1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of Research

In the past decade, adoption of mobile information and communication devices has exploded. Since the release of the first iPhone in mid-2007, less than ten years ago (at the time of writing), and the release of the first iPad in 2010, smartphones and tablets have become ubiquitous in modern society. In Australia, 84 per cent of the population own a smartphone and 60 per cent own a tablet (IAB Australia, 2016). These developments, along with the wide adoption of laptop computers, have changed both work and life in ways that we could not have imagined.

Mobile devices offer the opportunity for users to be more connected with others, including family and co-workers. But they also lead to the intensification of work and the expansion of work into the home because, now, work can be conducted anywhere and at any time. Work is no longer limited to the office. Technology is transforming our lives, presenting challenges and opportunities (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016).

Many employers offer flexible working arrangements to their employees. These policies support remote and virtual working, including telecommuting, enabled by mobile information and communication devices. The employer's motivation for remote and flexible working is to maximise productivity and to plan for more flexible production and service delivery. In addition, employers often frame flexible working arrangements as enabling better work–life balance for workers. These policies, allied with mobile communication devices, permit work to be conducted beyond conventional working hours and away from the office. Some firms use flexible working as part of their employment brand, developing a positive reputation in the employment market. Other firms do not make as much of flexible working arrangements.

In Australia, there is rising participation rates of women in the workforce with dual-earner households now the majority (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017a, 2017b). Societal norms around the role of mothers are shifting, with more women wanting to work or expected to work yet still be involved in childcare; while for fathers, there is a rising expectation of involved fathering (Humberd, Ladge, & Harrington, 2014; Ladge, Humberd, Harrington, & Watkins, 2014). Old models of male breadwinner and female caregiver (Pocock, 2011; Pocock, Skinner, & Williams, 2012) are falling away. Yet cultural norms, assumptions and expectations within the organisation may not have shifted so quickly, with working hours and displays of organisational commitment still firmly based on the ideal worker who is fully available for paid employment unencumbered by other concerns (Brumley, 2014; Dreyfus, 2013; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack, & Moen, 2010; O'Hagan, 2014).

The context of this research is the work domain and home/family domain of contemporary knowledge workers in the digital economy. These workers operate in a business context that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (Johansen, 2009). Their work involves collaborating with others, transferring, producing and manipulating

knowledge. They do not produce physical goods and, therefore, they are not tied strictly to a physical work location. The consequence is that knowledge work can be performed by knowledge workers at any time and any place.

Outside of work, knowledge workers care for their households, children, parents and pets, in the home/family domain. Employees seek to balance work and home/family by taking advantage of flexible working arrangements provided by employers. Knowledge workers are equipped with mobile communication devices such as laptops, smartphones and tablets, enabling flexible working. But, this is a double-edged sword: though work is now more flexible, there is also the possibility that work demands take priority over home and family, especially at home, leading to work intensification and, potentially, conflict (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009; A. Smith, 2016). Workers experience increasing time pressure and expectations of being constantly connected and available (Cavazotte, Heloisa Lemos, & Villadsen, 2014).

With the rising uptake of technology-enabled flexible work practices and shifting workplace norms, it is not clear how knowledge workers currently manage their careers and what models lead to successful careers. Traditional career models that assume regular, step-wise, upward promotion within the same organisation, driven by the employer's decisions, are no longer relevant in this context (M. Clarke, 2012). Older models of career planning do not necessarily align with contemporary knowledge-based workplaces, and the expectations and experiences of knowledge workers. Furthermore, for employees working flexibly or remotely, they may be less visible in the workplace, to their peers and to their managers. The impact of this reduced visibility is not well understood. Now, it is assumed that employees expect to take charge of their own careers – and across multiple employers. They follow a unique and personal career path, driven by their own decisions. The perceptions and drivers of career success in this new career model are not well understood, particularly for knowledge workers using flexible work arrangements.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

My interest in the study of careers, gender, technology and organisational culture stemmed from several personal and professional experiences. During Masters level studies, I was fascinated by the literature on gender in organisations. I had sensed gender differences in my workplace, but, until I encountered that literature, I did not have the tools to make sense of it. That same year, my workplace conducted a global employee survey, finding that employees perceived few career opportunities. I designed a career development website, but realised, during design, that my knowledge of career development theories was sketchy at best. I work in a global corporation where employees are equipped with mobile communication devices that are usually taken for granted. I observed that some employees seemed to be working at all hours of the day and night, while others made themselves less available. As I pondered the strands of gender equity, career development and technology-enabled working, I slowly formulated this study.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In the information technology sector, which is part of the digital economy, there is little research in Australia about how flexible knowledge workers shape the boundary between work and home/family. Boundary theory proposes that individuals range between a segmentation preference (with inflexible and impermeable boundaries) and an integration preference (with flexible and permeable boundaries) (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). However, these theories predate widespread adoption of mobile communication technologies. Thus, there is a need to understand how contemporary knowledge workers manage work–home boundaries when enabled with mobile devices, especially those workers with flexible working arrangements. For example, those who work from home face unique challenges to manage work demands and home/family demands in the same physical location. Technology and flexible working arrangements have the potential to liberate workers but also to enslave them.

Scholars have debated the problem of balancing the demands of intense work with the demands of raising a family and maintaining a household (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2016; Blair-Loy, Hochschild, Pugh, Williams, & Hartmann, 2015). Most frequently, scholars have framed this problem as a women's problem; deftly ignoring and thus marginalising the contribution of working fathers to the family (Humberd et al., 2014; Ladge et al., 2014). There is a need to understand how contemporary knowledge workers balance work and home, with attention paid to diverse family structures and to the role of men beyond simply enacting ideal worker norms.

Organisational culture in the information technology industry is often saturated with masculine norms because the industry is historically male-dominated. These norms privilege the ideal worker and exclude women (Trauth, 2002). The impact of organisational culture on uptake of flexible working arrangements in the IT sector has been poorly studied. Furthermore, there are few studies that look at the interplay of work–family culture in contemporary work environments, where employees are armed with mobile communication devices. It is known that some stigma is applied to employees using flexible working arrangements (Coltrane, Miller, DeHaan, & Stewart, 2013; Stone & Hernandez, 2013; Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, & Siddiqi, 2013; Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013) but there is little research on how this is perceived in the information technology industry in Australia.

Turning to careers, there is a lack of research on the impact of technology-enabled working methods and routines on an employee's perception of career success and their career progression. Career development literature to date has focused on a range of theories, often more apt to the career decisions of young people or those choosing an occupation. Research is needed on the strategies employed by mature flexible knowledge workers as they develop their careers within and between organisations. Boundary theory and border theory has been applied extensively in the area of work–life balance and flexible working arrangements (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000) but in the career development literature, boundary and border theories have been less applied to the concept of boundaryless careers (Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012).

A final problem is the lack of scholarly dialogue between the Information Systems discipline, which deals with technology, work and the social impact of evolving technology, and the Human Resource Management/Organisational Behaviour literature, which deals with work–life balance, flexible working arrangements and careers. There is an opportunity to bring these disciplines together in the study of technology-enabled flexible work practices and the impact upon the careers of knowledge workers.

1.4 Aim and Scope

To address the range of problems discussed above, the aim of this study is to investigate the intersection of flexible working arrangements and career outcomes for contemporary knowledge workers in the information technology sector in Australia. This aim recognises that knowledge workers are equipped with a suite of mobile information and communication technologies that enable flexible work practices, reshaping and reconstituting the boundary between work and home. This aim further recognises that work–family culture of the organisation is an important factor in determining the success of flexible work arrangements and the perceptions of career progression. Finally, this aim recognises that traditional career models are no longer relevant for contemporary knowledge workers, with employees thinking in new ways about career success and career satisfaction.

The research question for this study is: What strategies do knowledge workers employ to navigate their careers in a flexible work environment?

The study was structured as an exploratory case study of the Australian division of a single multi-national company in the information technology industry. The sample included employees within the company who were making use of flexible working arrangements. The types of flexible working arrangements in scope were: part-time hours, working from home, unpaid leave of absence, and parental leave. Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews and collecting corporate documents, then analysed using qualitative thematic text analysis.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study aims to give deeper insight into the experiences and perceptions of knowledge workers with remote or flexible arrangements as they navigate their daily lives between work demands and home/family demands using smartphones and laptops. Knowledge workers have evolved new ways of working, enabled by mobile devices such that, now, integration, not segmentation, is normative. Furthermore, use of flexible work practices has created new ways of balancing work and home/family. Existing work–life balance literature tends to focus on the experience of women and mothers; there is a gap around the experience of working fathers. The contribution of the study is a novel analysis of the experience of both mothers and fathers, as well as employees who are single and couples without children, showing how the norms of ideal worker, devoted mother, professional woman, breadwinner and involved father are shifting in the 21st century.

This study contributes a detailed investigation about how knowledge workers use smartphones and laptops, using the lens of affordance theory. These technologies evolve rapidly as manufacturers deliver new features, thus usage patterns evolve just as quickly. The literature is slow to reflect exactly how knowledge workers use mobile devices and how these practices are reshaping the work–home boundary and impacting career outcomes. The use of mobile devices is implicated in virtual displays of intense organisational commitment, especially for workers who work in a different location from their manager, or who work at home or on the road.

This study contributes new knowledge about how career outcomes are different for different types of flexible working. Specifically, part-time hours result in negative career outcomes; working from home has neutral career outcomes; and leave of absence has positive career outcomes. This study also sheds light on the mechanisms of flexibility stigma in the IT sector in Australia. Though part-time employees use mobile devices to achieve high availability, stigma persists.

Turning to boundary theory in relation to careers, and answering the call for boundary-focused career scholarship, I argue that, for the group of knowledge workers in this case study, careers are now bounded (not boundaryless) and, instead, the work–life interface is now boundaryless. Because knowledge workers in this study have crafted a work and home situation that suits their circumstances perfectly, they are inclined to avoid changing employers, since this would involve change to their flexible working arrangements. The consequence is that their careers are constrained or bounded.

Ultimately, I propose a new career model for knowledge workers, involving five components for success: visibility, smart output, collaboration, networking and manager support. A novel contribution is that these behaviours are now enacted principally in virtual and remote ways, rather than relying on face-to-face methods.

Finally, the analysis of technology affordances intersecting with flexible work practices and career outcomes bridges the Information Systems and Human Resource Management disciplines. The study is significant in blending aspects of these disciplines.

1.6 Overview of the Study

This thesis consists of six additional chapters, summarised in Figure 1.1.

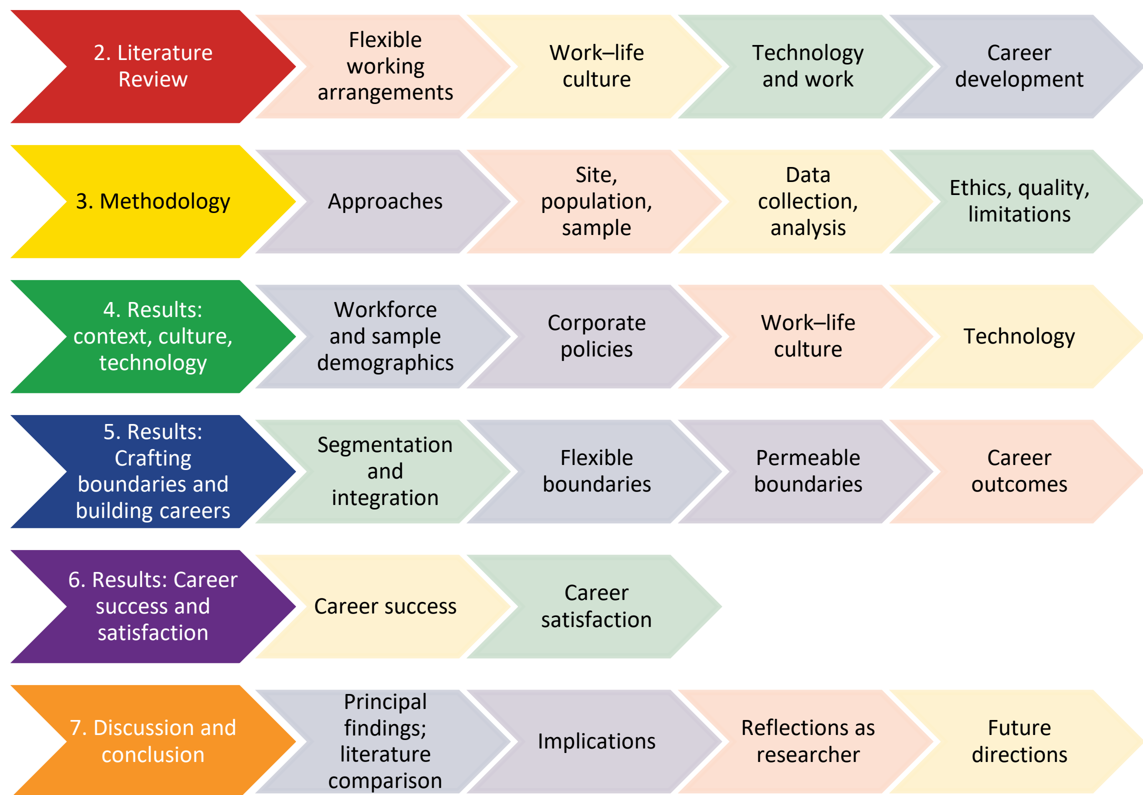

Figure 1.1 Overview of thesis and study

In Chapter 2, I present a comprehensive literature review organised across four themes: work–life balance and flexible working arrangements, organisational culture, technology in the workplace, and career development models and career success. In Chapter 3, I justify the methodological choices I made and I explain the method of data collection, preparation and analysis.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 cover the results of the study. In Chapter 4, I look at the organisational context, then I move to flexible working arrangements, information and communication technologies, and work–life culture. In Chapter 5, I describe how participants enacted work–home boundaries, then I turn to career outcomes. In Chapter 6, I investigate how participants defined career success orientation and perceived career satisfaction.

In Chapter 7 I argue the principal findings blended with a comparison of the literature; then I move to the implications for theory and practice. I reflect on my role as insider-researcher and my positionality. I discuss the limitations of the study and future directions for research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presented here covers four pillars to address the research question: work–life balance and flexible work arrangements; organisational culture; technology, work and telecommuting; and career development; (see Figure 2.1).

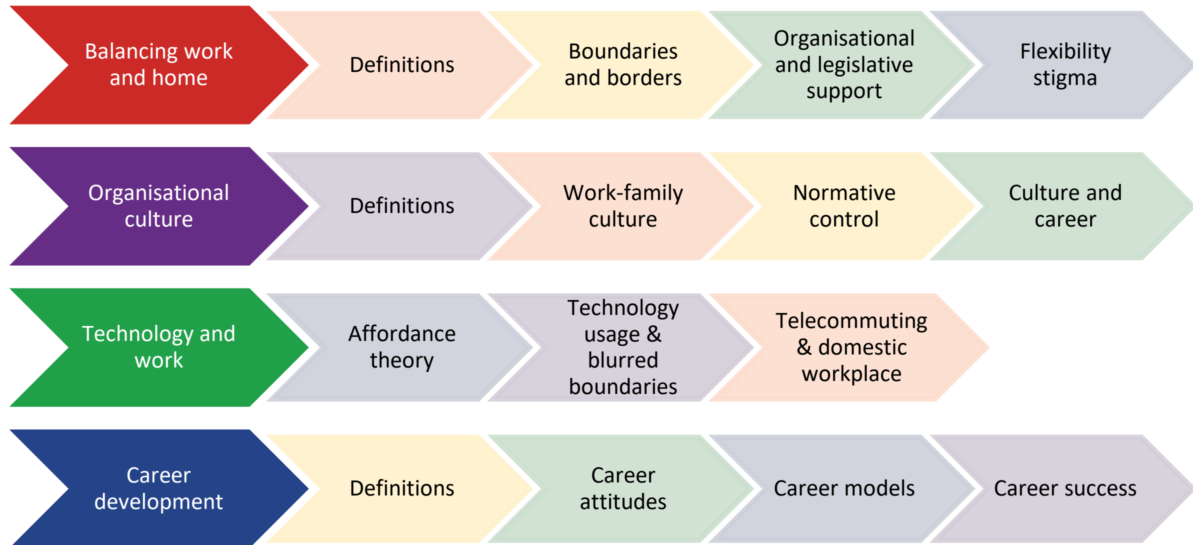

Figure 2.1 Overview of literature review structure and topics

The first section covers flexible work practices by starting with definitions of work–life balance and how definitions of the construct have evolved. Boundary theory and border theory are covered: specifically how individuals maintain and cross boundaries between work and home/family. Organisational and legislative support for flexible work practices is discussed, specifically the role of flexible work arrangements, supervisor support and the role of statutory parental leave in Australia. Flexibility stigma is discussed, looking at the impact of flexible working on job outcomes, including on careers.

The second section focuses on organisational culture, as the context in which employees make decisions about work and home or family. The section covers work–life culture in depth, followed by normative control, and the link between organisational culture and careers.

The third section focuses on technology and work in contemporary knowledge-based organisations, looking at how information and communication technologies allow knowledge workers to work anywhere and the consequences of this. The section begins with affordance theory, then turns to blurring of boundaries by mobile communication technologies. The next element is about telecommuting, the domestic workplace and working from home, and the impact of telecommuting on the lives of knowledge workers.

The final section covers career development, opening with the context of contemporary careers and the paradigms employed. Career attitudes are described followed by career models, closing with a discussion about career success.

I followed the method suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) to develop the literature review. They proposed four steps in preparing the literature review: (1) identify and

retrieve the literature; (2) review and analyse the literature; (3) synthesise and write the review; and (4) develop the conceptual framework. I used the Web of Science database and UNE Library's consolidated search tool to find literature using keyword searches, with the aim of finding literature published in the last ten years. I selected this period because of the significant growth in technology usage and adoption during that time and the consequent impact on work and home/family boundaries. I used key words related to the four themes identified: work–life balance and flexible working, career development, technology at work and telecommuting; and organisational culture.

2.1 Balancing Work and Home

The literature uses a range of terminology to describe the balance between work and domains outside work – variously labelled as 'life', 'personal', 'family', 'non-work' or 'home', depending on the study's conceptual background, definition of measures and research design. In this thesis, I use these terms interchangeably, respecting the original choice used by researchers in their studies. I start with work–life balance but also include work–non-work, work–home and work–family, where found in the literature. In later chapters, I prefer 'work–home' to describe all of an individual's concerns and demands outside work, including but not limited to family.

2.1.1 Work–Life Balance, Conflict and Enrichment

Work–life balance is the equilibrium maintained by an individual between his or her role-related expectations in the work domain and the family or home domain, leading to a sense of satisfaction, harmony and engagement, and minimising conflict (Clark, 2000; M. C. Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004; Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Voydanoff, 2005). Work–family balance has three components: time balance, referring to equal time devoted to work and family; involvement balance, referring to equal psychological effort and presence invested in work and family; and satisfaction balance, referring to equal satisfaction experienced across work and family roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Work–family balance can be classified using the direction of influence (work-to-home/family; home/family-to-work) and type of effect or outcome (conflict or facilitation) (Casper, De Hauw, & Wayne, 2013; Frone, 2003). Sources of conflict can be time-based, strain-based or behaviour-based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work–family facilitation is also labelled as work–family enrichment, enhancement or positive spillover (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Casper et al., 2013; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Scholars have criticised the concept of *equal* time, involvement and satisfaction balance and the assumption that low conflict or high facilitation equates to balance, instead proposing models that emphasise the individual's subjective perceptions of balance (Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014). Other work has looked at cases where individuals experience both conflict and enhancement simultaneously, proposing four categories of work–life balance: beneficial balance (low conflict, high enhancement); active balance (high conflict, high enhancement); passive balance (low conflict, low enhancement); and harmful balance (high conflict, low enhancement) (Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011). This model deliberately avoids focusing on the direction of conflict and,

instead, attempts a more holistic view of balance, conflict and enhancement (Rantanen et al., 2011). More recently, a new model of work–family conflict has been proposed, focusing on work–family conflict as a process, beginning with perceived incompatibility of work and family demands, leading to role decisions by the individual to meet work goals or to meet family goals (Haun & Dormann, 2016).

Scholars have criticised older models of work–life balance as often framed for women who take care of children (Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli, & Bell, 2011), neglecting the needs of men, other family arrangements (same sex couples and singles) and life needs beyond childcare, such as elder care or community involvement. Gatrell and Cooper (2008) argued that work–life balance and the notion of flexibility is gendered: men are not encouraged to work flexibly, while mothers who seek to work long hours are penalised. Williams, Berdahl and Vandello (2016) argued that the business case for work–life balance has failed because the work devotion schema is paramount, enacting elite class status and gender identity. Change threatens these identities and thus meets with resistance, sustaining current organisational norms rather than shifting them.

For this study, it is important to investigate the subjective perceptions of balance for employees in the information technology sector in Australia. Does the perception of balance vary by gender? How do individuals subjectively define work–home conflict and work–home enhancement?

2.1.2 Boundary Theory and Border Theory

Work-family boundary dynamics concern the 'socially constructed lines of demarcation between work and family roles, and the ways in which individuals maintain, negotiate and transition across the lines created' (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014, p. 100). Individuals create boundaries to simplify and order their environment. Individuals surmount boundaries during boundary transitions (Ashforth et al., 2000; Bulger, Matthews, & Hoffman, 2007). The frequent and recurring transition between work and home is classified as a micro-transition (Ashforth et al., 2000). With the individual at the centre, the home boundary is socially constructed by the individual in conjunction with spouse or family members; and the work boundary is constructed by the individual as employee in conjunction with the manager and the organisation (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009).

Flexibility, Permeability, Segmentation and Integration. Role boundaries have different degrees of flexibility, defined as 'the extent to which the physical time and location markers, such as working hours and workplace, may be changed' (Hall & Richter, 1989, p. 215); and different degrees of permeability, defined as 'the degree to which a person physically located in one domain may be psychologically concerned with the other' (Hall & Richter, 1989, p. 215). Individuals range along a continuum between high segmentation between roles, implying inflexible and impermeable role boundaries, and high integration, implying flexible and permeable boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Bulger et al., 2007; Duxbury, Higgins, Smart, & Stevenson, 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). The permeability of boundaries is asymmetrical (Hyland & Prottas, 2016), with work demands spilling over into the home domain more often than home into work. The transition challenge for highly segmented roles is situated in *crossing* the boundaries; whereas the challenge for highly integrated roles is situated in *creating*

and maintaining boundaries between those roles (Ashforth et al., 2000). Scholars have interpreted the segmentation–integration continuum by proposing a range of different categories (see Table 2.1).

Of the models listed in Table 2.1, Languilaire's work/non-work model (2009) is the most extensive, recognising seven different types of boundaries: spatial, temporal, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, psychosomatic and human (relational), suggesting that the integration–segmentation continuum is not a unidimensional line but should be regarded as a multidimensional plane. Individuals may vary on their preferences for each boundary type, giving a rich and complex appreciation of boundaries and placement on the integration–segmentation continuum, compared to unidimensional models.

Table 2.1 Boundary management styles along the segmentation–integration continuum

Boundary management styles	Source
Integrators Work integrators–life segmentors Neutrals Moderate segmentors	Bulger, Matthews, & Hoffman (2007)
Pushed segmentation Moderated segmentation Balanced Moderated integration Pushed integration	Languilaire (2009)
Integrators Separators Alternating, or cycler	Kossek (2016a); Kossek, Su, & Wu (2016); Kossek & Lautsch (2012)
Work warriors Overwhelmed reactors Family guardians Fusion lovers Dividers Nonwork-eclectics	Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy & Hannum (2012)
Protecting family Above and beyond Enhancing family Holistic	Ammons (2013)
Integrators Segmentors Struggling segmentors	Duxbury, Higgins, Smart, & Stevenson (2014)
Integrators Segmentors Hybridization style Spillover style	El Wafi, Brangier, & Zaddem (2016)

In border theory, strong borders are impermeable, inflexible and do not allow for blending of roles, while weak borders are permeable, flexible and facilitate blending (Clark, 2000). Border-crossers may identify more strongly with one of the domains (work or home) and may have more control over borders of that domain than individuals who identify weakly with a domain. Border-keepers are domain members who are influential in defining the domain and the border. Since boundaries are socially defined, border-keepers and border-crossers may not always agree on the exact boundary and on the flexibility and

permeability of the boundary, giving rise to conflict. The other-domain awareness of domain members is important in maintaining balance for the border-crosser. For example, a manager may have high family-domain awareness; that is, be aware of the employee's family circumstances. Commitment of the domain member to the border-crosser is also important in maintaining balance. The domain member supports the border-crosser in keeping up their other-domain responsibilities.

A criticism of both boundary theory and border theory is that both are gender-blind. It seems likely that men and women experience boundary formation and border crossing in different ways as they move between the home/family domain and the work domain (Ashforth et al., 2000; Matthews & Barnes-Farrell, 2010; Orser & Leck, 2010).

Congruence and Fit. There are two competing conceptions of congruence and fit with respect to the segmentation–integration continuum:

1. A boundary congruence approach (Kreiner, 2006), in which the workplace supplies resources to the individual to balance work and home. When the workplace provides resources that are congruent with the individual's preferences, the outcome is reduced conflict and increased wellbeing.
2. A boundary fit approach (Ammons, 2013), in which the individual has boundary preferences (the desired approach) which may be distinct from boundary enactments (the actual frontiers that individuals create or maintain). Where preferences are aligned with enactments, the outcome is a greater sense of balance.

A Swedish study of knowledge professionals with flexible working arrangements found a stronger preference for segmentation over integration (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014), while those participants with high boundary control had better work–life balance. A German study in the manufacturing sector found that employee preferences for permeability and workplace policies supporting flexibility were positively associated with work-to-family enrichment (Daniel & Sonnentag, 2015). Weak boundaries between work and home are associated with higher conflict between roles (Hecht & Allen, 2009). A study of UK professionals found that individuals used a repertoire of physical, cognitive and relational behaviours to craft work–life balance, with notable differences between individuals, suggesting that individuals have different preferences and perceptions surrounding work–life balance (Sturges, 2012). Work-family conflict may arise where individuals integrate boundaries against their preference (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006); conflict may arise where individuals prefer more flexible boundaries (Matthews & Barnes-Farrell, 2010). Individuals with a segmentation preference and lower work-to-home permeability are less likely to perceive work-to-family interference or conflict (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006; Park & Jex, 2011). But, higher home-to-work permeability (thus an integration preference) decreases work–life conflict (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006); while another study found that family-to-work boundary transitions were positively associated with work-to-family conflict and simultaneously with work-to-family enrichment (though a weaker positive effect) (Carlson, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Ferguson, 2015).

Mobile communication technologies are now considered important in shaping work–home boundaries (Duxbury et al., 2014; El Wafi et al., 2016; Mellner et al., 2014; Wajcman,

Bittman, & Brown, 2009), especially for knowledge workers. Integration between work and home is increasingly the norm (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015). Work-related technologies are connected to work effort and effectiveness while non-work technologies are connected to pleasure and enjoyment (Bødker, 2016). Paid work tends to dominate the lives of individuals (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015), who use a reasoning of personal choice to explain their long hours and weak and permeable boundaries (Lewis, 2003). Growing time demands of work are leading to blurred boundaries (Lewis, 2003; Schieman & Glavin, 2016; Siegert, 2015), causing a 'time crunch' (Pedersen & Lewis, 2012, p. 465) resulting in perceived busyness and lack of time.

For this study, it is important to understand how employees create, maintain and cross boundaries between work and home/family. Are they segmentors or integrators? For segmentors, what is their subjective experience of crossing boundaries and what challenges do they face? For integrators, what is their subjective experience of forming and maintaining boundaries, and what challenges do they face? How do individuals perceive flexibility and permeability of work and home/family? Do women create, maintain and cross boundaries in different ways compared to men? Who are the actual border-keepers in the work domain and in the home/family domain?

2.1.3 Long Hours

Recent studies have investigated evidence for a 'long hours' culture in the information technology sector. An Australian study in the IT sector, using 2001 census data, found that 80 per cent of private sector men and 70 per cent of private sector women worked more than 40 hours per week (Diamond & Whitehouse, 2007); however the study did not go so far as to identify the career outcomes associated with regular hours, long hours and resistance to long hours (Diamond & Whitehouse, 2007). A Scottish study found that 59 per cent of the sample of software workers worked up to 10 hours of unpaid overtime per week, while 13 per cent worked more than 10 hours of unpaid overtime (Hyman & Baldry, 2011).

A study in Ireland found that long hours are not truly long hours – only a few employees work long hours but the organisation is saturated with the mythology of heroic workers that have worked long hours in the past (O'Carroll, 2015). This created an organisational culture that vaunted long hours, setting a mythical and unachievable standard for employees. In addition, this standard was hard to meet for working parents with caring responsibilities, since their home/family commitments did not allow them to devote unlimited hours to the organisation. A study in the US found similar results in that the *ideal* IT engineer was assumed to work long hours, yet most engineers in the study did not work long hours, averaging close to 40 hours per week (Alegria, 2016). Managers in the study had more control of their schedules, using the opportunities of flexibility and permeability to build better work–life balance. Nevertheless they worked longer hours, including nights and weekends (Alegria, 2016). A recent study of elite women in the US technology sector found that those who subscribe to the work devotion schema were willing to work long hours, reducing perceptions of overload (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2016).

For this study, what evidence is there for long hours? Does it vary by gender? What is the symbolic importance of long hours and how does this impact career outcomes?

2.1.4 Organisational and Legislative Support for Work–Life Balance

Several policy areas have been identified that would support better work and family outcomes. Firstly, leave policies that enable paid parental leave for childbirth and adoption, and paid sick or carer's leave are important (Allen, 2012; Pocock, 2011; Skinner & Chapman, 2013). Secondly, provision of affordable, available childcare at satisfactory quality is essential (Allen, 2012; Pocock, 2011; Skinner & Chapman, 2013). Thirdly, access to flexible working hours and access to quality part-time jobs is relevant (Allen, 2012; Pocock, 2011; Skinner & Chapman, 2013). Finally, going beyond formal organisational measures, a supportive organisational culture and informal support for flexible working are critical (Allen, 2012; Pocock, 2011).

It should be noted that even if all policy measures were fully enacted and adopted, there are significant cultural norms which make it difficult for employees to utilise the policies fully and achieve satisfactory work and home/family outcomes (Kossek, 2016b; Putnam, Myers, & Gailliard, 2013; Skinner, Cathcart, & Pocock, 2016). Of interest for this study is to verify whether employees in the information technology sector identify the policies mentioned above as important in their subjective experience of trying to achieve work–life balance.

2.1.4.1 Flexible Work Arrangements

Workplace flexibility has been defined as 'the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks' (E. J. Hill et al., 2008, p. 152). In Australia, employers offer a variety of flexible work arrangements. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) defines flexible work arrangements broadly, including changing: hours, such as working fewer hours or part-time, or changing the work start- or end-times; patterns, such as job sharing, splitting shifts, time-in-lieu, or compressed working weeks; locations of work, such as working from home and telecommuting. Australian employers with more than 100 employees must report on their flexible work policies to WGEA annually. In this survey, WGEA also includes carer's leave, purchased leave and unpaid leave under flexible working arrangements (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2016).

The impact of flexible work arrangements has been debated in the literature (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011), with mixed findings: the link between flexible working and organisational performance, individual performance and work–family conflict was supported in some studies but not in others. There is a fundamental tension embedded in flexible work arrangements, ranging across fixed versus variable arrangements, unsupportive versus supportive work climates and equitable versus inequitable policy implementations (Putnam et al., 2013), creating the 'autonomy–control paradox' (Putnam et al., 2013, p. 427). Conceptually, workplace flexibility directly influences work–life fit, the 'ability to successfully integrate work and personal/family life' (E. J. Hill et al., 2008, p. 157). Flexible working via formal arrangements negatively influences performance but positively influences job satisfaction; informal arrangements positively impact individual performance (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016). Flexible working reduces stress, burnout and psychological distress (Moen et al., 2016) and increases job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Anderson &

Kelliher, 2009), yet also leads to work intensification (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009). The literature has not reached a consensus on the impact of flexible work arrangements, due to differences in: the precise flexible work offerings included in each study, the measures used, the industry sector studied, and the range of moderators included or excluded. Flexible working offers a career premium when managers assume that employees are using flexibility to maximise productivity and contribution; in contrast, a career penalty applies when managers perceive that employees want flexibility for personal reasons, because managers perceive employees to have lower organisational commitment (Leslie, Manchester, Park, & Mehng, 2012).

For this study, the intersection of flexible working and career outcomes is important. What are the perceptions of flexible working and career outcomes for knowledge workers in the IT sector in Australia?

2.1.4.2 Supervisor Support

Manager support or supervisor support is identified as an important aspect of work-life culture that promotes work–life balance (Allen, 2012; Pocock, 2011; Skinner & Chapman, 2013). Managers can actively encourage or discourage employees to balance work and home/family life (McDonald, Pini, & Bradley, 2007). Managers also make decisions about employee requests to take advantage of work–life policies and manager support is 'by no means unconditional' (Peper, Dikkers, Vinkenburg, & van Engen, 2011, p. 245). According to work disruption theory, managers take into consideration the potential for flexible working to disrupt the flow of work, when making decisions about whether to approve such requests (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Managers are rewarded for business results rather than accommodating employee requests for flexible working. Thus, additional demands are placed upon managers because they must juggle work schedules to ensure coverage (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Dependency theory states that managers are accountable for the results of their department but depend on their employees for this performance (Klein, Berman, & Dickson, 2000). Thus, when an employee requests flexible working, the manager's decision will be influenced, among other factors, by their level of dependency on the employee (Klein et al., 2000) and the reward system in place.

2.1.4.3 Parental Leave

In Australia, the National Employment Standards allow a minimum entitlement of 12 months unpaid parental leave (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2012c). The employee can request to extend their unpaid parental leave by an extra 12 months (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2012a), meaning that the employee can take a total of two years of unpaid parental leave.

Since 2011, the Australian Government has offered a Paid Parental Leave scheme, which pays up to 18 weeks of pay at the national minimum wage, around $672.60 per week before tax (Department of Human Services, 2017). Employers may offer employer-funded parental leave with pay, in addition to the government-funded paid leave (Department of Human Services, 2017). Since 2013, the Australian Government has offered Dad and Partner Pay, which is up to two weeks of pay at the national minimum wage, for fathers or partners (Department of Human Services, 2014). During parental leave, employees can come to work for up to 10 days and be paid their normal wage without impacting unpaid

parental leave entitlements (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2012b). These work days are known as ‘keeping in touch days’.

Paid Parental Leave has been criticised because it is paid at minimum wage, not replacement wage, thus differing from other leave entitlements like annual leave. Nor is Paid Parental Leave subject to superannuation contributions. These factors reinforce the notion that parental leave and the role of parenting are not valued the same as paid work (Dreyfus, 2013).

Malatzky (2013) studied Australian women’s responses to the introduction of the Paid Parental Leave scheme. The study found that women’s choices remain limited despite the availability of paid parental leave. Bearing children is regarded as a private responsibility in Australian society. There is limited recognition that support of child-bearing merits public assistance, including government policies. The findings revealed that women struggle to reconcile the ideal of ‘Professional Woman’ participating in the workforce, and the ideal of ‘Good Mother’ raising children (Malatzky, 2013, p. 200). Furthermore, there are significant penalties for women and men who work part-time, for example a reduced or zero promotion rate, and for parents who take time away from their jobs (Malatzky, 2013).

The Australian Human Rights Commission surveyed mothers who had received Paid Parental Leave or the Baby Bonus and fathers who had received Dad and Partner Pay (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). The survey found that discrimination in the workplace is extensive with 49 per cent of mothers reporting some form of discrimination in connection with pregnancy, parental leave or return to work. Several types of discrimination were noted, though of interest to this study is discrimination regarding performance evaluation and career opportunities, in the form of missed promotions, denied access to training, and missed performance appraisals, with such discrimination reported by: 46 per cent of mothers as occurring during pregnancy; 46 per cent during parental leave; and 27 per cent after return to work (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014).

By comparison, 27 per cent of fathers and partners faced discrimination during parental leave or return to work (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). For discrimination in connection with performance evaluations and career opportunities, 29 per cent of fathers and partners reported discrimination in this area (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014).

European Union member states all offer different forms of parental leave or paternity leave to fathers but there is little specific research that documents the use of such leave (Deven, 2005), highlighting a gap in the literature. Norway, Sweden and Quebec have a father quota of leave that must be taken or lost (‘use it or lose it’) and this has been shown to increase men’s use of parental leave (Deven, 2005; Patnaik, 2016).

For this study, it is important to explore and critique the organisational and national policy context, regarding parental leave.

2.1.5 Flexibility Stigma

Many organisations offer flexible working arrangements as a way of promoting work–life balance, yet usage of these policies is low (Sheridan, 2004; Williams et al., 2013). In Australia, flexible working and, especially, part-time work is dominated by women (Malatzky, 2013; McDonald, Bradley, & Brown, 2008; Sheridan, 2004). A flexibility stigma is applied to employees who use flexibility policies (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2014; Williams et al., 2013). Employees fear negative career consequences, such as pay penalties (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004), lower performance ratings (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; Wharton, Chivers, & Blair-Loy, 2008) and fewer promotions (Cohen & Single, 2001) from flexible working, ultimately shaping career success for employees (Leslie et al., 2012).

Flexibility stigma is gendered. For men, the male breadwinner norm (Poole & Langan-Fox, 1997) and the ideal worker norm (Acker, 1990) still prevail. Men who seek flexible work arrangements related to the birth of a child are rated lower on masculine traits, rated higher on feminine traits, receive more negative job evaluations and are recommended for smaller pay rises (Vandello et al., 2013). Caregiving fathers experience more harassment and mistreatment than fathers who do not take part in childcare, and they experience more harassment and mistreatment than men without children (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). Fatherhood without caregiving appears to give a fatherhood premium (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004) while fatherhood with caregiving, the 'daddy track', leads to a fatherhood penalty of reduced long-term earnings (Coltrane et al., 2013). In a US longitudinal study, white men who worked reduced hours for family reasons experienced an 8.2 per cent decrease in earnings, whereas white men who worked reduced hours for non-family reasons (which could include personal health problems) experienced a very small increase in earnings of 0.8 per cent (Coltrane et al., 2013). Men who seek flexible working are thus attributed feminine traits and penalised since they are gender deviant by not conforming to normative masculine ideals (Vandello et al., 2013).

For women, the caregiver norm still prevails (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Poole & Langan-Fox, 1997). Women who seek flexible work arrangements following childbirth are rated higher on feminine traits, receiving more negative job evaluations and smaller pay rise recommendations (Vandello et al., 2013). Childless women experience more harassment and mistreatment than mothers, and mothers who spend less time on childcare experience more harassment and mistreatment than mothers who spend more time on childcare (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). The motherhood penalty (Budig & England, 2001; Budig & Hodges, 2010; England, Bearak, Budig, & Hodges, 2016) means that mothers are evaluated as less worthy of promotion and salary increase (Fuegen et al., 2004), and, furthermore, mothers who conform weakly to or deviate from the caregiver norm (e.g., those who do zero childcare) are also penalised (Berdahl & Moon, 2013).

On the other hand, mothers who seek flexible work arrangements or who opt out of intense professional jobs are often considered time deviants, since they are not conforming to the ideal worker norm (Stone & Hernandez, 2013). Thus, part-time working mothers are 'marginalised and mommy-tracked' (Stone & Hernandez, 2013, p. 236). Mommy track women also suffer an earnings penalty (as for daddy track men) (Coltrane et al., 2013).

This suggests that caregiving could be regarded as an inconvenience to organisations. The positioning of caregiving as a distraction from 'real' work is not a neutral stance. Rather, this stance comes from the assumption that the workforce is there to be used by the organisation. Thus, one must question the apparent neutrality of the organisation in arranging policies that appear to support work–life balance.

One criticism of this work is that there is not enough evidence from real workplaces and from Australia regarding flexibility stigma. Coltrane et al. (2013) used longitudinal survey data from the US; Stone and Hernandez (2013) interviewed married mothers in the US; Berdahl and Moon (2013) surveyed union members in the US and Vandello et al. (2013) surveyed psychology students in the US. Since the US does not offer a national parental leave scheme, the results of these studies are constrained by that context.

McDonald et al.'s (2008) Australian study pre-dates the introduction of Paid Parental Leave and Dad and Partner Pay. Thus, there is a need for contemporary studies of flexibility stigma in Australian workplaces in the context of the current parental leave arrangements for mothers and fathers. Previous studies have noted several types of discrimination, such as missed performance reviews, lower performance ratings, reduced career opportunities, missed promotions, and denial of access to training (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014; Blair-Loy, 2003; Cohen & Single, 2001; Coltrane et al., 2013; Fuegen et al., 2004; Malatzky, 2013; Wharton et al., 2008).

For this study, it is important to understand subjective employee perceptions of their career progress; perceptions of any of the types of career discrimination noted above; and differences by gender. It is important to investigate the extent of the 'mommy track' and the 'daddy track' in the information technology sector in Australia, given that previous studies have addressed either the information technology sector in other countries, or have addressed Australian employees in sectors other than the information technology sector.

2.1.6 Summary

Work–life balance remains elusive for individuals. Work–life conflict may arise where there is tension between work and home/family; work–life enhancement may arise where the individual has positive perceptions between the two domains. Work–life balance is often portrayed as gendered, with flexibility aimed at women who have caregiving duties, while men stick to masculine norms.

Individuals make and shape boundaries between the work domain and the home/family domain. The boundary can be characterised using differing degrees of flexibility and permeability. Individuals range along a continuum between highly segmented and highly integrated, though there is scholarly debate about the precise nature of the continuum and the categories that apply. Where there is perceived congruence between the individual's segmentation–integration preference and workplace resources, it is assumed that there will be positive outcomes. Where there is perceived fit between the individual's boundary preferences and boundary enactments, it is assumed there will again be positive outcomes. Mobile communication technologies now play an important role in transcending and thus shaping the work–home boundary. There is a mythology about long

hours in the information technology industry. Some scholars found that employees worked long hours, especially for managers, but others found that employees work close to payroll hours.

To support work–life balance, organisations offer a range of policies. Flexible working arrangements, where the employee has greater choice regarding the hours and location of work, form the foundation for work–life balance. Yet flexible working is not a panacea for all ills: it intensifies work and carries notions of both autonomy and control. Supervisor support is critical to enable employees to balance work and home/family, but work disruption theory and dependency theory suggest that managers consider the flow of work and the contribution of employees when considering employee requests for flexible working arrangements. Parental leave is another organisational policy that enables better balance. In Australia, government parental leave is paid at minimum wage, not replacement wage. Those who take parental leave report discrimination such as missed promotions and missed performance appraisals.

Employees who work flexibly are subject to stigmas and penalties, including fewer promotions, reduced earnings and lower performance ratings. The source of the stigma is a perception that such employees are less committed to the organisation. They are cast as deviant from the norms of the ideal worker, the caregiving homemaker mother and the breadwinner father. Working mothers who combine paid work with caregiving may be relegated to the mommy track, while working fathers who seek greater involvement in their children's lives may be relegated to the daddy track.

2.2 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture forms the background context where employees and managers make decisions about flexible working arrangements and how they perceive career consequences. This section explores normative control of employees exerted through strong organisational cultures; and the relationship between organisational culture and careers.

2.2.1 Organisational Culture as Variable or as Root Metaphor

Some scholars regard organisational culture as a variable, while others regard organisational culture as a root metaphor for the organisation (Smircich, 1983). When regarded as a variable, organisational culture can be measured and understood as an objective reality. When organisational culture is regarded as a root metaphor, culture is constructed by organisation members and reproduced by networks of shared, symbolic meaning. Some scholars have proposed that the two approaches, the first reflecting an objectivist view of social reality and the second a hermeneutical or phenomenological approach (Alvesson, 2002), should be regarded as complementary (Kummerow & Kirby, 2014), suggesting that deep level analysis of organisational culture (derived from the root metaphor perspective) can inform decisions about action plans to enhance culture (where the culture as variable perspective is more relevant).

2.2.2 Definitions of Organisational Culture

There are many definitions of organisational culture but the most frequently cited definition is by Schein (2010, p. 18):

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

Schein's model of organisational culture has three levels of manifestation. The first level is artefacts, which are 'visible and feelable structures and processes' (Schein, 2010, p. 24) and they refer to observable behaviours, documents and processes. Artefacts include organizational stories, myths and sagas; metaphors and language systems; rituals, ceremonies and symbols; norms of behaviour and identifiable values; physical spaces; and organisational reward systems (Higgins, McAllaster, Certo, & Gilbert, 2006).

The second level of organisational culture is espoused beliefs and values. These are the organisation's goals and shared values (Schein, 2010). However, sometimes espoused values at this level are not congruent with observed behaviours from the artefactual level (Kummerow & Kirby, 2014; Schein, 2010). This level of organisational culture is less accessible than the level of artefacts (Kummerow & Kirby, 2014).

The third level of organisational culture is basic underlying assumptions. These are taken-for-granted consensus assumptions about the way things are within the organisation (Schein, 2010). These elements cannot be observed directly within the organisation (Kummerow & Kirby, 2014). As with other levels, discrepancies may arise between the assumptions level, the values level and the artefacts level.

Cameron and Quinn (2005) proposed a competing values framework to understand organisational culture. Since their framework deals with values, it can be regarded as addressing the values level in Schein's model. There are two dimensions in the competing values framework: flexibility versus stability; and external focus versus internal focus. Combining the two dimensions yields four quadrants or culture types: clan quadrant (internal focus, high flexibility); adhocracy quadrant (external focus, high flexibility); market quadrant (external focus, low flexibility); and hierarchy quadrant (internal focus, low flexibility) (Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff, & Thakor, 2006).

Alvesson (2002) offers another model, taking the view that organisational culture means understanding the importance of symbolism within the organisation, extending to rituals, stories, myths and legends; the interpretation of experiences and events within the organisation; and the assumptions and values about the social reality within the organisation. In this model, culture is not inside the heads of organisation members but rather it exists *between* the heads of organisation members where symbolic meaning is exchanged in interactions such as meetings or presentations (Alvesson, 2002).

Kummerow and Kirby (2014) suggest six key characteristics of organisational culture: (1) organisational culture develops over time as a product of group problem-solving; (2) organisational culture is comprised of consensus views; (3) organisational culture is acquired by newcomers through processes of socialisation; (4) organisational culture is

multi-layered, including surface level artefacts and deeper level beliefs; (5) organisational culture is subject to differentiation, thus producing subcultures; and (6) organisational culture is shaped by organisational history. Kummerow and Kirby (2014) criticised Schein's (2010) three level model for being overly complex and thus they proposed their fourth characteristic, which splits culture into surface level and deep level. Martin (2014) criticised models that regard culture as uniform across the organisation, proposing differentiation and fragmentation as alternative perspectives that explain the formation of subcultures (Martin, 2002).

2.2.3 Work–Family Culture

Work–family culture is defined as 'the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives' (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999, p. 394). The concept of work–family culture incorporates three dimensions: managerial support for work–family balance, career consequences associated with taking advantage of work–family arrangements, and organisational time or working hours expectations that may interfere with family responsibilities (Mauno, Kinnunen, & Pyykko, 2005; Thompson et al., 1999). In a supportive work–family culture, employees are more likely to make use of work–family benefits and employees have lower levels of work–family conflict (Thompson et al., 1999). Positive or supportive work–family culture is positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviours and organisational commitment; and negatively associated with work–family conflict (Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, Kutcher, Indovino, & Rosner, 2005). Supportive work–family culture is also associated with positive spillover from work to home and reduced negative spillover (Sok, Blomme, & Tromp, 2014). In a supportive work–family culture, employees have higher well-being measured as lower self-reported distress and this effect is partially mediated by perceptions of work–family conflict (Mauno et al., 2005). Interestingly, the same study, based on a sample of Finnish employees, found that male participants in a paper mill and in a government labour department experience higher work–family conflict than women (Mauno et al., 2005).

Australian scholars extended the definition of work–life culture to include two additional dimensions: gendered patterns of policy use, and co-worker support (McDonald, Brown, & Bradley, 2005). A subsequent qualitative study about work–life culture conducted in the local government sector in Australia by the same researchers found that participants perceived significant negative career consequences from using alternative work arrangements; that participants perceived strong expectations around long working hours and physical presence in the workplace; that manager support was critical in making and continuing flexible working; that co-workers supported flexible working yet participants found that they missed out on social events and informal communication; and that participants perceived that flexible working was mainly for women (McDonald et al., 2007). These findings align with previous findings on the impact of supportive work–family culture and research on flexibility stigma discussed earlier.

In the Netherlands, studies found that a hindrance work–family culture (Dikkers et al., 2007) was strongly related to more work–family conflict that resulted in burnout; and conversely, a supportive work–family culture (Dikkers et al., 2007) was related to work–

family enrichment (and decreased work–family conflict), employee engagement, and less burnout (Peeters, Wattez, Demerouti, & de Regt, 2009).

In Finland, a study found that work–family culture was statistically better represented as two factors: managerial work–family support; and work–family barriers (Mauno, 2010). The study also found that managerial work–family support is of greater importance for employee well-being than work–family barriers; and that managerial work–family support does not significantly buffer against the negative effects of work–family barriers on employee well-being (Mauno, 2010). These results reflect the fact that, in Finland, there is extensive statutory support for flexible working arrangements and, thus, employees do not perceive work–family barriers as highly important (Mauno, 2010).

A subsequent study by the same research group compared perceptions of work–family culture at the individual level and the department level (Mauno, Kiuru, & Kinnunen, 2011). Supportive work–family culture was found to be positively associated with job satisfaction, work engagement and low turnover intention at both the individual level and the department level (Mauno et al., 2011). At the departmental level, work–family culture was found to be a *shared* phenomenon, supporting the original definition of Thompson et al. (1999) and also the view that culture is socially reproduced through interactions (Van Maanen, 2008).

In Spain, researchers modified Thompson et al.'s (1999) model of work–family climate to include direct supervisor support and found that supportive work–family culture is positively correlated with the use of flexible working arrangements and organisation commitment, and negatively correlated with turnover intention and work-to-family conflict (de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2012). The study also found that career consequences and organisational time demands could be condensed into a single factor, labelled 'career consequences', supporting Mauno's (2010) approach and findings. By contrast, another study in Spain found that career consequences and organizational time demands were separate factors (Vazquez, Llaguno, & Ruiz, 2013), contradicting the findings of the previous studies (de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2012; Mauno, 2010).

In the US, studies have found that supportive work–family culture was negatively associated with work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, and positively associated with work-to-family enhancement (Gordon, Whelan-Berry, & Hamilton, 2007) and satisfaction with work–family balance (McNamara, Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, Brown, & Valcour, 2013). Supportive work–family culture positively predicted job satisfaction, affective commitment and reduced work–family conflict (de Janasz, Behson, Jonsen, & Lankau, 2013). In the information technology sector, work–family culture was not *directly* related to work interference with family, but was *indirectly* related to decreased work interference with family through influence on leader-member exchange and co-worker support (Major, Fletcher, Davis, & Germano, 2008).

2.2.3.1 Critical Analysis of Work-Family Culture

Judging by the range of literature summarised above, there is no consensus amongst researchers regarding how to measure work–family culture. The original scale by Thompson et al. (1999) has been adapted, extended and condensed by subsequent scholars. A contention is that the overall construct of work–family culture is not clear.

Some researchers regard it as a unidimensional construct (e.g., McNamara et al. (2013)) while others regard it as multi-dimensional (e.g., Mauno (2010); and Vasquez et al. (2013)). Some scales include supervisor support (e.g., de Sivatte and Guadamillas (2012)) while others ignore this element. Several researchers have found intercorrelation between career consequences and organisational time demands (de Sivatte & Guadamillas, 2012; Mauno, 2010).

The discussion above also shows variation in the outcomes from work–family culture based on the country where the research is conducted. The country influences the results in two ways: the impact that national culture has on workplace culture and the gendered nature of work; and the legislative and statutory support for flexible working. For example, studies in Europe find lower barriers to flexible working (e.g., Dikkers et al. (2007); Mauno et al. (2011)) compared to studies in the US (e.g., de Janasz et al. (2013); McNamara et al. (2013)).

The mechanisms by which work–family culture influences outcome variables are not always clear. Some studies report mediating or moderating variables (Bragger et al., 2005; Major et al., 2008; Mauno et al., 2011; Peeters et al., 2009). In effect, the literature has not yet reached full consensus on outcomes, mediators and moderators.

In addition, the literature on work–family culture reflects differentiation perspectives versus integration perspectives (Martin, 2002). Most studies are silent about which perspective is being used, though, in most cases, individual perceptions are being surveyed. By contrast, Mauno et al. (2011) explicitly explore both the individual perception and departmental (group) perceptions. There is a need to be clearer about this aspect in the literature.

Another criticism of the literature is that covert aspects of culture are not measured in the common survey tools. Given Schein's (2010) three-layer model of organisational culture, the literature on work–family culture tends to investigate at the level of artefacts and, sometimes, the level of values but does not investigate the deeper level of assumptions.

Another limitation is that all studies, except for Mauno (2010), have been cross-sectional studies. Causality is difficult to establish when only using cross-sectional studies, yet it is difficult to gather longitudinal data about perceptions of work-family culture.

Turning to populations and samples, there are few Australian studies of work–family culture (McDonald et al., 2007). Though there are studies of employees in the information technology sector in other countries (Major et al., 2008; Mauno et al., 2005), no studies have investigated work–family culture for Australian employees in the information technology sector.

2.2.4 Organisational Culture and Normative Control

Normative control is defined as 'the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions' (Kunda, 1992 p.11). Traditional, utilitarian control is based on employees working for economic rewards and trying to avoid sanctions, whereas strong organisational cultures are thought to provide guideposts so that employees can shape themselves in the

corporate image (Kunda, 1992). Employees form an emotional attachment by aligning with the organisation and complying with organisational norms, without managers having to exert direct influence (Kunda, 1992; McLoughlin, Badham, & Palmer, 2005). Instead, organisation members exert control by mutually rewarding good behaviour and sanctioning deviant behaviour (Welch & Welch, 2006). In the information technology sector, knowledge work cannot be directly supervised because only the output of work can be measured, implying that normative control may be more important in this sector than traditional methods of managing (C. Hunter, Jemielniak, & Postula, 2010).

Critics of the normative control concept have questioned whether normative control in fact enhances freedom of employees or whether it is a form of manipulative tyranny (Kunda, 1992). When discussing normative control, the focus has tended to be on the rhetoric of organisation leaders and elites rather than the actual context and settings where normative control is exerted (McLoughlin et al., 2005). Finally, though strong cultures play a part in exerting normative control, strong cultures may also be resistant to change, which may hurt the organisation's capacity for strategic change (Welch & Welch, 2006) in response to ever-changing and volatile business contexts (Johansen, 2009).

2.2.5 Organisational Culture and Careers

Organisational culture has an influence on careers in several ways (Schein, 1984):

1. Organisational culture has an influence on the concept of career. Organisations vary in the extent to which career ladders are explicitly defined; what motives are considered legitimate for seeking career progression; and the level of prestige accorded to roles within career ladders (Schein, 1984).
2. Organisational culture influences how organisation members balance the demands between work, home (or family), and self-oriented settings (pursued for self-development purposes). Organisations vary in the degree to which work life should be clearly separated from home or family life and the degree to which organisation commitment should overrule home or family commitment.
3. Organisational culture legitimises reasons for pursuing a career and legitimises excuses for avoiding or refusing certain career actions. Furthermore, organisational culture determines the shared criteria for career success.

Another view of career and organisational culture uses Holland's theory of vocational personality and work environments (J. L. Holland, 1997) (discussed in Section 2.4.3.1). Essentially, one element of the theory proposes that work environments can be classified according to vocational personality, suggesting that, within an organisation, subcultures may form around occupational groupings or around shared vocational personalities. The theory proposes that an individual will tend to find career success where there is a good fit between their own vocational personality and the work environment (Ballout, 2007; Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2004). Thus, the subculture of the individual's business unit or department could be considered an important factor in partially determining the individual's career success.

2.2.6 Summary

This section has covered organisational culture, work–family culture, normative control and careers. From this review, it is apparent that the construct of work–family culture is important in understanding how employees perceive working flexibly to balance work and home/family commitments but the literature has not yet settled on an agreed definition for work–family culture. Of importance to this study is an awareness of the roles that organisational culture, in general, and work–family culture, specifically, play. Several elements emerge as critical for this study: the extent of supervisor support, the extent of manager support (for which read: organisational support), organisational working time expectations, and career consequences. Also of interest is the extent to which normative control is experienced by employees and managers as they negotiate flexible work arrangements in the workplace. In the next section, I will examine the role of technology in permitting flexible work and in balancing work and home.

2.3 Technology and Work in Knowledge-based Organisations

Taking the view that technology both enables and defeats work–life balance, this section describes affordance theory as a starting point for analysis of technology and work. Then the section examines the impact of technology on work and home/family and the impact of technology on boundary formation, crossing and maintenance. Working from home, as a specific form of flexible working, is discussed.

2.3.1 Affordance Theory

J.J. Gibson (1986) first developed affordance theory in the field of ecological psychology, to describe the relationship of animals with objects in the environment. Later, Norman (1988) transferred the theory to the design of everyday objects, defining affordance as the 'relationships between the properties of an object and the capabilities of the agent that determine just how the object could possibly be used' (Norman, 2013, p. 11). Affordances are relational (Fayard & Weeks, 2014; Treem & Leonardi, 2012), and both objective and subjective. Affordances shape the behaviour of the agent or user interacting with the object, sometimes constraining behaviours (Azad, Salamoun, Greenhill, & Wood-Harper, 2016; Fayard & Weeks, 2014). The concept of affordances was then taken up in the Information Systems discipline as a method for analysing the interaction between humans and computer systems, including mobile devices.

Smartphones and laptops have material features leading to the affordances perceived by users (Leonardi, Treem, & Jackson, 2010). For example, a smartphone allows the user to make and receive telephone calls, affording connectivity, or if the call is avoided, invisibility (Azad et al., 2016). Recent studies call upon a range of affordances for modern communication technologies, summarised and explained in .

For this study, affordance theory is relevant in two areas. Firstly, affordances permit the potential and the mechanism for work demands to penetrate home/family and vice versa; visibility, association and persistence increase boundary blurring and permeability (Siegert, 2015). Secondly, affordances permit the potential for employees who work

flexibly to use a range of impression management techniques (Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016) to build or craft a desired reputation.

Table 2.2 Affordances of communication technologies

Affordance	Potential for user	Sources
Association	Associate with other users (e.g., in a social network) or be credited with content	Treem & Leonardi (2012)
Asynchroneity	Defer or avoid communicating with others	Azad, Salamoun, Greenhill, & Wood-Harper (2016); Erhardt & Gibbs (2014)
Broadcastability	Share a message widely with a large group (e.g., using CC feature on email)	Erhardt & Gibbs (2014)
Connectivity or connectedness	Access other users rapidly and communicate continuously	Azad et al. (2016); Cousins & Robey (2015)
Editability	Revise and polish a communication before sending	Erhardt & Gibbs (2014); Treem & Leonardi (2012)
Identifiability	Associate a device or mobile service with a single, unique person	Cousins & Robey (2015)
Interoperability	Share resources and information via mobile devices	Cousins & Robey (2015)
Mobility	Move in space and time while communicating using mobile devices	Azad et al. (2016); Cousins & Robey (2015)
Multiplexity	Use multiple channels and multiple people to pass a message	Erhardt & Gibbs (2014)
Persistence	Communication remains accessible after the communication event has finished	Erhardt & Gibbs (2014); Treem & Leonardi (2012)
Personalisation	Configure device settings and options to match preferences	Cousins & Robey (2015)
Replicability	Take an existing message and share this with others (e.g., forwarding email)	Erhardt & Gibbs (2014)
Synchroneity	Communicate and interact with others in a synchronous fashion	Azad et al. (2016); Erhardt & Gibbs (2014)
Visibility	Display connections and behaviours to others	Erhardt & Gibbs (2014); Treem & Leonardi (2012)

2.3.2 Technology and Blurred Boundaries

In the contemporary workplace, especially within knowledge-based organisations, mobile communication technology is ubiquitous (Cousins & Varshney, 2009). Work tasks infiltrate the family or home domain and family tasks infiltrate the work domain (Cousins & Varshney, 2009), leading to blurred boundaries (Allen et al., 2014; Duxbury & Smart, 2011) and negative and positive impacts on work–life balance. Use of technology in the workplace has both a 'smart side' and a 'dark side' (P. Holland & Bardoel, 2016, p. 2579). The use of communication technologies implies four demands: the expectation of responses (and the negative consequences of interruptions); the expectation of constant availability; a higher workload; and poorer communication (Stich, Farley, Cooper, & Monideepa, 2015). For example, social media use can lead to disruption of traditional work and home spheres, reshaping the boundary between private and public (McDonald & Thompson, 2016). Workplace telepressure arises as employees feel the need to respond

swiftly to email messages from others (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Equally, employees check their personal email while at work, and they check their work email while at home, blurring and crossing the work–home boundary (Capra, Khanova, & Ramdeen, 2013); or, more broadly, employees use communication technologies for work use on non-work days and for non-work use (i.e., home and family) on work days (Senarathne Tennakoon, da Silveira, & Taras, 2013).

Mobile communication technology embodies a paradox: on the one hand, the technology enables the individual to be more productive and perhaps balance work and family demands, on the other hand, the technology enables work to intrude upon home life and family to intrude upon work life, thus permeating boundaries (Duxbury & Smart, 2011). Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates (2013) call this the 'autonomy paradox' (2013, p. 1337) and Leonardi et al. (2010) call this the 'connectivity paradox' (p. 85): mobile email devices offer the individual more flexibility and autonomy but also intensify expectations of continual connectivity and availability, and the individual ends up using mobile communication technology all the time, thus diminishing autonomy (Stich et al., 2015; Villadsen, 2016).[1]

Other studies of professionals' use of personal digital assistants, corporate smart phones and BlackBerry devices reported that such technologies gave employees a sense of autonomy and flexibility while, at the same time, intensifying work outside of regular hours, extending into new spatial settings, leading to location-based work extension, and extending into different times, leading to time-based work extension (Cavazotte et al., 2014; A. G. Golden & Geisler, 2007; Middleton, 2007; Villadsen, 2016). More frequent smartphone use for work demands at home is associated with reduced work–home conflict for integrators; for segmentors, work-related smartphone use at home has no impact on work–home conflict (Derks, Bakker, Peters, & van Wingerden, 2016). Where individuals perceive that mobile technology is useful for work demands after hours, perceptions of work–life conflict are decreased (Wright et al., 2014). Yet, knowledge professionals may perceive some work activities, such as processing email and interacting informally with others, as not real work (Fangel & Aaløkke, 2008). Instead, *real work* is viewed as work done independently that produces tangible outcomes such as documents or reports. The consequence of this framing is that processing of email then permeates the work–home boundary outside of conventional working hours, because processing email is not regarded as working (Fangel & Aaløkke, 2008).

Three strategies have been identified for technology users to navigate the tension between privacy and availability: individuals perceive the technology as providing greater control and professional competence; individuals frame their technology usage as free, individual choice; and, individuals use ironic detachment to separate themselves from the negative impacts of technology usage (Cavazotte et al., 2014). Ironic detachment in this study refers to the individual using humour and jokes to distance themselves from the negative consequences of their own practice of using technology.

Quesenberry and Trauth (2005) catalogued three themes identified by professional women in the information technology sector using technology to support work–life

[1] Autonomy paradox and connectivity paradox are conceptually similar to the autonomy–control paradox (Putnam et al., 2013) of flexible working arrangements.

balance (the study included only women professionals): use of asynchronous communication and telecommuting, facilitated by email, laptops and mobile phones, allowed for greater control over schedules; some office relationships were facilitated by electronic methods of communications (in addition to face-to-face communication) and productivity increased as a result of being able to work remotely without interruption and using electronic information sources and collaboration tools for work; and, technology was useful for some to enable bonding with family and friends via shared interests.

Of interest for this study is to confirm whether women today share the same themes. Have the themes shifted as the landscape of technology and knowledge work has shifted? Since the original study did not involve men in the sample, this study will look at whether men have similar or different themes when using technology to support work–life balance.

Cousins and Varshney (2009) outlined three separate strategies for work–life management using technology:

1. *Managing life space transitions*, involving combining the physical and virtual worlds, making frequent and intermittent boundary crossings, building virtual (electronic) bridges, and intertwining work and family.
2. *Managing accessibility*, involving configuring technologies (commonly mobile communication technologies) to: identify and process permeations; integrate and segment technologies (in line with integrating or segmenting work and home domains more broadly); negotiate boundaries with domain members (specifically border keepers); conform to organisational policy and social norms to determine availability and appropriate behaviours; represent selves and places using electronic means; and, finally, disconnection (to remove the individual digitally from a domain).
3. *Managing space utilisation*, involving conventional use of devices (carrying them from one space to another to work), use of dead time (using mobile technology to work in what might have been unproductive time), multi-tasking while moving, and reconfiguration of space.

Dery and MacCormick (2012) conducted a study regarding the shift in technology expectations from 2006 to 2012. The study was conducted in an Asia Pacific investment bank. The authors do not state the gender breakdown of participants in their study. The study found that the principal shift was from an emphasis on mobility in 2006 to an emphasis on connectivity in 2012, with deeper access to data, people and conversations. At an individual level, there was a corresponding shift in managing work boundaries, from organisation-level management to self-management, while at the corporate level, norms around mobile devices shifted to embedded work intensification, high expectations of continuous connectivity/availability, and high penalties for lack of performance. A study of male and female UK teleworkers reinforced self-management as important for technology-enabled remote workers (Grant, Wallace, & Spurgeon, 2013).

Sarker, Xiao, Sarker and Ahuja (2012) found four adverse effects of mobile technology on work–life balance for IT professionals: constantly raising expectations of availability, blurring boundaries of work and personal time, more complicated coordination among co-workers, and feeding personal compulsions of knowledge workers. They also found that individuals take one of three perspectives about work-life relationships:

compartmentalised (corresponding to a segmented view), overlapping (work as part of life), and encompassing (corresponding to an integrated view).

For this study, it would be interesting to discover what perspective is taken by employees, especially the blurring of boundaries, the expectation of availability, and the need for collaboration between employees which may be enhanced or frustrated by mobile communication technologies in use.

2.3.3 Telecommuting and the Domestic Workplace

Working from home, telecommuting, and telework involve using information technology to perform work tasks, either all of the week or some of the week, at home or at other non-office locations (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). Telecommuters do boundary work to maintain work and family/home boundaries in the same physical location, the 'domestic workplace' (Ruppel, Gong, & Tworoger, 2013, p. 438). Telecommuters working in global virtual teams must deal with time zone boundaries and cultural boundaries. They make micro-transitions between work and home without changing their physical location (Ruppel et al., 2013), interweaving work and home demands (Anderson & Kelliher, 2011). Telecommuters also choose from a range of electronic media to manage the work–home boundary, for example, using lean, asynchronous media such as email, when communicating globally, rather than rich media such as videoconferencing, which would expose the telecommuter's domestic clothing and domestic context to co-workers (Ruppel et al., 2013). Hislop et al. (2015) note that telecommuters use mobile technologies to achieve high availability and also spatio-temporal freedom, lowering perceptions of social isolation. However, the freedom to leave the domestic workplace to focus on home/family demands leads to higher work–life balance but the expectation of constant connectivity and availability can be an inescapable prison (Hislop et al., 2015).

Some telecommuters construct strict temporal boundaries between work and home and follow a monochronic pattern, but, more commonly, other telecommuters use polychronicity to interweave work and home commitments in a multitasking flow (Gold & Mustafa, 2013). Also, with weak temporal boundaries, telecommuters tend to work irregular (though often not excessive) hours, and leisure hours require protection through self-discipline tactics by the telecommuter (Gold & Mustafa, 2013). Polychronicity is associated with lower work overload in the work domain but there is no association between polychronicity and family overload in the home domain (Korabik, Rhijn, Ayman, Lero, & Hammer, 2016).

There is debate in the literature about the impact and effectiveness of telecommuting (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015; Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012). Telecommuting influences key outcomes for the employee by enhancing the perception of autonomy (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Gajendran, Harrison, & Delaney-Klinger, 2015; Kossek et al., 2006) but, equally, the organisation reorders normative control by reshaping office norms of visibility, trust, presence and availability into new norms for teleworking professionals (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). The opportunity for teleworking positively influences employee performance in new product development performance in research and development groups (Coenen & Kok, 2014). Onder (2016) found that telecommuting positively

impacted commitment, mediated by perceptions of greater work–life balance, but telecommuting did not impact perceptions of job performance and autonomy. An Australian study in the public sector found that teleworking increased employee satisfaction and productivity (Diamond, 2008). Working from home rather than the office produces equal earnings growth in the first 40 hours worked, but 'taking work home' or overtime telecommuting yields significantly smaller increases than overtime worked on-site (Glass & Noonan, 2016). Using virtual communication methods, teleworkers rely on other teleworkers for social support, and long-duration or high-intensity teleworkers develop disconnects between themselves and office-based staff (Collins, Hislop, & Cartwright, 2016), potentially affecting organisational belonging (Belle, Burley, & Long, 2015). A quasi-experimental flexibility policy study found that formal use of telework did not reduce work–family conflict or improve wellbeing (Kossek et al., 2006).

Golden, Veiga and Simsek (2006) elaborated that telecommuting leads to higher family-to-work conflict but lower work-to-family conflict. Sayah (2013) found that individuals have different levels of boundary permeability for the work-to-home/family direction versus the home/family-to-work direction, implying that classification as a segmentor or integrator is too simplistic, since the individual may have different boundary management tactics depending on the direction of influence. Fonner and Stache (2012) found that female telecommuters made greater use of segmenting cues than male telecommuters, with 28 per cent using time cues, 25 per cent using technology cues and 24 per cent using space cues, to facilitate the micro-transitions between work and home roles.

Overall, the mixed findings surrounding the impact of telework signal contradiction and paradox. Some scholars have called for a more granular study of telework, suggesting that the nature of work, the suitability of various tasks for telework, and the intensity (number of days per week as teleworker) and duration of telework influence employee perceptions (Belle et al., 2015; Boell, Cecez-Kecmanovic, & Campbell, 2016; Collins et al., 2016).

2.3.4 Summary

Affordance theory looks at the relationships between an object's properties and the possible uses of that object. Affordances shape the user's behaviour in relation to that object. In the context of mobile communication technologies such as smartphones and laptops, a range of affordances have been identified, including: asynchroneity, connectivity, editability, mobility, persistence, synchroneity, and visibility. These affordances permit boundary permeability and transcendence and impression management techniques.

The use of communication technologies leads to blurred work–home boundaries. Individuals experience demands of instant responses, constant availability, higher workload and poorer communication. Technology enables individuals to be more productive and autonomous, yet simultaneously the technology intrudes in previously private domains of the home and family. This is termed the autonomy paradox or the connectivity paradox. Individuals may frame their technology usage as a free, individual choice, yet the organisational context and norms supply powerful controls that individuals may not be aware of.

Telecommuting or working from home involves both technology use and flexible working arrangements. Teleworkers do boundary work to maintain work–home boundaries in the same physical space, termed the domestic workplace. Teleworkers have a great deal of freedom by working from home, but expectations of constant connectivity and high availability lead to the dualism of liberation and enslavement. Teleworkers use different styles to micro-transition between work and home: some follow a monochronist pattern while others are polychronist. The impact of telework has been debated in the literature. Some studies found positive results (higher commitment, greater work–life balance) while other studies found neutral or negative results (higher family-to-work conflict).

For knowledge workers who have access to information and communication technologies that allow them to work at any time and in any place, the individual must define the boundary between work and home/family, and manage the technology appropriately. Where the individual works at home for some of the week or all week, the definition of the work–home boundary is critical.

Of interest to this study is how the individual manages the flexibility and permeability of this boundary and what sort of technologies are preferred over others. Linking back to the previous exploration of boundary theory and border theory, is there a difference in boundary management tactics depending on the direction of influence (work to home/family, versus home/family to work)? The literature suggests that men and women have different experiences of work-life balance, boundary maintenance between work and home/family, use of technology, and ultimately different coping strategies, so for this study it is important to compare and contrast the subjective reality of men and women to reveal if this difference is found in the information technology sector in Australia.

2.4 Developing Careers

This section opens by comparing definitions of career, and the evolution of the definition. I cover the change in paradigm for careers and the overall business context of volatility and uncertainty before exploring career attitudes, specifically protean careers, boundaryless careers and new organisational careers. I explore career models, including theories of content, theories of process, theories of process *and* content, and wider theories of career development. In the final subsection, I examine career success, specifically the distinction between objective and subjective career success.

2.4.1 What is a Career?

There are several definitions of career (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Hall, 1987; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) but the definitions have several common elements. Firstly, a relationship exists between an individual and the workplace, occupational context or organisation context. The individual moves through this space, accumulating work-related experiences, setting in motion the construction of stories and meaning (Collin, 2006). Secondly, career represents two coexisting meanings, the subjective or intrinsic, and the objective or extrinsic (Collin, 2006; van Emmerik, 2004). For this study, the subjective career is of interest, especially the intersection of the individual's perceptions of work–life balance and their perceptions of career outcomes.

2.4.2 Shifting Career Paradigms and Demographic Change

Alongside the evolution of broader social and economic contexts, the meaning of career is evolving from careers driven by the organisation (Shapiro, Ingols, O'Neill, & Blake-Beard, 2009) and work *versus* life balance needs of workers remaining constant over time (Benko & Weisberg, 2007) to careers that are no longer linear and employer-driven, but more unpredictable and employee-driven (Loacker & Śliwa, 2016; Ng & Feldman, 2014). Socially, the structure of families and nature of income-earners are changing, especially given increasing female participation in the workforce. For example, in Australia, the rate of female participation has risen from 43.7 per cent in February 1978 to 59.6 per cent in February 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017a). More women in the workforce has resulted in dual-earner households becoming the dominant arrangement in Australia: 51.1 per cent of all couple families with children aged under 15 have both parents employed (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017b). The traditional male breadwinner/female caregiver household is no longer the norm (Pocock et al., 2012) and has been replaced by the 'adult earner family' (Mahon & Brennan, 2013, p. 90), encompassing both dual income couples and single working parents.

These workforce changes and the efforts of organisations to restructure for global competition and the growth of technology and knowledge (Pryor & Bright, 2011) have led to six workforce trends: a shrinking pool of skilled talent due to growing demand and shrinking supply; changing family structures; an increasing number of women in the workforce; changing expectations of men; emerging expectations of younger generations of employees; and increasing impact of technology (Benko & Weisberg, 2007). Within the new career paradigm, protean (Hall, 2004), boundaryless (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) and new organisational (M. Clarke, 2012) career attitudes come to the fore.

2.4.2.1 Protean Careers

A protean career is one owned by the individual, with core values of freedom and growth, a high degree of mobility and with psychological success as the primary criterion (Hall, 2004). Two metacompetencies of adaptability and self-awareness assist individuals to be more protean (Hall, 2004). Protean career orientation was initially measured in two dimensions: values-driven (the individual's values guide their career); and self-directed (being adaptive with regard to performance and learning) (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Assuming that an individual can be weaker or stronger on these two dimensions, four primary categories of protean careers can be developed (summarised in Table 2.3): dependent (weak values-driven and weak self-directed); reactive (weak values-driven and strong self-directed); rigid (strong values-driven and weak self-directed); and transformational (strong values-driven and strong self-directed) (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

Table 2.3 Categories of protean careers

	Values-driven	
Self-directed	**Weak**	**Strong**
Weak	Dependent	Rigid
Strong	Reactive	Transformational

Note. Adapted from Briscoe and Hall (2006).

Briscoe, Hall and Frautschy DeMuth (2006) developed a protean career scale, later improved by Baruch (2014), who focused on the self-direction dimension. Protean career orientation is positively associated with work–life balance (Direnzo, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2015).

A protean career attitude emphasises self-management of careers, though it is noted that this dimension may be more relevant in individualistic societies than in collectivist societies (Baruch, 2014). Individualism/collectivism refers to the degree to which individuals prefer to take care of themselves and their families, preferring to be independent from other groups, organisations and collectivities (Schneider & Barsoux, 2004). Australia is a highly individualist country, scoring 90 on Hofstede's scale (Hofstede, 2003). The range of the scale is zero to 100.

Career control is a behavioural competency that captures the individual's pro-active career planning processes to develop capabilities and influence the direction of their career (Veld, Semeijn, & van Vuuren, 2016). High career control supports high employability, especially for managerial staff and less so for individual contributors (Veld et al., 2016). Career control is conceptually related to a protean career attitude where the individual takes charge of their career development.

2.4.2.2 Boundaryless Careers

A boundaryless career is 'not confined to a single occupation or organization but involves movement across traditional boundaries' (Heery & Noon, 2009, p. 27). The boundaryless career is regarded as flexible, employer-independent, inter-organisational, non-hierarchic and emergent (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), with individuals making career advancements by moving between organisations, rather than staying within a single organisation (Van Buren, 2008).

Boundaryless career orientation is measured in two dimensions: organisational mobility preference or physical mobility; and boundaryless mindset or psychological mobility (Briscoe et al., 2006). Boundaryless career orientation thus emphasises the career actor's agency and mobility (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009). In 2014, researchers devised a new instrument to measure boundaryless career orientation (Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2014), then deployed it to European employees in the IT sector. The study identified five factors for boundaryless career orientation: organisational mobility preference, geographical mobility preference, occupational mobility preference, rejection of career opportunities, and preference for working beyond organisation boundaries.

The concept of boundaryless careers has been criticised recently on multiple fronts: using 'boundaryless' as a label when this conception is inaccurate and a label of 'boundary-crossing' would be more accurate; ambiguous and multiple definitions of the concept; overplaying individual agency and underplaying organisational constraints; normalising boundaryless and denormalising traditional careers when in fact many individuals still experience a traditional career; and, finally, a lack of empirical support for the prevalence of boundaryless careers (Inkson et al., 2012; Yao, Thorn, & Doherty, 2014). In reaction, boundary-focused career scholarship is proposed, taking note of boundaries as social constructions that constrain, enable and punctuate careers (Inkson et al., 2012).

Scholars have criticised boundaryless career theory, suggesting that women's career development and the boundary between home and work are underplayed or ignored (Pringle & Mallon, 2003). Furthermore, boundaryless career theory operates under individualist assumptions of industrialised Western cultures and does not accommodate collective cultures (Pringle & Mallon, 2003; Yao et al., 2014). For example, in traditional Pacific Island cultures, present in New Zealand society, obligation to family and village are more important than individual achievements, and thus paid work and personal career progression take a much smaller role (Pringle & Mallon, 2003). Thus, the relational context of the individual, as they develop and manage their career, comes to the fore (Blustein, Palladino Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004).

2.4.2.3 Boundary Theory and Boundaryless Careers

Several scholars have called for a re-appreciation of boundaryless careers in light of boundary theory (D. Guest & Rodrigues, 2014; Inkson et al., 2012; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). The focus on inter-organisational mobility as the primary feature of boundaryless careers has limited further conceptual development. Rodrigues and Guest (2010) contend that boundaries are essential to careers with some boundaries becoming stronger, while others are dissolving. The concept of a permeability continuum across a suite of multiple, co-existing career boundaries is important in understanding the structure of people's careers (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). A study of UK pharmacists (Rodrigues, Guest, & Budjanovcanin, 2015) found that many domains (and their associated, dynamic boundaries) were relevant to career progression, including work, home, organisation, sector and geography.

Inkson et al. (2012) suggest that understanding of career boundaries and boundary crossing is essential to understanding careers. Career boundaries are socially created thus subjective and are enacted by career gatekeepers (Inkson et al., 2012), similar to the notion of border keepers (Clark, 2000). The permeability of career boundaries is an important consideration when looking at how career actors transition across boundaries and how boundaries might constrain or enable the career actor (Inkson et al., 2012).

It is striking that, for the most part, scholarship on boundaryless careers ignores the literature on boundary theory and border theory. For this study, it is important to understand the boundaries that employees perceive that surround their careers. How do employees construct these boundaries? Are they maintained by the employee or do other, significant boundary keepers play a role? Are the boundaries that are formed regarding careers similar to or different from the boundaries that are formed between the work domain and the home/family domain? What is the intersection between perceived career boundaries and perceived work and home/family boundaries?

2.4.2.4 New Organisational Careers

Though recent literature tends to discard organisational careers and focus on protean and boundaryless careers, some researchers have criticised this emphasis and suggested that organisational careers are still very much alive (M. Clarke, 2012; De Vos & Dries, 2013). A hybrid model of 'new organisational careers' has evolved, incorporating some of the aspects of flexible careers (M. Clarke, 2012). New organisational careers are not necessarily linear or fully controlled by the organisation: spiral models and joint career

management between employee and organisation are important (M. Clarke, 2012), where the organisation offers career support and career development (De Vos & Cambré, 2016). New organisational careers take place in conditions of turbulent change, so, while employees may work at one or two firms, they need to respond to changing environments with continual adaptation (M. Clarke, 2012). A recent study supported these assertions, finding that career management is becoming more protean (a focus on individual accountability) but not more boundaryless (individuals prefer intra-organisation career transitions, suggesting bounded careers) (De Vos & Dries, 2013). In addition, protean career orientations lead to gains for organisations and employees, while boundaryless career orientations lead to losses for both groups (Rodrigues, Guest, Oliveira, & Alfes, 2015).

2.4.2.5 Gendered Nature of Careers

Classic career theories (see range of theories below) have been criticised for ignoring women's careers (Bimrose, McMahon, & Watson, 2013). The concept of the classic career is gendered in the sense that it is grounded on masculine norms, including measures of productivity, the notion of suitability for role, and visibility in the workplace, for promotion eligibility (Steidl & Sterk, 2016; Wajcman, 1999). Furthermore, homosocial reproduction at executive level within firms suggests that those in power (frequently men) will seek to exclude those others that do not appear to conform to established (frequently masculine) norms (Kanter, 1977). The information technology sector is characterised by higher male employment than female employment, sustaining a masculine climate that privileges masculine values, attitudes and norms (Greenhalgh-Spencer, 2016).

Women's careers are thought to evolve through three phases: idealistic achievement (ages 24–35), pragmatic endurance (ages 36–45), and reinventive contribution (ages 46–60) (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). The kaleidoscope career model suggests that women's career histories are relational, compared to men, with women's career decisions are made by considering their own needs alongside the effects upon those surrounding them (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). This model suggests that authenticity, balance and challenge will vary over time, aligned to women's family and career options. There are four paradoxes surrounding women's careers (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2008):

1. Organisational structures and practices typically separate career and life.
2. Caring for families is regarded as a career liability for women.
3. Standard organisational career paths are focused on upward movement in the corporate hierarchy.
4. Human and social capital of women, in the context of career development, has not cracked the glass ceiling.

Thus, there is limited recognition of new and evolving patterns of employment. For women, employment history may involve career breaks and tensions trying to balance work and home/family (Bimrose et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2009). Equally, for men, the rise of involved fathering (Ladge et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2016) where working fathers try to balance work and home/family rather than being devoted exclusively to work, is also not catered for. For example, a study of female consultants in UK professional service firms found that structural barriers like limited networking and sponsorship were

important constraints for women's careers (Kumra, 2010), while the model of success accorded with the (male, unencumbered) ideal worker model, marginalising women and their careers. An Australian study found that organisational gender culture sustained distinctions between genders and that women were pressured to comply to masculine norms, reproducing gendered career inequity (North-Samardzic & Taksa, 2011).

Sullivan and Baruch's definition of career as 'an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations,' (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1543) affords a more open interpretation of career, identifying non-work experiences in addition to work experiences as important for career development. This is more inclusive of men and women who seek to balance work and home/family.

2.4.3 Content Theories of Career

Over many decades, scholars have developed a range of theories concerned with the concept of career models. The theories can be grouped into: theories of content, theories of process, theories of content and process, and wider theories (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

2.4.3.1 Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments

The theory of vocational personality was developed by J. L. Holland (1959, 1966, 1985, 1997). He proposed that individuals have a unique vocational personality which can be typified as: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Holland further proposed that occupations or work environments can be classified according to vocational personality. The theory predicts that where an individual works in a congruent occupation (that is, an occupation with like type), that individual should have better career outcomes, such as career satisfaction and career success (Inkson, 2007) and should show more career stability (J. L. Holland, 1997). This theory represents a person-environment fit approach (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Critics of this theory have pointed out that it focuses more on career choice and does not focus on developmental processes that lead a person to make such choices (Zunker, 1994). Also, a review of 66 studies examining the relationship between person-environment congruence and outcomes, such as satisfaction, showed a mix of significant and non-significant relationships (Spokane, Meir, & Catalano, 2000). The theory does not address what happens after the career decision is made and how the individual adjusts to their environment and develops their skills in the workplace.

2.4.3.2 Theory of Work Adjustment

The theory of work adjustment was developed by Dawis and Lofquist (1984). This theory is another example of a person-environment fit approach. In this theory, individuals have abilities (representing skills and capabilities) and values (representing outcomes that the individual wants from the job) (Inkson, 2007). The job also has ability requirements and reinforcer patterns (representing the rewards that flow from the job) (Inkson, 2007). Where there is correspondence between the individual's abilities and the job's ability requirements, the outcome is satisfaction from the individual's perspective (Hesketh & Griffin, 2006). Where there is correspondence between the environment's need for specific skills, abilities and knowledge, and the individual's supply of these elements, the

outcome is satisfactoriness from the organisation's perspective (Hesketh & Griffin, 2006). The theory suggests that a dynamic and ongoing process of work adjustment occurs where there is disjuncture or a change in the individual or the work context (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Work behaviours displayed during work adjustment include celerity, pace, rhythm and endurance (Lawson, 1993).

This theory extends on Holland's theory (1959, 1966) by incorporating the notion of change in the person or the environment, leading to adjustments. This theory may be criticised because work behaviours seen during work adjustment, such as celerity and endurance, reflect notions of normative masculinity rather than more feminine norms.

2.4.3.3 Theory of Career Anchors

The theory of career anchors was developed by Schein (1996). An individual's career anchor is 'his or her self-concept, consisting of 1) self-perceived talents and abilities, 2) basic values, and, most important, 3) the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to the career' (Schein, 1996, p. 80). Schein identified eight career anchors: autonomy/independence, security/stability, technical-functional competence, general managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service or dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. This theory suggests that when choices are made about self-development, career or family, it is wise if the individual selects jobs and organisations that satisfy their career anchors (Schein, 1996). This theory relies on the individual's self-awareness and subjective perceptions of their career anchors and does not describe jobs or occupations (Schein, 2006).

2.4.4 Process Theories of Career

2.4.4.1 Life-span, Life-space Approach

This theory was developed by Super (1980) and suggests that career development occurs in five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. The theory identified nine life roles in the life-space, namely child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent and pensioner; and four theatres, namely the home, the community, the school and the workplace. The playing of various roles across the five stages are typically depicted in the so-called life-career rainbow diagram. The individual encounters decision points as they change from one role to another across life stages.

Critics of the theory state that career development in the new career paradigm is never as smooth as suggested by the theory (Inkson, 2007). Also, smooth progression of the individual from one stage to the next does not address parents' career experiences, which may contain periods of career breaks or periods of caring for children. Furthermore, increasingly, individuals are caring for elderly parents.

2.4.4.2 Theory of Circumscription, Compromise and Self-creation

This theory was developed by Gottfredson (1981). This theory suggests that vocational choice during early years is conducted as a process of eliminating roles that conflict with self-concept, forming the circumscription portion of the theory. The theory suggests that there are four stages to circumscription: orientation to size and power (age 3 to 5);

orientation to sex roles (age 6 to 8); orientation to social valuation (age 9 to 13); orientation to unique, internal self (age 14 and up). The theory posits that not all suitable choices are available to the individual, therefore the individual must make a compromise by releasing preferred (though inaccessible) alternatives for less compatible, more accessible options. The theory takes account of both gender and class by suggesting that the child creates a unique social space or zone of acceptable alternatives based on their perception of occupations that are worthy and unworthy.

One shortcoming of this theory is that it addresses childhood career choices, but it does not seem to address adult career choices. In the new career paradigm, adults are faced with many career choices during their working lives.

2.4.4.3 Self-concept

Both Super's life-span, life-space approach and Gottfredson's theory share the common element of self-concept. In Super's approach, self-concept influences human behaviour, develops with occupational experience and changes over time. In Gottfredson's theory, self-concept is contingent upon culture and depends upon experience. Thus, the child's self-concept is shaped in part by their environment and in part is the child's own creation. Betz (1994) criticised Super's definition of self-concept because of definitional breadth and lack of specificity.

For this study, it is important to consider how the individual makes career choices across life stages, and, in particular, how work–life balance and the use of information and communication technology influence such decisions. Super's theory uses the idea of theatres to denote separate spheres of the workplace and the home, so, for this study, it is important to consider how employees transition between work and home, using the concepts of boundary theory and border theory discussed previously. From Gottfredson's theory, are there any career choices which are circumscribed to the employee-as-adult because of their perceptions of the demands of work and of home/family? What compromises does the employee-as-adult make (or have they made) in relation to their career progression, taking into account their desire for work–life balance?

2.4.5 Process and Content Career Theories

2.4.5.1 Career Construction Theory

This theory was developed by Savickas (2005) and proposes that 'individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences' (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). Vocational personality (as described earlier in Holland's theory) is the first component of career construction theory and involves the individual's career-relevant abilities, interests and values (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The second component of career construction theory is career adaptability, which involves psychosocial resources of concern (the individual is concerned about their career into the future), control (the individual wants to increase control over that future), curiosity (the individual is curious about exploring future career scenarios) and confidence (the individual's confidence to follow aspirations is strengthened) (Zacher, 2014). The third component of this theory is life themes (Patton & McMahon, 2006), usually expressed narratively through stories of individuals' dynamic construction of their careers. Finally,

this theory incorporates stages of growth, exploration, establishment, management and disengagement as a maxicycle, with minicycles (using the same stages) that occur when the individual experiences changes in their career context (Savickas, 2005).

This theory has the advantage of using adaptability as a central theme. Given that in the new careers paradigm, change is continuous and expected, adaptability of an individual is regarded as highly important to facilitate career success. The theory could be criticised for focusing narrowly on life themes and life stages during career construction and ignoring the broader inputs of family and home.

2.4.5.2 Life Designing

Savickas has expanded career construction theory recently to move to 'life designing' (Savickas et al., 2009). This theory explicitly includes work and beyond-work contexts. This theory sets out to answer the question: 'How may individuals best design their own lives in the human society in which they live?' (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 241). Life designing has five presuppositions: moving away from traits and states and towards context; moving from prescription to process; moving from linear causality to non-linear dynamics; moving from scientific facts to narrative realities; and from describing to modelling. The basic framework for life-designing interventions is structured to be life-long, holistic, contextual and preventive. Finally, when using a life-designing intervention, the goals are to enhance the individual's adaptability, their narratability, their activity and their intentionality. Narratability refers to enhancing the individual's skills to 'construct and narrate a story that portrays their career and life with coherence and continuity' (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245).

Life designing, thus, takes a highly subjective approach to careers. It places the individual at the centre and seeks to understand the co-created meaning of career, as perceived by the individual. In this sense, this theory takes a whole-of-life perspective, including family and home, in addition to paid work. For this study, this approach may be a significant perspective to consider to what extent employees 'design their lives' in accordance with their needs for balance between work and home/family and in accordance with their own career aspirations.

2.4.5.3 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory of career decision-making was developed by Krumboltz (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976). This theory suggests that deciding about an occupation is attributed to a high number of learning experiences, mostly unplanned (Krumboltz & Jacobs, 2006). The theory also suggests that indecision can be wise, in the sense of keeping an open mind about career choices (Krumboltz, 1992). The theory identifies four categories that influence career decision-making: genetic endowment and special abilities; environmental conditions and events; learning experiences; and task approach skills (Krumboltz et al., 1976). The theory suggests that when these factors interact, three possible outcomes exist: self-observation generalisations; task approach skills; and actions (Krumboltz et al., 1976). For career selection, the theory suggests the focus should be on opening up new learning experiences and exploring relevant activities (Krumboltz et al., 1976).

2.4.5.4 Happenstance Learning Theory

Social learning theory was extended by Krumboltz and associates into happenstance learning theory, taking note of the unplanned and often chaotic nature of learning experiences during the individual's career (Mitchell, Al Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). The theory states that 'the goal of career counselling is to help clients learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives – not to make a single career decision' (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 141). Indecision is reframed as open-mindedness (Mitchell et al., 1999). Career assessments are used to generate learning, rather than used for analysing person-environment fit (Krumboltz, 2009). The theory encourages exploration as a source of unplanned learning (Krumboltz, 2009), using skills of curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism and risk taking (Mitchell et al., 1999).

This theory fits with the new career paradigm. Against a backdrop of unpredictable change in organisations, technology and the nature of work, being alert to happenstance learning and then using those experiences to shape future career directions, seems sensible.

2.4.5.5 Social Cognitive Career Theory

This theory was developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994), building on Bandura's general social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001). The theory suggests that career interests develop from self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Self-efficacy is the individual's beliefs about their ability to perform behaviours or to complete actions; and outcome expectation means the individual's assumptions about the consequences of their actions (Lent et al., 1994). When the individual is faced with a career choice, the theory suggests that the individual will use their perception of self-efficacy and outcome expectations alongside personal career-related goals, to make decisions, which may also be constrained or enhanced by environment or context (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). The theory specifically acknowledges the influence of gender (and race) on the individual's career development, though the theory argues that gender effects will be mediated by variation in learning experiences and variation in self-efficacy and outcome expectation (Lent et al., 1994). More recently, the theory was extended to take into account satisfaction and subjective well-being (Lent & Brown, 2008) and adaptive, process behaviours (such as decision-making, career advancement, job search, and negotiation of career transitions) that support career self-management (Lent & Brown, 2013).

With these additions, the notion of adaptive career self-management is related to the concept of career adaptability (from career construction theory) (Savickas, 2005). The new career paradigm is supported by contemporary social cognitive career theory, recognising that the individual is in charge of their career and that they need to use a range of adaptive behaviours to find success, where success is defined subjectively.

For this study, it is important to understand the perceptions of career self-management that are expressed by employees in the information technology sector. How are the individual's outcome expectations shaped by their efforts to maintain work-life balance, to build and maintain boundaries between work and home/family, and to use technology effectively in both domains? Furthermore, what are the range of adaptive behaviours that

employees display as they manage their careers and seek advancement, while maintaining the home/family domain?

2.4.6 Wider Theories of Career Development

2.4.6.1 Chaos Theory of Careers

This theory was developed by Pryor and Bright (2003, 2011). The theory suggests that career development can be understood as a 'complex, unique, non-linear, adaptive, chaotic and open system' (Pryor & Bright, 2003, p. 16). The individual is sensitive to change in the system and that change can produce unpredictable effects (Pryor & Bright, 2003). Career development is 'an interlocking process of choosing (nomothetic perspective) a career and creating (idiographic perspective) a career' (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p. 30). Individuals are regarded as complex, dynamical systems (Pryor & Bright, 2011).

2.4.6.2 Systems Theory Framework of Careers

This theory was developed by Patton & McMahon (2006). They viewed the individual as a complex system, embedded in a broader social system (including peers, family, media, community groups, workplace and educational institutions), which in turn is embedded in a broader system called the environmental-societal system (including socioeconomic status, the employment market, geographic location, and political, historical and globalisation trends). Change in one system causes recursive changes in interacting systems, thus moving away from a linear model to one that recognises change over time. The framework also recognises the unpredictable nature of chance or unplanned events (also seen in planned happenstance learning theory (Krumboltz, 2009; Mitchell et al., 1999)). This framework brings together content influences and process influences (McMahon & Watson, 2009).

Both the chaos theory and the systems theory framework rely on underlying systems scholarship to build their theories. Both theories recognise the chaotic, unpredictable and non-linear nature of the world (that is, the context for career). Decision-making is not represented as a one-time event based on a matching paradigm, but rather decisions are made by the individual, situated within their system. Turning to the gendering of work and life outside the workplace, both theories indirectly incorporate these aspects, since they recognise that the individual is operating within a system, which includes family.

2.4.6.3 Kaleidoscope Career Model

The kaleidoscope career model was developed by Maineiro and Sullivan (2005) and it describes how individuals alter the patterns of their careers by rotating various aspects of their lives to arrange relationships and roles in agreeable ways (Sullivan, Forret, Mainiero, & Terjesen, 2007). Ownership of the career is with the individual (Sullivan et al., 2007), suggesting a greater sense of personal agency than chaos theory and systems theory. The model has three parameters: authenticity (being true to oneself), balance (making decisions to balance all life aspects into a coherent whole), and challenge (participating in activities that allow the individual to learn and grow) (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). As the individual moves through their life span, certain parameters will dominate while others

will become secondary, depending on the life issues that are salient (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008).

This model specifically addresses career development for women, recognising that mid-career women are typically seeking balance, while late career women are typically seeking authenticity (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). Furthermore the theory recognises that women operate relationally and do not make career decisions in isolation (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008): the concept of career cannot be separated from the broader understanding of context.

The notion of 'women' as a category can be seen in juxtaposition to 'men' as a category, where men, associated masculine norms, and the male breadwinner were regarded as primary (Baird, 2011). This conception positions women as others, undervaluing women's work, contribution and ultimately women's careers (Baird, 2011).

2.4.6.4 Contextual Action Theory of Career

This theory was developed by Young and associates (Valach & Young, 2004; Valach & Young, 2002; Young, Valach, & Collin, 2006). The theory suggests that action (to progress the individual's career) is goal-directed and intentional (Young et al., 2006), highlighting the individual's agency as a driver of career development. These career actions are 'cognitively and socially regulated and steered' (Young et al., 2006, p. 213). Actions can be understood from three perspectives: manifest behaviour, internal processes and social meaning (Young et al., 2006). Within this theory, there are different levels of action systems: individual action, joint action, project and career, where career is a superordinate construct allowing individuals to make connections between actions and to make sense of goals and consequences (Young et al., 2006). Actions are organised in three levels: goals, functional steps and elements (Young et al., 2006).

This theory does attempt to address the new career paradigm, by viewing career actions firmly within the context in which they occur. The context itself is now unpredictable and constantly changing. Also, the theory includes social meaning as an important perspective through which to understand careers, implying that the social (and subjective) construction of careers is important to individuals.

2.4.7 Career Success

Career success is defined in two ways: firstly as a cumulative outcome (Heslin & Turban, 2016), thus the 'the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences' (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995, p. 486); secondly, as an emergent process, in addition to an outcome (Heslin & Turban, 2016).

Career success can be viewed from two angles (see Figure 2.2). Subjective or intrinsic career success is judged by the individual and is measured by indicators such as job satisfaction, self-reported career satisfaction, happiness, work engagement, emotional wellbeing, career wellbeing and physical health (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Dries, 2011; Kidd, 2008; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Olson & Shultz, 2013; P. Smith, 2012). Six subjective career success outcomes have been identified: pride in

achievement, self-worth, job satisfaction, organisation commitment, fulfilling relationships, and moral satisfaction (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). Objective or extrinsic career success is judged by other people and is measured by tangible, observable, quantifiable indicators such as salary, number of promotions, hierarchical status and span of control (Arthur et al., 2005; Dries, 2011; Heslin, 2005; Ng et al., 2005). Six objective success outcomes can be identified: status, wealth, prestige, skills, network and well-being (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). Cross-cultural research across 16 countries has identified seven globally relevant meanings of career success: learning and development; work–life balance; positive relationships; positive impact; entrepreneurship; financial security; and financial achievement (Mayrhofer et al., 2016).

The changing nature of careers and the importance of the individual's perception of satisfaction have increased the relevance of subjective career success (Ballout, 2007; Olson & Shultz, 2013; Rodrigues, Guest, & Budjanovcanin, 2013). A recent meta-analysis found several factors that act as barriers to subjective career success, including: low core self-evaluation, low organisational commitment, job dissatisfaction, low occupational commitment, low general and low career-related supervisor support, low work engagement, low promotion opportunities and unmet expectations (Ng & Feldman, 2014). Of these factors, unmet expectations had the strongest effect size, highlighting that perceptions of grasping for yet not reaching a specific career outcome have a significant influence on subjective career success.

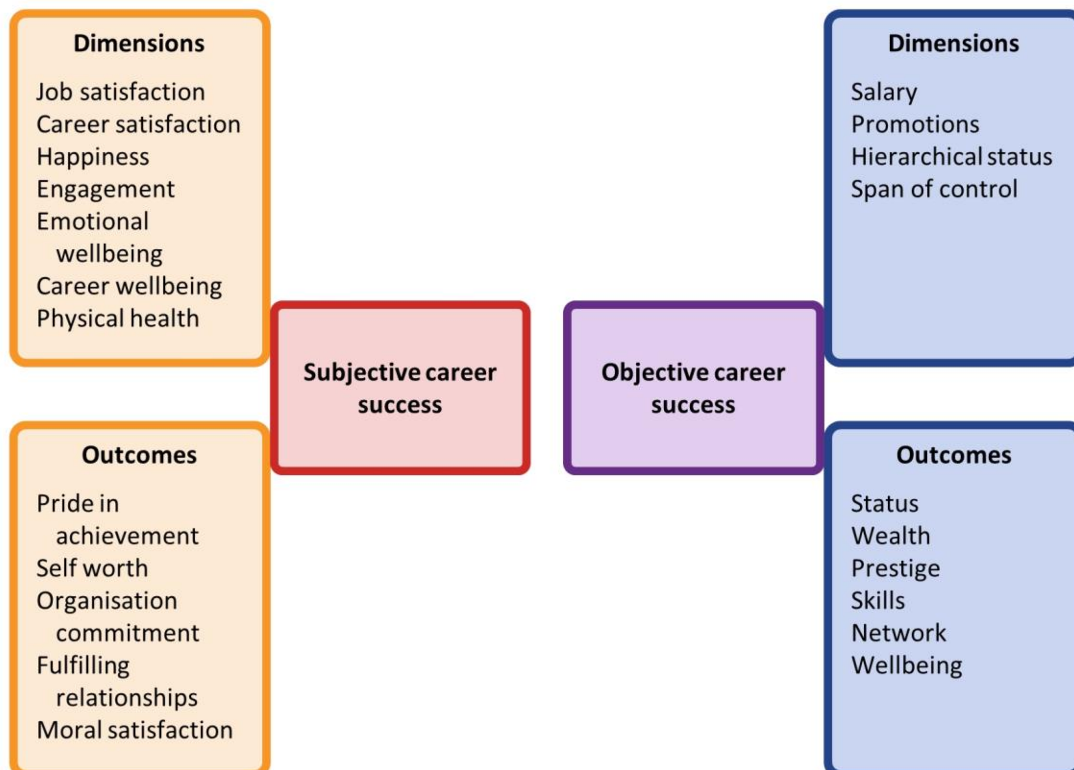

Figure 2.2 Model of career success dimensions and outcomes

The criteria for career success can be classified as self-referent or other-referent (Heslin, 2005). Self-referent criteria are those defined by an individual and their personal standards and aspirations with respect to their career. Other-referent criteria are those that involve comparisons with peers or other people in a similar role or industry. Objective career success and subjective career success are moderately correlated (Ng et al., 2005). The relationship between objective career success and subjective career success can be mapped onto a four-cell matrix (depicted in Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Relationship between subjective and objective career success

	Objective success	
Subjective success	**Low**	**High**
High	Contented and satisficing	Gratified and dominant
Low	Discontented and disappointed	Unfulfilled and striving

Note. Adapted from Nicholson and de Waal-Andrews (2005).

This model highlights that, often, subjective career success follows objective career success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005), but it is also possible that the individual has low objective career success but high subjective career success (called 'contented low achievers' (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005 p. 143)); and it is also possible that the individual has high objective career success and low subjective career success.

2.4.8 Summary

The corporate context has changed from stability to instability, where the organisation is situated in a world that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The societal context has also changed, with more women participating in the workforce, leading to dual earner couples as the norm, rather than male breadwinner/female caregiver arrangements. As a consequence, traditional organisational careers have given way to contemporary career attitudes: protean careers, boundaryless careers and new organisational careers. These new career attitudes emphasise flexibility of career path and the employee's central role in shaping their own career (rather than the organisation as driver of career). Of interest for this study is the influence of working flexibly, working at home, or absence from the workplace on the individual's career sensemaking, whether they perceive themselves as protean, and whether they perceive their careers as boundaryless. How does working flexibly shape the individual's perception of their career, their manager's perception of their career, and organisational attitudes towards the individual and their career progress?

There is a wide range of theories about careers, including theories of content, theories of process, theories that combine both content and process, and wider theories. Theories of content include the theory of vocational personalities and work environments; the theory of work adjustment; and the theory of career anchors. Theories of process include the life-span, life-space approach; and the theory of circumscription, compromise and self-creation. Theories of process and content include career construction theory; life designing; social learning theory; happenstance learning theory and social cognitive career theory. Wider theories include chaos theory of careers; systems theory of careers; the kaleidoscope career model; and contextual action theory of careers.

The broad range of theories presented illustrates that there is not a single theory that stands out. Nor do the theories coalesce around a single framework. Scholars have enhanced career theory over time, tending towards more complex models to explain various aspects of an individual's career behaviour and outcomes. Ultimately, no single theory is satisfactory in fully explaining contemporary careers.

Career success can be divided into objective and subjective components. Recent scholarship has emphasised subjective career success over objective career success. Of interest for this study, is the notion of career success as expressed and experienced by employees and managers, in the context of flexible working arrangements. Use of information and communication technologies means that individuals can work anywhere, therefore work itself is boundaryless. Thus, the question arises: if work is boundaryless, what happens to the career success of the individual? What indicators are used by individuals to measure objective and subjective career success? What barriers do individuals perceive to their career success? To what extent do unmet expectations influence perceptions of career success?

2.5 Research Question and Sub-questions

For this study, the research question (see Figure 2.3) is:

> **What strategies do knowledge workers employ to navigate their careers in a flexible work environment?**

Flexible work environment refers to working arrangements that involve part-time work, working from home some or all of the week, and leaves of absence, such as parental leave, maternity leave, paternity leave and unpaid leave of absence. These working arrangements could be accessed by both men and women for a variety of reasons, including childcare, family care, health and wellbeing, educational reasons or personal lifestyle reasons.

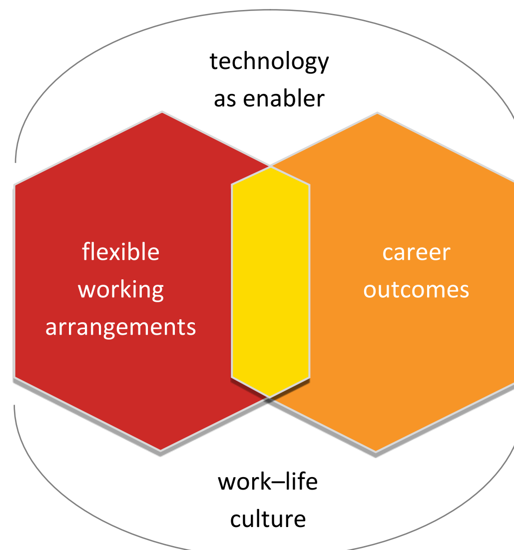

Figure 2.3 Intersection of flexible working arrangements and career outcomes

The roles of technology and work–life culture are critical to understanding the intersection of flexible working and career outcomes for employees in the information technology sector.

Following from the principal research question, the research issues raised during the literature review have been collected here and arranged around several key themes. The themes are: work and home boundaries; career boundaries; the intersection of work–home and career boundaries; sensemaking about flexible work; sensemaking about career; the intersection of flexible work and career sensemaking; organisational culture; career outcomes and career satisfaction (see Figure 2.4). This collection of themes and sub-questions will be used to guide methodological decisions, data collection and data analysis.

Appendix D provides a detailed list of questions raised in the literature review, mapped to questions listed in Figure 2.4, mapped to findings and conclusions in Chapters 4–7.

Work–home boundaries
- What is the subjective experience of segmentors?
- What is the subjective experience of integrators?
- What is the perception of flexibility?
- What is the perception of permeability?
- Who are the boundary keepers?
- What is the role of technology?
- What is the evidence for long hours?
- Does the work–home boundary vary by gender?

Intersection of boundaries
- How do perceived career boundaries intersect with perceived work–home boundaries?

Career boundaries
- What are the subjective perceptions of career boundaries?
- Who are the boundary keepers?
- What is the similarity to work–home boundaries?

Flexible work sensemaking
- What types of flexible work are being used?
- Does this vary by gender?
- What is the subjective definition of work–life conflict and work–life enhancement?
- What organisational policies, e.g. parental leave, are used or avoided?
- What national policies, e.g. parental leave, are used or avoided?

Intersection of sensemaking
- What is the impact of flexible working on career outcomes?
- What is the subjective perception of flexibility stigma?

Career sensemaking
- What are the subjective perceptions of protean careers?
- What are the subjective perceptions of boundaryless careers?
- What are the subjective perceptions of manager influence on career?
- What is the extent of life designing?
- What shapes the individual's outcome expectations?
- What adaptive behaviours are displayed?

Organisational culture
- What elements of culture are salient for flexible working, career and technology?
- How uniform is work–family culture?
- How is culture manifested in subjective perceptions of the intersection of flexible working and career outcomes?
- How is culture manifested in subjective perceptions of technology usage?
- What evidence is there for normative control?

Career outcomes
- What evidence exists about career discrimination (missed training, promotions, performance reviews, salary increases)?
- What is the perception of career success?
- Does it vary by gender?

Career satisfaction
- What is the subjective perception of career satisfaction?
- What evidence is there for the mommy track?
- What evidence is there for the daddy track?
- What career choices are circumscribed?
- What compromises are made?

Figure 2.4 Research themes arising from literature review

3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the intersection of technology-enabled flexible work practices and career outcomes, within a software and hardware company in the information technology sector. The research question was:

> **What strategies do knowledge workers employ to navigate their careers in a flexible work environment?**

In this chapter, I describe the methodological choices and the detailed method that I followed to answer the research question (see Figure 3.1).

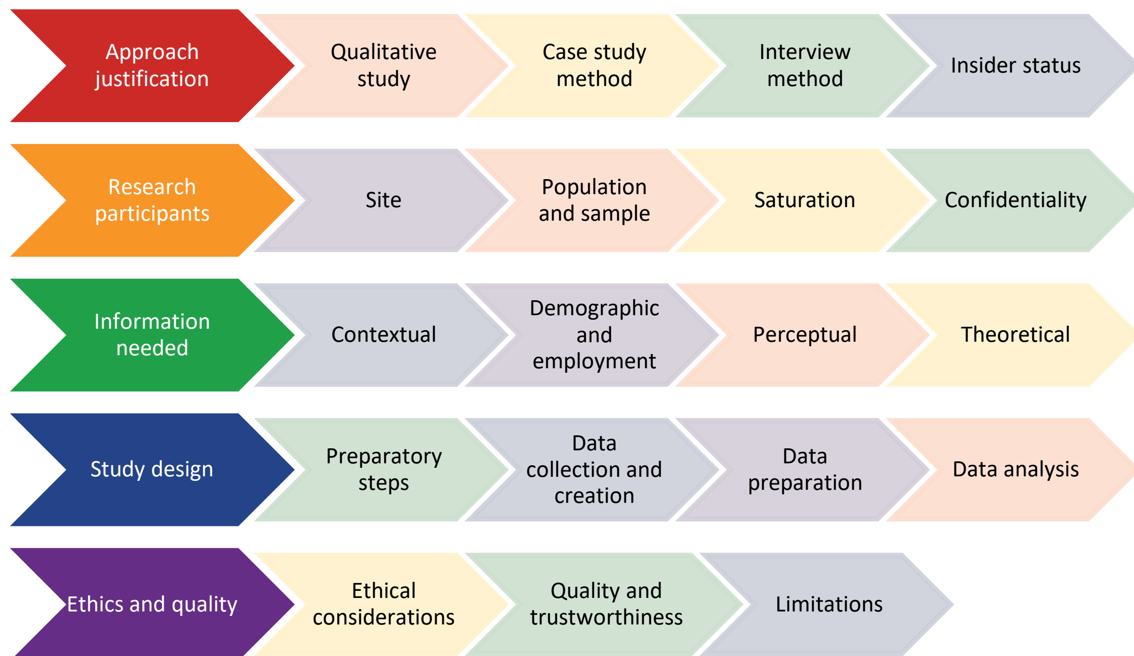

Figure 3.1 Overview of method chapter structure and topics

This chapter begins with justifications for choosing a qualitative approach, for using the case study method, and for using the interview method. I also interrogate my insider status and its contribution to the study. I identify the site, population and sampling strategy for the study, then discuss the approach to saturation and arrangements for confidentiality. I summarise the information required to address the research question.

Then I turn to the detailed design of the study. I describe the strategy for data collection and creation, and my procedures for data preparation. I outline the method I followed for data analysis, synthesis and display. Finally, I discuss ethical considerations, the factors for quality and trustworthiness, and the limitations of the study.

3.1 Justification for Qualitative Approach

In this section, I justify the use of relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology for this study. I explain the rationale for selecting the case study method and the interview method. I explore the consequences of insider status.

3.1.1 Justification for Relativist Ontology

Ontology is concerned with issues about the true nature of existence or of being (Bakker, 2010) and the nature of reality (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2008). Positivist research usually adopts a realist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) or objectivist (Bryman & Bell, 2011) ontology, believing that a single reality exists that is independent of the interest of the observer and external to social actors. Interpretivist research in contrast adopts a relativist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), constructivist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) or constructionist (Bryman & Bell, 2011) ontology, believing that multiple, socially constructed realities exist, created by the actions and perceptions of social actors.

For this study, a relativist ontology is appropriate. This ontology is justified because the research question looks at how an individual makes use of flexible work practices and what their perceptions of their career outcomes are. This study is interested in the individual's lived reality of their career as they navigate between the work domain and the home/family domain. The assumption here is that there are multiple constructed and co-constructed realities at play, rather than a single reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Taking a relativist position, each individual creates their own reality, in conjunction with those around them, such as their family at home and their manager and co-workers in the workplace.

3.1.2 Justification for Subjectivist Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the sources, nature and limits of knowledge (Mathison, 2005) and is defined as the 'general set of assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p. 60). Positivist research adopts a dualist objectivist epistemology, asserting that the researcher can remain external to the phenomenon being studied and that the researcher can avoid influencing the phenomenon being studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Interpretivist or constructivist research, by contrast, uses a subjectivist epistemology, asserting that the researcher and research subjects are interconnected, such that the results of the research are a creation of the process of inquiry (Saldaña, 2011) in which the researcher and the researched co-create understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and where social action has subjective meaning (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

For this study, subjectivist epistemology is appropriate. This epistemology is justified, firstly, because the relativist ontology has been selected as appropriate. If multiple socially constructed realities exist for participants, then the study has to take account of the existence of multiple knowledges (Sumner, 2006). The focus is on what human actors think and feel, how they communicate with each other, and how they make sense of different scenarios (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The making of meaning and the construction of knowledge is through group or social processes (Willis, 2007).

The study draws upon a wide range of data sources, including conversations with different stakeholders (addressing subjective perceptions), documents such as policies and reports, and career outcomes (addressing both objective and subjective measures). Employees (as social actors) interact with managers, and with the wider organisational culture as they negotiate flexible work or absences. They also interact with managers and peers as they

navigate their careers and reflect on how their choices about work arrangements have impacted their career success. Their reflections constitute their personal sensemaking, based on social interactions, about their careers. Thus, subjectivist epistemology is justified for this study.

Also, as covered in the literature review, objective measures will tend to confirm that men are more successful than women with respect to career outcomes, and this study aims to reveal subjective career success and examine perceptions of subjective career success in more depth, again justifying subjectivist epistemology.

3.1.3 Justification for Exploratory Case Study Method

A case study is defined as 'an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon, set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009, p. 18). I selected an exploratory case study research strategy for this study. The case study method is justified where the research question addresses 'how' and 'why' questions; where behavioural control of events is not required, and where the focus of the research is on contemporary events (Yin, 2009, 2012). The case study method is also justified when the researcher aims to investigate only a handful of cases in considerable depth (Hammersley & Gomm, 2009).

Turning to the current study, the research question aims to understand the intersection of flexible work arrangements and career outcomes in a very specific context: the information technology industry in Australia. The context of the organisation is important to the study of the flexible working and career development because the organisation provides unique policies, communication technologies and support in these domains to employees. The research question addresses how employees balance their work and family lives, what happens to their careers, and why this is so. The research question does not require control over the events within employees' lives. Furthermore, the research question is focused on the contemporary nature of employees' flexible working arrangements and their perceptions of career outcomes. As case studies emphasise detailed contextual analyses of specific events, the case study approach is justified.

This study will use an embedded single-case design (Yin, 2009, 2012). The case is a single organisation in the information technology sector in Australia, with embedded sub-cases of individual employees within the organisation.

The case study method allows for a wide range of sources of evidence: documentation, interviews, archival records, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009). Use of multiple sources allows for methodological triangulation of evidence (Cox & Hassard, 2010).

3.1.4 Justification for Interview Method

Data gathering by means of semi-structured interviews (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Kvale, 2007) is the principal method chosen here. From the perspective of relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology, interviews establish a space in which the participant's own story can be heard (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001) and where the

participant is regarded as a meaning maker (Warren, 2001). Interviews are seen as an effective technique for asking knowing subjects for knowledge about their experiences and their social practices (Alvesson, 2011) where participants can provide insight into their lives (Yin, 2009). By using this method, I engaged participants to generate rich descriptions, using their own words, of life in the organisation and descriptions of the events and consequences surrounding a decision to work flexibly or to take time away from work. I also came to a deep understanding of participants' perceptions about career success and their sensemaking surrounding career progression in the organisation.

Semi-structured interviews tend to give a degree of confidentiality and more personal replies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), allowing the study to uncover the deeper subjective meaning, or inner worlds (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001), that participants attach to their flexible work arrangements and their career outcomes. The use of semi-structured interviews is justified where the researcher has identified a clear focus area for the research and wishes to explore similar themes for each participant (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009), as in this study where I was interested in flexible work practices, use of technology and career outcomes. Interviews are also regarded as an essential data collection technique for the case study method because participants can provide significant insights into human behaviour and events (Yin, 2009, 2012).

When using semi-structured interviews, this technique privileges subjectivity and positionality, allowing for multiple truths and interpretations of the participant's life experience (Boje & Rosile, 2010; Czarniawska, 1998; Riessman, 2003). For this study, in alignment with a subjectivist epistemology, I sought to draw out the perceptions of each participant about flexible working and career outcomes, embracing multiple truths rather than a single truth. I selected thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Kuckartz, 2014) of participants' intervierws because the research question asks about flexible working and career outcomes and the intersection of these themes.

3.1.5 Insider Status

At the time of the study, I was an employee of the company being studied and I had more than 16 years of service, meaning that I conducted this study as an insider. Insider research, where the researcher is part of the topic being investigated (Adler & Adler, 2004; Costley, Elliott, & Gibbs, 2010; Sherry, 2008), carries with it a range of advantages and disadvantages, which must be considered when conducting research.

At the time of the research, my team was located in the Global Human Resources business unit and my job role was in organisational development (not generalist HR). I did not have any part in creating or monitoring organisational policies and practices regarding flexible work.

As an insider, I had privileged access to the research site. I was easily able to contact the gatekeeper and position the study and my role within it. Gatekeepers are people that facilitate access to the research site and act as sponsors for the research throughout the life of the project (Jenkins, 2004). Here, the gatekeeper was the senior HR director for Australia and New Zealand.

As part of my ongoing employment, I had an extensive network of friends, acquaintances and professional contacts, and I identified some of these contacts as key participants (Jenkins, 2004) to the study. As an insider, I had tacit and intrinsic knowledge (Kirpitchenko & Voloder, 2014) about the policies, procedures and organisational culture of the organisation, thus establishing working fluency in the language of the organisation and the language of the participants (Jenkins, 2004; Mears, 2009) and establishing shared cultural membership (Pelias, 2011) with participants.

One of the advantages of insider research is the ability to quickly establish trust and rapport with participants (Morgan & Guevara, 2008; Sutherns, Bourgeault, & James, 2014). The study's topic is considered generally unthreatening and limited self-disclosure is required, supporting swift rapport-building. Trust in the insider enhances each participant's sense of freedom to voice their stories (Sutherns et al., 2014). Furthermore, some participants were personal contacts of mine, facilitating rapport, while others were strangers to me. However, since stranger participants and I shared the experience of being employed by the same company, this degree of similarity helped to build a foundation level of rapport (Mears, 2009; Morgan & Guevara, 2008). Interviews with acquaintances or friends are not neutral sites of interview talk, so researchers must maintain awareness of the different identities engaged during interviews (*friend* versus *researcher,* for example), but also the opportunity for mutual construction of shared, deeper narratives, rather than individual stories (Garton & Copland, 2010).

Conversely, insider status may raise fears and risks for participants (Funston, 2014; F. Holland, 2014). Some participants were concerned that their story, employment history, family circumstances or physical location were so unique as to identify them to others. Some participants feared their reputation might be damaged if their confidential views about co-workers or the company were made public. Some participants expressed doubt about how they would be portrayed in my thesis. I allayed these fears by emphasising the arrangements for confidentiality, anonymity, application of pseudonyms and the storage of data.

Another aspect of insider research is the range of power dynamics between the researcher and participants. Three dimensions of power have been identified in research projects: identity-based differences in power; power when conducting research; and power exercised when writing up the research (Wolf, 1996). Insider researchers have less power to exploit participants, since there is a diminished social distance between researcher and participants (Sutherns et al., 2014). Insiders have the power to explain, an enhancement of power, because insiders can show empathy towards participants based on shared experience or more intimate knowledge of a phenomenon, compared to outsiders (Sutherns et al., 2014).

Insider researchers can expect to have ongoing contact with participants (Sherry, 2008). In this project, I met or bumped into employees who had participated in the study. I came to expect such encounters would occur in the workplace and I ensured the confidentiality of the information shared by participants.

The degree of similarity between me and participants could influence the nature of the data collected (Sherry, 2008). Some participants worked in the same business unit as I do (Global Human Resources) while others worked in entirely different business units. As an

insider, I considered my positionality: the impact of similarity or difference of age, gender, education and ethnicity as factors that influence data collection (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Conversely, participants in the study may have assumed I had greater knowledge or understanding of their circumstances, because we worked for the same company (F. Holland, 2014).

Insider status can sometimes work against researchers where data may be overlooked because of the researcher's extensive familiarity with the situation and the study topic (Strudwick, 2014). Thus, as an insider, I aimed to avoid missing insights because of over-familiarity. I strove to view the context and participants' stories with the fresh eyes of a stranger.

One of the challenges of insider research was becoming aware of my personal lens and overcoming that to understand the world from the participant point of view (Mears, 2009). The concept of reflexivity serves to examine how my own presence or standpoint as researcher may have intervened in the research process (Mears, 2009; Pelias, 2011; Sherry, 2008). To heighten reflexive thinking, I reflected on my own background and assumptions and how this was implicated in my project, as I collected and analysed data. I created detailed field notes after each interview, and memos during data preparation and analysis. This helped to maintain a stance of critical objectivity (Jenkins, 2004).

Another challenge of insider research is managing the transitions between being a researcher and being a non-researcher at the research site (Jenkins, 2004). For only a small portion of the time, I acted as a researcher, but for most of the time I executed my usual job duties as a non-researcher. Therefore, this brings to mind boundary theory (as covered in the literature review) and the micro-transitions that I necessarily made to move between the domain of research and the domain of paid employment, in the same physical environment. Though I split my own identity between researcher and non-researcher, to participants such a distinction was not apparent to them, and they interacted with me as if I were the person they had always known, rather than two separate identities.

One final challenge of being an insider is dealing with the demands made by participants for their personal needs (Jenkins, 2004). Most participants treated the interview in a detached, contained way, but some participants wanted to 'send a message' or express dissatisfaction in some way. During interviews, I tried to ensure participants understood I was acting as a researcher, and I would write a thesis and potentially suggest policy recommendations, but I was not in a position to pass messages to the Human Resources department or solve personal problems.

3.2 Site, Population and Sample

The research site is a software and hardware company in the IT sector. The company is the local affiliate of a global parent company headquartered in Silicon Valley, California. The population for this study was the company's Australian workforce, numbering around 2,100. The company's HR director granted approval for this project and requested the company's identity be confidential, therefore I will refer to the company as 'Tech'. During

2016, the HR director left and I sought and gained ongoing sponsorship from the new HR director.

To identify participants accessing flexible work arrangements, I used non-probability purposive, problem, volunteer and snowball sampling techniques (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Cooksey, 2014a; Guetterman, 2015; Layder, 2013). The use of purposive sampling is justified in this study because the study aims to understand the intersection of flexible work arrangements and career outcomes; therefore, most participants would be those employees using flexible working arrangements, or their supervisors. The use of problem sampling (Layder, 2013) is justified when seeking information-rich cases for detailed examination of complex interplay between participants, interactions and social contexts.

I requested reports from Tech's HR systems to identify employees who had taken various types of leave in relation to maternity, paternity or extended leaves of absence in the past five years. I requested reports from Tech's HR records to identify employees who had been granted approval in the past five years to work part-time or to work from home some or all of the week. In addition, I asked Tech's HR managers if they were aware of any employees who had taken maternity leave, paternity leave, or extended leave of absence, or who had requested part-time arrangements or working from home arrangements who might be willing to be interviewed for this study.

Furthermore, I asked participating employees if they knew of any others who may have relevant experiences to share. This snowball sampling approach was productive as there were some employees utilising flexible work arrangements who did not appear on official reports from Tech's HR department.

Besides the employee perspective, I also interviewed several managers within Tech to capture the manager perspective. The reasoning was that managers were influential in shaping work–home boundaries for employees and also influential in developing employees' careers, thus their perceptions were a key component of data collection.

3.2.1 Approaching Saturation

Saturation is achieved when no significant data comes from additional interviews and participants tell stories similar to stories previously heard (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2010; Bloor & Wood, 2006; Guetterman, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Some texts offer guidance on the specific number of interviews required, ranging between six and thirty participants (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; G. Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) but other texts avoid offering concrete guidance on the precise number of interviews required to achieve saturation, instead focusing on pragmatic guidelines that sampling must be sufficient, appropriate and adequate to answer the research question (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). After each interview, I made field notes about emerging themes. I paid attention to the emergence of new themes or new twists about stories of part-time hours, working from home and leaves of absence. After completing around 12 interviews with part-time employees, I felt that saturation was achieved regarding this topic since I heard repeated stories of work expanding into non-work time, efforts to juggle work and home/family, and similar career outcomes. I completed 24 interviews in total with part-time

participants. Turning to working from home, after completing around 15 interviews, I felt that saturation was achieved as I heard repeated stories of participants blending work and home/family duties during the work day and making themselves available outside of 'normal' working hours. Later participants in the data set covered the same ground and told similar stories, compared to prior participants, thus satisfying saturation (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2010). I completed 30 interviews in total with work from home participants (including five participants who were part-time). Finally, I completed five interviews with participants who took a leave of absence. It is not possible to say whether saturation was reached for this cohort. The limited sample was a result of the rarity of leave of absence within Tech and the difficulty of finding employees within Tech willing to participate.

3.2.2 Confidentiality

In accordance with the University's Ethics Approval (HE14-301), all data collected during the study was handled as confidential material. This ensured that participants felt safe to share their thoughts and feelings regarding their work at Tech, how they were treated, and their subjective perceptions of their careers. I assigned pseudonyms to participants during the data preparation phase, to protect confidentiality of responses.

3.2.3 Information Needed

I identified five areas of information required to address the research question (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Information required to address research question

Category	Information classes
Contextual information	Tech's formal policies for parental leave, leave of absence, working from home and remote work. Tech's company vision, mission and values. Tech's annual statutory reports to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (provided information about vertical and horizontal gender segregation and the proportion of part-time employees). Tech's internal newsletters about career development or individual career stories.
Demographic information	Participant's gender, age, education level, presence of spouse or partner, working status of spouse or partner, number of dependent children or adults, and age of dependent children (where present).
Employment information	Participant's line of business (equivalent to business unit), career level, job code, job function, length of service with Tech, and length of service with current manager.
Perceptual information	Employee perceptions about working flexibly, working from home, absences, use of technology, negotiating boundaries between work and non-work, negotiating work arrangements with their manager, career outcomes before, during and after periods of flexible work, working from home or leaves of absence. Manager perceptions about their experience of working flexibly and managing their team, the manager's perception of negotiating flexible work arrangements requested by subordinates, perceptions of participants working from home, perceptions of how the manager created or maintained work and non-work boundaries, and perceptions of participants' career outcomes before, during and after periods of flexible work, working from home, or leaves of absence.
Theoretical information	Theory of work–life balance, conflict and enhancement. Boundary theory and border theory. Work–family culture theory. Affordance theory for mobile communication technology. Career development theories. Career attitudes (protean and boundaryless). Career success theory.

3.3 Study Design and Preparatory Steps

In conducting the research, the steps I followed are displayed in Table 3.2. The preparatory steps are Steps 1 and 2. They are not discussed further. I discuss Steps 3 to 6 in detail, following this section.

Table 3.2 Overview of study design

Step	Tasks
Step 1	Conducted detailed literature review of several literatures: work–life balance, flexible work arrangements, technology and affordances, telework, boundaries and borders, flexibility stigma, organisational culture, work–family culture, career attitudes, career models, and career success.
Step 2	Established the epistemological and ontological stance for addressing the research question, then selected the appropriate research methods.
Step 3	Created and tested the interview template in a pilot study; identified potential participants and contacted them by email and phone to invite them to participate.
Step 4	Conducted semi-structured interviews with participants; gathered extant texts such as policy documents and reports from Tech's intranet.
Step 5	Transcribed the interviews and asked participants to verify the transcripts.
Step 6	Coded the interview transcripts and collected documents; analysed the data using thematic text analysis.

3.4 Data Collection and Creation

I collected data in two categories: interviews, and documents (policies and reports).

3.4.1 Interview Template

The interview template was developed based on the literature review and by linking to the research question and research themes. For a semi-structured interview, the themes are covered in a flexible and broad way (Alvesson, 2011; Warren, 2001).

To develop the questions, I noted approaches taken by previous researchers (T. F. Smith, 2005). To investigate flexible working practices, I created questions to ask participants about their current working arrangements, what triggered the request, what the response was, and how the working arrangement had played out to date. To understand more about technology usage, I created questions to ask participants about what information and communication technologies they used most frequently, and why, and what information and communication technologies they avoided, and why. To elicit stories about careers, I created questions to ask participants about how they defined career success, how these definitions had changed over time and in connection with flexible work triggers, what the influence of the manager was, and their overall career satisfaction. For managers with subordinates, I created additional questions to investigate the manager's personal policies and perceptions of subordinates who seek flexible working arrangements or who are already working flexibly.

The original interview template is shown in Appendix A. The principal sections are: obtaining consent; demographic data; questions to employees; and questions to managers. The original goal was a semi-structured interview up to one hour long. Most interviews were completed in one hour. A few interviews were shorter; several interviews ran for much longer, typically one-and-a-half to two hours.

3.4.1.1 Pilot Testing

I conducted pilot testing of the interview template to enhance dependability. The criterion of dependability (see Section 3.8.2) focuses on the researcher's responsibility to ensure the process is logical, clearly traceable and well documented (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Schwandt, 2007; Shenton, 2004). The purpose of pilot testing was to ensure the questions contained in the interview template elicited stories from participants that address the research question, namely the intersection of flexible working and career outcomes. Another purpose of pilot testing was to ensure the questions were clearly understood by each participant and to confirm that the sequence of questions made sense for each participant, since interviews could unfold in unexpected ways (Warren, 2001). Another purpose for pilot testing was to verify the interview could be completed in about 60 minutes and that methods and devices for recording interviews gave good quality recordings.

The interview template was tested on five participants at the beginning of the study. (These interviews were later incorporated into the formal data collected for this research.) Two cases involved employees working from home; one case covered maternity; one case covered working from home and part-time hours; and the final case covered part-time hours. One participant was male and four participants were female. Four interviews were conducted via teleconference and one was conducted face-to-face.

Feedback from the pilot testing showed the interview template gave a reasonable structure to the interviews. All interviews were completed within one hour. For those working from home, I realised I could ask additional questions about the perceptions of isolation, loneliness and separation from the organisation; and more extensive questions about the usage of technology. For those working part-time, I recognised I needed to probe more deeply into the expansion of work into non-work days and ask further questions about visibility of part-time work within the organisation and pressures to shift from part-time to full-time status. I developed supplementary questions for several categories of participants, shown in Appendix B.

Turning to the sequence of questions, though the order on the interview template was reasonable, I found the conversation varied by participant. In some cases, it was appropriate to discuss usage of technology immediately after discussing flexible working arrangements; in other cases, the discussion around technology occurred later in the interview. Some participants were quick to link their working arrangements with their careers, while others did not raise career early in the interview and I was able to raise it later in the interview as part of my planned interview questions.

Another lesson was that face-to-face participants often told additional stories or made off-the-cuff, yet highly valuable, comments after I signalled the formal end of the interview. To capture these remarks, I realised I should only turn off the recording device after the participant had left the room, thus capturing all dialogue between us. For interviews via teleconference, the system continued recording until I terminated the telephone call, so all comments across the entire session were recorded.

Turning to interview style, I realised there was a benefit in being silent, not rushing to fill the silence with dialogue. I adapted my questioning style to ask the question and allow the

participant to hesitate or think in silence, without interruption, until they were ready to answer. Certain questions, especially those about career success, always caused participants to stop and think about their response, and I learnt to simply wait until the participant had formulated their thoughts and was ready to speak.

3.4.2 Conducting Interviews

All employees on the long list of potential participants were emailed by Tech's senior HR director, explaining the research project, ethical and confidentiality arrangements, and seeking permission for an interview. The first wave of invitations was sent to all known part-time employees. This wave included 51 women and seven men. Three employees had been interviewed before these invitations were sent and were removed from the mailing list. Of 58 invitations sent, 19 employees responded giving a response rate of 33 per cent. Overall, of 61 part-time employees, 22 employees were interviewed, giving a response rate of 36 per cent. Three part-time employees were also working from home.

The second wave of invitations was sent to all employees who had working from home arrangements recorded with the Human Resources department. I excluded nine employees who had already participated, or who had already received invitations in the previous wave (those who were both part-time and working from home). Of 66 invitations sent, 13 employees responded giving a response rate of 20 per cent. Overall, of 75 employees working from home, 22 employees were interviewed, giving a response rate of 29 per cent.

In addition to the invitations sent, I approached people in my personal network and asked for referrals at each interview. I followed up with invitations to most but not all referred employees. Of 21 participants invited this way, three had previous unpaid leaves of absence, two were about to go on maternity leave, two were part-time, one was part-time and working from home, 12 were working from home, and one had a previous unpaid leave of absence and worked from home.

I arranged and confirmed time slots for interviews via email. During the data collection phase, I was not on leave while arranging and conducting interviews. The research project was not formally part of my job: instead, the project was positioned as an adjunct to my normal duties. Tech's HR director clarified in the invitation email that the study was not initiated or commissioned by the company, but it had Tech's support.

For employees based in Sydney who worked in the office some or all of the week, I arranged face-to-face interviews. For employees working from home in Sydney, and for all employees working outside of Sydney, I arranged teleconferences. Teleconferences are widely used at Tech, so using this method did not present any barriers for participants. I used Skype to conduct one interview.

In total, I interviewed 54 employees in the period from January to July 2015. Though I had aimed to conduct interviews at a pace of one per day, in some weeks I conducted many more interviews. This was because the two rounds of invitations from Tech's senior HR director generated a large group of responses immediately after each invitation was sent and I decided to cover as many interviews as possible in reaction to those employees agreeing to participate.

All interviews, except one, were recorded, with participant permission, using a digital recorder (for face-to-face interviews) or using the recording facility of the teleconferencing service or a recording tool for Skype. In the single case where recording permission was not granted, I conducted the interview via teleconference and made notes during and after the conversation. The participant did not elaborate on their reasons for refusing permission for recording.

Immediately after each interview, I recorded audio field notes, to capture my personal thoughts, feelings and perceptions, and to capture any biases that might have come through (Browne, 2013; Carter, Lapum, Lavallée, & Martin, 2014; Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013). Though all interviews proceeded smoothly for the most part, several participants covered highly emotional territory during their interviews (e.g., death of a parent concurrent with birth of a child, death of an unborn child, breakdown of relationship leading to divorce). In these cases, I made field notes of the conduct of the interview and my personal feelings during and after the interview for later analysis and interpretation.

3.4.2.1 Sampling of Male Part-time Employees

One of the focus areas of the study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of male part-time employees. The first wave of invitations to part-timers included seven men. After waiting three weeks, none of the men had responded (though I had received many responses from women part-timers.) I then wrote to each male part-time employee personally, forwarding the original invitation from the senior HR director, asking if they would participate in the study.

Three men responded; four did not. One said that he was a visiting academic and, therefore, his case was unlikely to be relevant for my study; another wrote to decline participation without stating a reason; and the third wrote to say he was too busy with other work priorities to participate. Thus, despite my attempts, none of the current male part-time employees were included in the study.

3.4.3 Documents

I searched Tech’s intranet, especially the Human Resources website, for policy documents about flexible working and absences, including documents about maternity and paternity leave, long-term unpaid leaves of absence, working from home, and working part-time. I observed how visible and accessible this information was to Tech’s employees and managers. I included documents about sick leave, carer’s leave and long service leave to reflect the intersection between home/family life and employees’ work arrangements.

I downloaded the company’s annual statutory report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), for 2014, 2015 and 2016. I requested and received access to the company’s confidential WGEA benchmarking report for 2014–15. I downloaded the company’s vision, mission and values from the Employee Handbook.

3.5 Data Preparation

In this section, I outline how I transcribed interviews, prepared documents and gathered sociodemographic information.

3.5.1 Transcription Rules

To assist with accurate and consistent transcription of the audio files, the transcription rules were codified, before beginning the transcription process, to support the criterion of confirmability (see Section 3.8.1). The transcription rules used by Cooksey (2014b) were adapted for this study. Verbal content was typed exactly as it was heard. Standard punctuation was used. Where the participant used emphasis in a sentence, the transcriber used an exclamation mark. Small pauses of one or two seconds were not transcribed but longer pauses of more than two seconds were recorded. Where a word or phrase was emphasised or louder, the transcriber used all capital letters. Where a word or phrase could not be understood, the transcriber used parentheses, and typed 'unintelligible'. Where the interviewer and participant were speaking at the same time, and it was not possible to separate each person's speech, the transcriber used parentheses and typed 'crosstalk'. Where the interview was interrupted at any time, the transcriber used parentheses and typed 'interview interrupted'. Where the participant used non-verbal vocalisations, the transcriber inserted parentheses and a description, e.g., (laughs) or (sighs).

I decided not to transcribe my own conversational fillers, such as 'mmm', 'ok', and 'yeah', when the participant was speaking in response to a question. I also decided to transcribe all non-fluency features and fillers (Shead, 2009) such as 'you know', 'like', 'sort of', 'I guess', spoken by the participant.

3.5.2 Transcription Process

Audio files in MP3 format were transcribed into text files. I transcribed some audio files personally and other audio files were transcribed by an outsourced transcriber. Based on my experience, one hour of MP3 audio required a minimum of four hours of transcription time, sometimes longer. For my personal transcriptions, I prepared transcribed files in RTF format, using the transcription rules, and using f4 pro transcription software (Dr. Dresing & Pehl GmbH, 2012). I configured the software to automatically insert timestamps, synchronised to the MP3 file, using the appropriate format for later import into qualitative analysis software.

After transcription, each text file was compared to the audio, proofread, edited and modified if necessary. I provided the text file to participants for verification of the accuracy of transcription, where the participant has requested this on the consent form. Though a few participants expressed surprise at seeing their speech transcribed, none of the participants requested changes to the transcript.

During transcription, I recorded audio memos capturing my insights and connections I made as I completed the transcription process. I used the suggested questions of Saldaña

(2016) and Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2012) to guide my memo making: (1) What strikes me? (2) What surprises me? (3) What intrigues me? (4) What disturbs me?

Following successful verification, each transcript was made anonymous by introducing pseudonyms. I downloaded a list of common Australian names to use as the master list of pseudonyms. I allocated each participant a code number and kept a spreadsheet log of all interviews, participant names, code numbers and pseudonyms (suggested by Bazeley (2013)). If a participant mentioned another participant, then the correct pseudonym was used. If the participant mentioned another person who was not a participant, then a new pseudonym was introduced. I also crafted pseudonyms for company names (e.g., 'GreenCo') and used them consistently across all transcripts.

Each transcript was appropriately formatted for MAXQDA 11 software (VERBI Software GmbH, 2016). (F4 pro automatically saved each file in RTF format which is acceptable to MAXQDA). I devised a document naming convention that incorporated the participant's code number and other useful information, like age and gender. I named each transcript using the naming convention, facilitating convenient identification and analysis in MAXQDA. Turning to field notes and memos, I transcribed the audio files using f4 pro, then saved and named the text files per my naming convention, incorporating the participant's code number, enabling me to link each participant with their transcript, field notes and associated transcription memos in MAXQDA.

3.5.3 Preparation of Documents

I reviewed the format of all policy documents and reports I collected, to ensure they could be imported successfully into MAXQDA, prior to coding. I did not have to re-type any documents.

3.5.4 Preparation of Sociodemographic Data

I used my interview log to create a detailed spreadsheet of sociodemographic data. As each interview was transcribed, I entered the participant's details into this spreadsheet. I used Tech HR reports to retrieve and calculate some fields like job code and tenure with organisation.

3.6 Data Analysis

To begin the data analysis, all files were imported into MAXQDA version 11 software. During the course of the study, I upgraded to MAXQDA version 12 (VERBI Software GmbH, 2016), to stay current with the software. For interview transcripts, the transcript and the audio file were imported, then linked to each other to maintain a tight connection between the audio data and the text data. (MAXQDA allows the researcher to click on any timestamp in the transcript to hear the matching audio segment.) This meant I could listen to elements such as tone of voice, for a specific paragraph, which were difficult to represent in the transcript. I configured appropriate variables in MAXQDA to hold sociodemographic data (e.g., age, gender, job code), then I imported relevant data from my spreadsheet log to allow for cross-case analysis.

3.6.1 Overview of Data Corpus

For the 53 interviews transcribed from recorded audio, the mean document length was 8,874 words (*SD* = 2,408 words; minimum = 3,691 words; maximum = 15,800 words). For the participant that did not give permission to record, my notes came to 2,905 words.

In addition to the interview documents, the corpus of data included my own field notes, memos created during transcription, memos created during coding and analysis, company policies, company statutory reports, company emails, and people directory entries. The total corpus included 231 documents and 579,672 words in total, comprised of 473,206 words in interview documents and 106,466 words in other document groups.

For the 53 transcribed interview documents, I analysed the proportion of interview talk attributed to the participant. I used MAXQDA to count the total words per interview transcript, the number of words I spoke and the number of words the participant spoke, to calculate the ratio of participant words to total word count. The mean participant word ratio was 73.01% (*SD* = 8.18%; minimum = 52.77%; maximum = 88.73%). This analysis shows participants were able to contribute their thoughts, feelings and perceptions, covering roughly three-quarters of the interview talk on average, with roughly one-quarter of the interview talk attributed to me. The mean participant word ratio is similar to other interview-based studies (see, for example, Hunter (2004), who achieved a mean participant word ratio of around 84%).

3.6.2 Analytical Roadmap

The roadmap for analysing data in this study is based on the concept of *thematic analysis* (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; W. J. Gibson & Brown, 2009; G. Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Maxwell & Miller, 2008), using the techniques of qualitative text analysis (Kuckartz, 2014). The three goals of thematic analysis are to examine common elements or similarity between participants, to examine differences between participants, and to examine relationships within the data. I used the seven step process outlined by Kuckartz (2014, p. 70), summarised in Table 3.3, and the advice of Miles et al. (2014) and Saldaña (2016) for first cycle coding and second cycle coding.

Table 3.3 Thematic qualitative text analysis process

Phase	Task
Phase 1	Initial work with the text, highlight important text passages, and write memos
Phase 2	Develop main thematic categories
Phase 3	First coding cycle—code the available data using the main categories
Phase 4	Compile all the passages assigned to each of the main categories
Phase 5	Determine sub-categories
Phase 6	Second coding cycle—code all the data using the elaborate category system
Phase 7	Category-based analysis and presentation of results

Note. Adapted from Kuckartz (2014).

Phase 1. Reading Texts and Writing Memos. I read through each transcript closely, paying attention to text passages that seemed important or germane for analysis. I looked specifically for segments that addressed the four dimensions within the research question:

perceptions of flexible work arrangements, especially the boundary between work and home; perceptions of work–family culture; perceptions of mobile communication devices, including devices and channels used and avoided; and finally, perceptions of career success and career satisfaction. During these readings, I created analytic memos (Richards, 2009; Saldaña, 2016) as the process unfolded, to capture momentary insights, evolving themes, and my reflections as a researcher.

Phase 2. Developing Thematic Categories. I started developing thematic categories by coding my transcription memos. These memos were a distillation of things that surprised, intrigued or disturbed me during the process of transcription, thus a very personal and highly selective view of the data. The codes I generated formed preliminary insights into emerging themes (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Codes from transcription memos

First order codes	Second order themes
Statements about gratitude, fear, freedom, guilt, disappointment	Feeling emotions
Statements about division in labour in household, childcare support, supportive managers with children of their own, involved fathers, role model mothers, breadwinners, caregivers, unencumbered work	Enacting stereotypes and roles
Statements about balancing work and home, segmenting work and home, integrating work and home, work–life balance as personal responsibility, control of work schedule	Shaping work–home boundaries
Statements about work expanding into workday nights, weekends, non-working week day (for part-timers), and leaves of absence or holidays	
Statements about cannot be manager with part-time hours, overloaded jobs, the right to say no, perceptions of laziness and low productivity, stigma, concealment of part-time hours, impact of part-time on career success	Being part-time
Statements about working from home with children; health and safety concerns, the privilege of working from home, pressure to be available and productive, feelings of isolation and loneliness, higher or lower productivity when at home, impact of working from home on career success	Working from home
Statements about unpaid leave of absence; perceptions while away from work; perceptions after return to work	Taking a leave of absence
Statements about the impact on career success of: organisational change, job or role content, networking, location, children; statements about stagnating or stalling in career; life success; being visible or invisible; statements about the role of the manager in career development	Defining career success
Statements about communication technologies used or avoided	Using technology
Statements about the rules embedded within organisational, business unit, or departmental culture	Shaping behaviours

The second, deductive approach to generating thematic categories was driven by the literature review and the most prominent theories from that review aligned to the research question. I identified four broad codes that would help to answer the research question (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Codes from literature review and theory

Theoretical area	Code	Sub-codes
Boundary theory	Boundaries and borders	Work boundaries Home/family boundaries Home demands in the work domain Work demands in the home domain Crossing boundaries Perceptions of boundary keepers Perceptions of boundary crossers
Affordance theory	Technology usage	ICT used ICT avoided Perceptions around teleconferencing Perceptions around instant messaging Perceptions around SMS text messaging
Work–family culture	Work–family culture	Supervisor support Co-workers support Career consequences Organisational time expectations Organisational support Attributes of ideal remote worker
Career outcomes	Career success	Subjective career success measures Objective career success measures
	Career satisfaction	Career satisfaction perceptions

Another angle of coding was through metaphors (Bazeley, 2013). During the detailed reading of the transcripts, I noted that some metaphors occurred more than once. The metaphors I selected for analysis were: 'juggling', in connection with balancing work and home; 'climbing the ladder' in connection with career success and career progression; and '9 to 5' in connection with working hours and organisational time expectations.

Phase 3. First Cycle of Coding. I conducted the first cycle of coding in MAXQDA by reading through all the interview transcripts and allocating the sub-codes listed above. I found it was most efficient if I looked at a single theoretical area, for example boundaries and borders, across all transcripts, rather than trying to deal with all four theoretical areas at the same time.

I selected the paragraph level as the individual coding unit, rather than larger or small coding units, such as the sentence level. Though participants did not speak in 'paragraphs', during transcription the data was transformed into large paragraphs. The size of the coding unit is an important analytical choice in MAXQDA. Coding at paragraph level captured the context of remarks by the participant (where coding at sentence or phrase level would not have been analytically justified or productive, in this project).

Phase 4. Compiling Segments by Category. I used MAXQDA's retrieval functions to focus on a code (and sub-codes) and retrieve all the coded segments for that category. Then I read the retrieved segments again, making analytic memos to capture evolving themes and patterns.

Phase 5. Determining Sub-categories. I identified additional sub-codes applicable to my four theoretical areas. For the area of boundaries and borders, I added sub-codes for *flexibility* and *permeability*. These two dimensions of the theory emerged as the most

important analytical dimensions to approach participants' stories about balancing work and home. For the area of work–family culture, as I analysed working time expectations, the metaphor of '9 to 5' emerged as notable, and I also coded clock times mentioned by participants to capture the range of working hours and the reasons or justifications for working early or working late. Finally, I added a sub-code for *flexibility stigma* to capture statements where participants talked about perceptions and practices that constituted penalties or discrimination from working flexibly.

In the area of technology, I uncovered interesting perceptions around videoconferencing and so I added a sub-code to capture these statements. For career outcomes, I did not add further sub-codes.

Phase 6. Second Cycle of Coding. I conducted the second cycle of coding (Miles et al., 2014) to code all transcripts with the elaborate code system, aiming to discover themes, patterns or clusters in the data (Kuckartz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). As for the first cycle of coding, I created further analytic memos to capture insights, connections and markers of potential bias (Richards, 2009; Saldaña, 2016).

Case-related Thematic Summaries. I wrote case-related thematic summaries (Kuckartz, 2014) to synthesise the data per case per code. For example, for boundary theory and border theory, I retrieved all the relevant coded segments per interview, then wrote a short summary for each participant, identifying the extent of boundary flexibility and boundary permeability displayed. I also identified any exceptions to each participant's boundary rules. The intent of writing summaries was to transform the data from participant words to my (researcher's) words. Since the summaries were based on participant statements, they were grounded in the empirical data (Kuckartz, 2014). Another feature of writing summaries is that MAXQDA highlighted where coded segments were *absent*, indicating that the participant had avoided or not mentioned the topic under analysis. Here is an example of the case summary for work–life culture and organisational time expectations for a leave of absence participant.

> - email on Sunday, not clock watching, could leave office at 15:00, could send emails at midnight, email at 20:00 on weekday
> - checking email late @ night and early morning = 'might be something that I need to respond to' but framed as personal choice
> - 'get the job done'; also calling USA in their non-core hours, 'you can get things done'
> - narrative of personal freedom 'set your own agenda'

Phase 7. Analysing and Presenting Results. I conducted cross-case analysis using gender, age, career level, tenure with manager and tenure with Tech as variables. Sometimes this analysis was productive, highlighting trends or differences between male and female; at other times, the analysis did not show any noteworthy results. To answer the research question directly, I compared cohorts of participants. Specifically, I analysed the type of flexible working arrangement (part-time; work from home; leave of absence) intersecting with the career outcomes. I considered the manager's role with reference to career outcomes and flexibility stigma.

To enhance credibility and authenticity (see Section 3.8.3), I conducted negative and deviant case analysis. For example, within the cohort of employees working from home,

there was one employee who did not do any additional work outside of core hours. I analysed his transcript to understand his perceptions and justifications.

As a detailed example of second cycle coding and analysis, I investigated the degree of career satisfaction expressed by participants. I coded all text segments in interview transcripts relating to career satisfaction (this was a specific question in my interview template). Then I summarised the segments for each participant, resulting in 54 case-related thematic summaries of career satisfaction. I used the demographic variables in the data set to compare groups of employees, for example, male versus female, manager versus individual contributor, and number of dependent children in the household.

I wrote a summary of my findings as an analytic memo, or interim case summary (Miles et al., 2014). I discussed my findings with academic supervisors, using peer debriefing (Kuckartz, 2014), to validate that the findings were reasonable given the data, and to uncover new analytical questions that could be applied to the data.

Turning to display, I selected powerful quotations for the subsequent chapters of this thesis, especially selecting quotations that had both emotional content and descriptive content. I created diagrams and figures to illustrate some of the key results, including the dimensions of work–family culture and cognitive maps of the drivers of career outcomes for part-time and work from home participants.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

I considered ethical issues fully and handled them carefully in this study. Four ethical considerations emerged as important: providing information to participants about the study; protecting participants from any harm arising from their participation in the study; avoiding invasion of privacy; and avoiding deception (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

All participants were provided with an information sheet showing detailed information about the purpose of the study and how the study was planned and arranged. On the understanding that participants joined the study completely voluntarily, informed written or verbal consent was sought from each participant, before proceeding to interviews. This complied with UNE's Human Research Ethics Committee approval. Participants were also advised that they could refuse to participate or terminate their involvement at any time without penalty or consequences.

Turning to protecting participants, it was essential to provide confidentiality and anonymity to participants. The interview template could have touched upon sensitive issues for the employee or for the manager, especially when one or the other perceives negative treatment, negative outcomes or difficult emotions. I kept the names of participants confidential and removed any identifying attributes of participants. In addition, Tech offered a free and confidential employee assistance program (EAP), operated by a third-party provider, so if the interview raised emotional or sensitive issues that were troubling, employees could be referred to the EAP for counselling and advice. The contact details for the EAP were included in the information sheet for the study.

As noted in Section 3.2.2, personal information from each interview was made anonymous and kept confidential, to protect privacy for participants. If participants disclosed private

information about their circumstances (e.g., family structure or distressing life events) that they wished to keep out of the final thesis, I honoured such requests by making a note of the request and by marking such portions of the transcript appropriately. Furthermore, I attempted to comply with the Australian privacy principles included in the *Privacy Act 1988* and with Tech's Internal Privacy Policy, to avoid any privacy complications.

The design of this study is not based on any concealment or deception. For example, I explained to participants that interviews will be recorded only with their consent and they had the right to terminate the recording at any time.

3.8 Quality and Trustworthiness of Conclusions

To ensure the quality of conclusions from this study, I remained alert to any biases that may have occurred during the design phase, the data collection phase and the data analysis phase of the study. I followed the criteria proposed by Miles et al. (2014) and Lincoln and Guba (1985).

3.8.1 Objectivity and Confirmability

Objectivity and confirmability refer to the relative neutrality and the expectation of reasonable avoidance of researcher bias, or being explicit about biases that are known to exist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). Under this criterion, researchers strive to ensure findings are the result of the ideas and experiences of participants, rather than the preferences or biases of the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

To achieve objectivity and confirmability, the study's general procedures are described in great detail in this chapter to provide a comprehensive picture of the work completed. While I strove to maintain a neutral stance at all times, I also recognised that a *completely* neutral stance was unachievable in a research project that involved interviews between me and participants. By making extensive field notes following each interview, I captured my personal assumptions, biases, values and emotional states that may have had a bearing on the conduct of the study, termed 'ongoing reflective commentary' (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). Furthermore, I had insider status within the company so my field notes, analytic memos from coding, and personal reflections were important in drawing out any biases resulting from insider status and highlighting them in the study's results and conclusions.

As an individual contributor at Tech, I was not involved in recruitment and selection processes, promotion processes or performance review processes with employees, so it was unlikely that participants felt awkward or threatened during the interview. Furthermore, in my job role, I was not involved in monitoring flexible work practices at Tech. I observed participants' demeanour and made field notes capturing this. If I felt awkward, then I made field notes to capture this and incorporated these observations into my reflections.

3.8.2 Dependability

The criterion of dependability relates to whether the process of the study is consistent and stable over time (Miles et al., 2014; Schwandt, 2007). Dependability revolves around sufficient detail when reporting the processes of the study, to allow the work to be repeated (Shenton, 2004).

To maximise dependability, the process of conducting a study must be consistent and approached with care, akin to having an audit trail. For this study, my aim was to conduct all interviews consistently, to ensure dependable results. My role as a company insider was critical in obtaining privileged access to the research site and to the company's employees and managers, yet this privileged access may have influenced how frank participants were in sharing their perceptions about their careers. By emphasising the confidential nature of this study and the processes in place to safeguard identity, I hoped that each participant felt comfortable to share their story.

To create an audit trail, I kept a research diary (in the form of a logbook in MAXQDA) and I used analytic memos during coding cycles. The research diary tracked the evolution of the study, from planning phases, to data gathering, to analysis and conclusions. The analytic memos focused on how the data was analysed and how connections, themes and patterns in the data were identified and interpreted.

3.8.3 Credibility and Authenticity

Credibility and authenticity refer to the truth value of the findings and the extent of congruence between the findings and reality (Miles et al., 2014; Schwandt, 2007; Shenton, 2004). In order to achieve credibility, findings of the study must make sense and participants' thoughts and feelings must be accurately represented (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Credibility must be evaluated from several standpoints: my own, the participants, and readers of this thesis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I employed triangulation of data sources (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Flick, 2007, 2008; Shenton, 2004), where possible, using complementary methods of document reviews, semi-structured interviews and comparison of employment data with employee perceptions, and by comparing employee stories with manager stories. I conducted negative and deviant case analysis to uncover any disconfirming or discrepant evidence and possibly to arrive at rival explanations (Miles et al., 2014; Schwandt, 2007; Shenton, 2004) to further bolster credibility of findings.

I discussed emerging findings with academic colleagues (as suggested by Miles et al. (2014) and Shenton (2004)), to challenge and validate preliminary insights to enhance credibility. Finally, I also used participant validation (otherwise known as member checks) of the interview transcripts (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Miles et al., 2014; Schwandt, 2007; Shenton, 2004) to verify accuracy and enhance credibility. I used limited participant validation to review the results of my analysis: I asked one participant to read the preliminary results and provide feedback; and I presented a summary of preliminary results to another participant and sought feedback.

3.8.4 Transferability

The criterion of transferability refers to the extent to which the study's conclusions can be transferred to other organisations or contexts (Miles et al., 2014; Schwandt, 2007). Since this research uses a case study approach within a single company in Australia, there is limited scope for transferring these findings to other contexts. To assist with transferability, subsequent chapters provide rich and 'thick description' (Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004, p. 73), to allow readers to judge the overlap between the research context in this study and other contexts.

There may be a limited case for transferability of findings to similar companies in the same industry sector, for example, software/hardware companies in Australia, or those companies composed mainly of knowledge workers that have access to technology-enabled flexible work practices. A comparable setting might be large professional service firms that operate in Australia.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the study is that the research is conducted at a single company. This limits transferability of the findings. For future research, it may be possible to gain access to similar Australian firms; for example, other companies in the information technology sector and other companies with a large majority of knowledge workers.

The size of the sample is also a limitation of this study. From a population of 2,100, having a sample of 54 participants implies many voices were not heard. This can be partially addressed by ensuring participants are chosen that have a wide range of experiences, a wide range of reasons for absence, working from home or working flexibly; and by being willing to reject or exclude participants that have very similar stories to others.

Nonresponse bias, where the study fails to gather data from nonresponders (Lavrakas, 2004), is a limitation of this study. From the 124 email invitations sent, 92 employees did not respond. Furthermore, sampling excluded former employees who left Tech (except for one participant). It is not possible to establish how nonresponders might differ from participants in this study. I speculate, without evidence, that former employees who found it difficult to balance work and home/family while employed at Tech would have different stories to tell, compared to current employees. To address nonresponse bias, a special follow-up study could be launched, to track down former employees to specifically gather their stories.

The selection of the sample through snowball sampling is also a limitation of this study. There may well be interesting stories from participants that I simply missed, because they were not well-known or well connected through internal social networks at Tech. To mitigate this, I attempted to cover a wide range of business units during the study, to incorporate as many divisions of the company as possible.

Reliance on semi-structured interviews may also be a limitation of this study. Interviews required a level of trust and rapport between me and the participant, to obtain open and honest discussion. My role as an insider helped in this regard because I could establish

rapport quickly and demonstrate credibility to the participant. On the other hand, my insider status may have caused fear or apprehension from the participant if they were concerned that their interviews or their remarks might somehow be exposed to others at Tech. Reinforcing confidentiality and anonymity were essential to allay these concerns.

The mode of the interview may be a limitation of this study. During face-to-face and Skype interviews, I could interact with the participant and note paralanguage and body language during the interview. However, when the interview was conducted via telephone or teleconferencing, then I was not able to observe body language. To mitigate this, I made detailed field notes, immediately after each interview, about the mode of the interview, and any impressions or strains that I may have noticed during the interview.

The location of the interviews may be a limitation of this study. That some interviews were conducted in office locations may have influenced the participant to feel more nervous about being observed talking to me, or being overheard. To mitigate these concerns, it was important to establish trust and rapport and ensure confidentiality and anonymity. To mitigate being overheard, face-to-face interviews were conducted in Tech's so-called quiet rooms, which are small offices, with closing doors, used for informal meetings. These quiet rooms afforded private conversations between me and participants. I did not have to arrange any off-site meetings during the study.

My personal bias may also be a limitation of this study. I have personal values or opinions regarding flexible work, and career outcomes that arise from workplace absences or working flexibly. This bias was mitigated by using a research diary during the length of the study; by making and analysing field notes during the cycle of interviews; and by using analytic memos during coding. Being aware of my personal biases and calling them out clearly is one approach to being transparent about the impact of such biases on the results and conclusions. Furthermore, the process of data analysis was framed by my own subjectivity, and use of field notes and analytic memos helped to expose and uncover my subjectivity. Another area of personal bias is that, during the study, I used Tech's working from home arrangements, so I retained my awareness of this, and avoided applying my own judgements about working from home to participants in the study.

The risk (or probability) of Tech announcing restructuring, redundancies or acquisitions is a limitation of this study. Tech has an active acquisition program with newly acquired employees joining on a regular basis, while redundancies are not unknown as business strategy shifts. Therefore, the company is in a constant state of flux. During early 2016, after the data collection had ended, Tech made a large group of employees redundant, including several study participants. Furthermore, senior executives of some business units signalled a shift in policy regarding working from home (before interviews were scheduled), preferring employees to work in the office. To address this limitation, I remained alert to the background conditions during each interview and the organisational events that occurred, that shaped participant perceptions. I recorded these background conditions and events in field notes and incorporated them into data analysis and coding.

Social desirability response bias (Dalton & Ortegren, 2011) of the participant may be a limitation of this study. Participants may place more emphasis on socially desirable responses or behaviours during interview and may avoid talking about socially undesirable responses or behaviours (Ranjan & George, 2014). To address this issue, I

emphasised the anonymous and confidential nature of the study and minimised the appearance of threatening questions (suggested by Dykema, Basson and Schaeffer (2008)), to create a space that was free of judgement, so participants may share their stories.

The reactivity (McKechnie, 2008) of the participant may be a limitation of the study. Reactivity occurs when the act of doing research changes the behaviour of the participants. Since I am an insider, I am a conspicuous researcher and this may have caused the participant to hold back. To mitigate this effect, it was important to establish trust and rapport with participants (using the approaches detailed above). Also, it was important to clearly explain the purpose of the research to avoid the impression that the study was trying to capture or penalise unacceptable practices. Another way to mitigate participant reactivity was to keep detailed field notes and a research diary, then to analyse them reflexively to uncover and respond to any interactions between me and participants that may have led to inaccurate results.

Another limitation arising from my insider status is that some participants formed part of my internal social network while others did not know me. For those I knew well, the participants may have tried to give responses they thought I was seeking or which they thought might be helpful to me. Conversely, the participants may have been more cautious about 'spilling the beans' and may have been less candid in their responses. To mitigate this limitation, I explained the purpose of the study and the arrangements for confidentiality and anonymity, and established an atmosphere of trust and rapport, as far as possible. In fact, I was surprised many times during the interviews about the depth and intimacy of information participants disclosed.

3.10 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has provided a detailed description of the methods, rationale and assumptions for conducting the research. I chose qualitative methods to get close to employee perceptions about work and home or family, boundaries, technology and career outcomes. As an insider, I had privileged access to the research site, with intimate knowledge of its organisational culture, and access to gatekeepers and participants. I chose semi-structured interviews to gather participant perceptions in a very dense and detailed manner. The sample consisted of 54 employees of Tech, some of whom were managers. The participants used leaves of absence for family care or lifestyle reasons, or worked part-time, or worked from at home some or all of the week. Two data collection methods were used: document collection and semi-structured interviews. The data was coded and analysed against a range of themes, including those from the literature and themes from my personal perceptions and field notes. The quality of the conclusions was monitored to ensure confirmability, dependability and credibility. Limitations of the study include my positionality, bias and subjectivity, my insider status and participant reactivity—these limitations were actively mitigated.

In the next chapter, I share the results of analysis, beginning with organisational and sample demographics, then turning to work–family culture and the affordances of technology.

4. Results: Context, Culture and Technology

The previous chapter discussed the methodological choices and detailed methods for this study. In this chapter and the following two chapters, I present the analysis of data gathered from participants (through interviews) and from document collection, to address the research question: *What strategies do knowledge workers employ to navigate their careers in a flexible work environment?* An overview of these three chapters is shown in Figure 4.1.

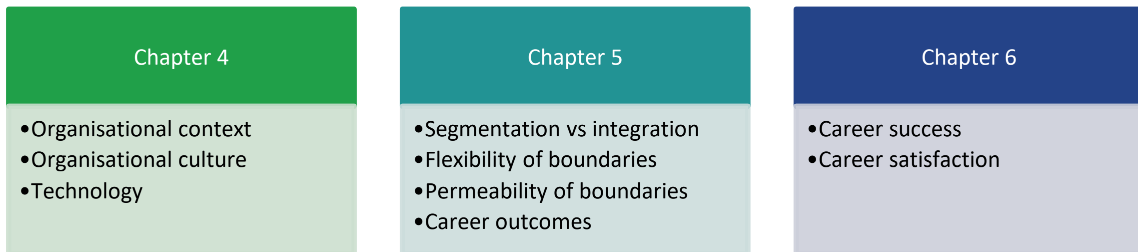

Figure 4.1 Structure of findings and results

Figure 4.2 displays an overview of this chapter.

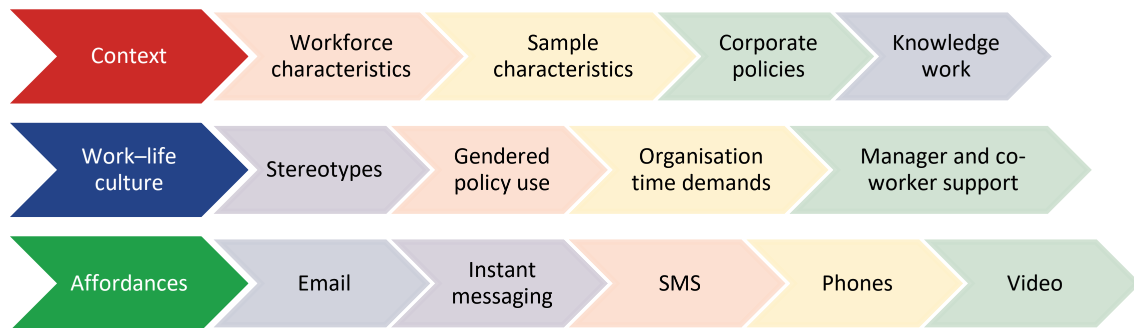

Figure 4.2 Overview of organisational context, culture and technology structure and topics

I begin this chapter with a demographic summary of the Tech workforce, followed by detailed characteristics of the sample. Next, I analyse Tech policy documents relating to flexible working arrangements to understand the corporate policy context as background. Turning to work–life culture, I analyse participants' interviews for cultural norms and assumptions. I delve into communication technologies, adopting an affordance lens to analyse the way that communication devices are used and how their use is socially constructed. I also investigate how participants craft a reputation of high availability and responsiveness, using the affordances of communication technologies. This crafting is implicated in how participants build their careers (which I discuss in the following chapter).

4.1 Organisational Context and Sample Demographics

4.1.1 Characteristics of the Tech Workforce

Tech is a multinational corporation in the IT sector. In Australia, at the time of this study, Tech had 2,118 employees, excluding contractors. The proportion of female employees was 21.95 per cent (males, 78.05%).

The organisation is broadly structured in three major divisions: (1) research and development, responsible for developing new software and hardware products; (2) sales, marketing and support, responsible for selling and supporting Tech's solutions; and (3) finance and administration, responsible for all back-office functions, including accounting, payroll, operations, human resources and recruiting, legal, and real estate and facilities.

At the time of this study, the workforce was vertically segmented by gender: there were very few female senior leaders in the organisation. Female managers were 3.12 per cent of the total workforce (male managers, 13.36%); female managers were 18.91 per cent of the managerial workforce (male managers, 81.09%). The workforce was also horizontally segmented by gender: female employees were clustered in feminine-typed occupations (Hakim, 2004; Kelan, 2009) such as Human Resources, Marketing, and clerical and administrative roles in Finance and Administration. Male employees dominated in masculine-typed occupations (Hakim, 2004; Kelan, 2009) such as Sales, Support, Presales and Information Technology.

At the time of the study, mean tenure with Tech was 8.55 years (*SD* = 6.76 years; minimum = 0.008 years; maximum = 43.55 years). Tenure includes service with acquired organisations. Mean age was 42.65 years (*SD* = 9.13 years; minimum = 21 years; maximum = 73 years).

The location of each employee's manager, compared to the employee's location, varied. Forty-four per cent of employees had their manager in the same location as the employee. Twenty-seven per cent of employees had their manager in a different location from the employee's location, yet still in Australia. A typical example was an employee located in Melbourne with the manager in Sydney. Twenty-nine per cent of employees had managers who were located outside Australia, for example, Singapore, Hong Kong, the UK and the US.

The senior management team, that is, the direct reports of the senior vice president, were exclusively white, male and married with children. The workforce was overwhelmingly full-time. Part-time employees (working less than 37.5 hours per week) made up 2.52 per cent of total workforce (full-time, 97.48%). Within the part-time group, 90.57 per cent were female (male, 9.43%). Within the group of all managers, 1.71 per cent were part-time and they were all female (full-time managers, 98.29%). HR records showed that 5.05 per cent of the workforce had some form of formal telecommuting arrangement in place.

As we shall see, these demographic characteristics have a profound influence on what is considered normal, reasonable and acceptable within Tech with respect to displays of availability and commitment to Tech and, consequently, navigating career success and career progression.

National and Industry Sector Comparative Data. The Workforce Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) gathers workforce data about gender equity. Tech provides an annual report to WGEA. In turn, WGEA provides national and industry benchmark data (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2015). The national data for 2015 included 4,670 companies and 3,974,822 employees. The industry sector for Tech is 'Computer System Design and Related Services'. In 2015, this data set included 95 companies and 53,925 employees. The workforce composition comparisons are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Workforce composition data for Tech with industry sector and national comparisons

Dimension (%)	Tech %	Industry %	National %
females in workforce	22.0	25.1	48.8
female individual contributors	26.5	26.4 †	50.2
female front-line managers	27.0	19.6	40.0
female senior managers	23.0	17.4	33.0
female other executives and general managers	18.4	17.1	29.3
female key management personnel (equivalent to senior management team reporting to CEO)	12.5	20.3	27.4
female CEO or equivalent	0.0	9.0	15.4
part-time employees	2.5	4.2	21.0
female part-time employees	90.6	68.7	75.1

† Source: Workplace Gender Equality Agency, personal communication, January 4, 2017

The data in Table 4.1 suggests that Tech's workforce is somewhat in line with industry sector benchmarks. Tech's workforce has fewer females compared to industry benchmarks, but has above average female representation at the front-line manager and senior manager levels. Tech has equivalent representation of female managers at general manager level but below average numbers of female key management personnel. Tech has lower than industry average part-time employees and higher than industry average female part-time employees.

Compared to national benchmarks, Tech's workforce has far fewer female employees, far fewer part-time employees, and much higher numbers of female part-time employees. This data reinforces that Tech is male-dominated, in line with industry benchmarks, but this male domination is quite different from the national picture.

4.1.2 Characteristics of the Sample

The sample in the study was composed of a unique set of employees, taken from the broader population. The first group of participants was part-time employees. I interviewed 23 part-time employees. All of them were female. As noted in the Method chapter, although I invited current male part-time employees to participate, they all declined or did not reply to the invitation. Later, I serendipitously found a male participant who had an episode of part-time employment in his employment history. (His data is included in this study.)

The second group of participants was employees who took an unpaid leave of absence. All of them were male. Through a series of referrals, I interviewed five employees who had

taken an unpaid leave of absence. They all told very positive stories of their experiences. Two of the five additionally had current work from home arrangements. In addition, one female participant had a previous career break, which was counted as a leave of absence.

The third group of participants was employees who work from home. This group had 28 participants, including 15 males and 13 females. This group had different styles of working from home: 17 participants worked from home all week (of these, four had part-time hours); six participants worked from home part of the week and in the office for part of the week using a regular schedule; and five participants used ad hoc working from home arrangements, working the vast majority of the time in the office and very occasionally at home. For the 17 participants working from home all week, they worked in a range of locations. Nine participants in this group were in country or regional locations where they were many hours from the nearest Tech office. Eight participants were located in metropolitan areas, but still chose to work from home.

The fourth group of participants was employees about to embark on maternity leave. This was a small group of two. However, the vast majority of part-time participants I interviewed also had maternity leave previously in their employment history.

Figure 4.3 shows the overlapping categories of participants.

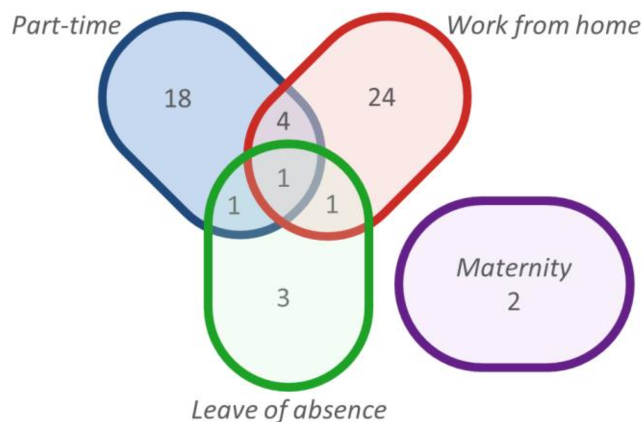

Figure 4.3 Categories of participants in study sample

Table 4.2 shows the analysis of demographic data within the sample.

Table 4.2 Overview of participant demographic data

	n	%
Gender		
Female	34	62.96
Male	20	37.04
Location		
Sydney	27	50.00
NSW outside Sydney	3	5.56
Melbourne	12	22.22
VIC outside Melbourne	3	5.56
Brisbane	4	7.41
QLD outside Brisbane	2	3.70
Perth	2	3.70
Canberra	1	1.85

	n	%
Age group (years)		
25–29	1	1.85
30–34	2	3.70
35–39	16	29.63
40–44	17	31.48
45–49	10	18.52
50–54	3	5.56
>55	5	9.26

As shown in Table 4.2, 62.96 per cent of participants were female (n = 34), which is quite different from the Tech Australia population. The reason is that I was seeking information from employees who were working flexibly and part-time employees were overwhelmingly female, thus increasing the proportion of female participants in the sample. For participants working from home, 43.33 per cent (n = 13) of the sample were female.

Turning to age, the sample broadly reflects the overall age profile of the Tech workforce. The mean age of participants was 43.24 years (*SD* = 7.49 years). The youngest participant was 29 years old; the oldest participant was 65 years old.

The list of participants under their pseudonyms is shown in Appendix C.

4.1.2.1 Employment Demographics

Table 4.3 shows the employment characteristics of participants in the sample. Organisation tenure varied between new hires with just a few months of service, all the way to long-standing employment of 36 years. The mean tenure was 10.12 years (*SD* = 6.55 years). The mean tenure of the sample is higher than the mean tenure of the workforce.

Turning to the employee's tenure with their manager, some employees had many different managers in a short space of time; yet others had the same manager for a long period. The mean employee tenure with their manager was 3.36 years (*SD* = 4.05 years; minimum = 3 months; maximum = 20 years). Looking at organisation tenure and manager tenure together, the data reflects a turbulent organisation structure for some participants (where participants had new managers) and a very stable organisation structure for others (where participants had the same manager for five years or more).

Turning to career level, participants come from a range of individual contributor (IC) and management career levels. The career level is a job attribute that represents the level of complexity and seniority of a job. Staff ICs are strongly represented because the working from home policy does not officially allow junior ICs to request this option. (I discuss this

policy in detail below.) Typical junior IC job titles included: sales administrator and hardware engineer. Typical staff IC job titles included: HR manager, senior technical support engineer, principal software engineer, and sales representative. Typical senior IC job titles included: master principal sales consultant, HR director, senior principal product manager, account manager, and solution director.

Participants were employed in a range of business units and job functions (i.e., the employee's occupation or the nature of job duties that they perform). Some job functions are not perfectly aligned with business units because some business units contain a range of job functions, for example, consulting is found in Industry-focused Business Units and in Sales and Presales.

Table 4.3 Overview of participant employment data

	n	%
Organisation tenure		
<1 year	3	5.56
2–3 years	5	9.26
3–5 years	7	12.96
5–10 years	13	24.07
10–15 years	13	24.07
>15 years	12	22.22
Previous employee	1	1.85
Career level		
Junior ICs	3	5.56
Staff ICs	27	50.00
Senior ICs	11	20.37
Front-line managers	7	12.96
Middle managers	6	11.11
Business unit		
Operations	2	3.70
Finance	2	3.70
Human Resources	9	16.67
Research and Development	12	22.22
Sales and Presales	11	20.37
Customer Support	13	24.07
Industry-focused Business Units	5	9.26

	n	%
Tenure with manager		
<1 year	18	33.33
1–2 years	6	11.11
2–3 years	5	9.26
3–5 years	12	22.22
5–10 years	10	18.52
>10 years	3	5.56
Job function		
Administration	1	1.85
Business practices	2	3.79
Consulting	2	3.70
Finance	3	5.56
Human resources	9	16.67
Information technology	1	1.85
Presales	3	5.56
Product development	11	20.37
Sales	11	20.37
Support	11	20.37

4.1.2.2 Household and Family Demographics

Turning to the structure of the household, the breakdown of participants, their partners, their children and their dependent adults is shown in Table 4.4.

Five participants were single; six participants had a partner but no other dependents; and 43 participants had a partner and dependent children. Four participants had a partner and dependent children and dependent adults. The employment status of the partner was an

important factor for this study. Dual-earner couples make up 75.93 per cent of the sample (n = 49).

Table 4.4 Overview of participant household and family characteristics

	n	%
Partner		
No	5	9.26
Yes, not employed	8	14.81
Yes, employed full-time	33	61.11
Yes, employed part-time	7	12.96
Yes, maternity leave	1	1.85
Dependent children		
0	11	20.37
1	8	14.81
2	27	50.00
3	8	14.81
Dependent adults		
0	49	90.74
1	3	5.56
2	2	3.70

4.1.3 Corporate Policies

Tech offers a range of policies that support flexible working arrangements. In this section I will discuss the flexible work options policy which covers part-time hours and working from home; and elements of the leave policy that apply to flexible working.

Neither policy is global but apply only to employees in Australia and New Zealand.

4.1.3.1 Part-time Hours

The first portion of the Flexible Work Options Policy is dedicated to part-time hours. This policy offering is framed as 'maintaining a healthy work/life balance for all employees' but then in the next sentence narrows from 'all employees' to only employees with 'significant carer responsibilities for children at home' (Tech Corporation Australia, 2008, p. 1). The policy formally restricts requests for part-time hours to employees with 'a child under school age or a disabled child under the age of 18' (Tech Corporation Australia, 2008, p. 1). The policy recognises the employee's right to request part-time hours, but also refers to Tech's right to review the request and to consider the potential business impact.

This policy wording has two important implications. Firstly, part-time work is exclusively reserved for employees with childcare responsibilities. The policy does not accommodate other reasons for part-time hours, such as caring for elders or partners. Secondly, since the policy is only formally available for parents with children under school age or with a disabled child under 18, the implication is that part-time hours are not the norm and that the employee is expected to return to full-time hours, when the employee's children go to school (or the disabled child turns 18).

Judging from participant responses, some managers contest employee requests for part-time hours, especially managers outside Australia in countries where part-time hours are rare. Other managers initially contest part-time requests, then agree but make the part-time arrangements temporary. Another group of managers are more supportive and approve part-time requests without contest.

4.1.3.2 Working from Home and Remote Worker Arrangements

The second portion of the Flexible Work Options policy covers working from home and remote working. This policy groups employees into four categories:

1. Employees who are *not* allowed to work from home, including junior ICs (who 'need direct supervision') and front-line managers (who 'provide direct supervision to others') (Tech Corporation Australia, 2008, p. 2). Employees who have client facing roles (including internal clients) 'may also need to be available in the office to achieve optimum customer service' (Tech Corporation Australia, 2008, p. 2), though the use of 'may' implies that there is a possibility that the company could grant an exception to the policy.
2. 'Ad hoc remote' employees. These employees perform regional or global roles where they need to be available outside core working hours. The policy permits working from home for a maximum of two days per month, with prior manager approval. The policy states that the employee is responsible for health and safety requirements in the domestic workplace; and the employee accepts responsibility for any incidents (Tech Corporation Australia, 2008). The company recognises the Tech office as the primary workplace.
3. 'Flexible workers'. These employees have job duties that are portable. The policy allows for up to three days per week in the domestic workplace and remaining days in the office, where flexible workers have an assigned workspace. Tech issues formal written agreements to flexible workers, confirming the domestic workplace and the combined working arrangement between the domestic workplace and the Tech office.
4. 'Remote workers'. These employees have fully portable job duties. The policy states that remote workers work more than four days per week in the domestic workplace. Remote workers do not have an assigned workspace in the Tech office. Like flexible workers, Tech issues formal written agreements, confirming the domestic workplace and the remote working arrangement.

To request flexible or remote working, the employee must discuss the request with their manager, then complete an application form. The request must be approved by the manager, the vice president of the business unit, and Human Resources. The employee must supply an ergonomic desk and chair at their own cost. The policy contains a list of 'essential equipment', including broadband internet connection, laptop, monitor, external keyboard, mouse, first aid kit and fire extinguisher. The company supplies the laptop, monitor, external keyboard and mouse through standard procurement procedures; the employee orders the first aid kit and fire extinguisher from a preferred supplier then submits an expense report; and the employee arranges a broadband connection and may submit monthly broadband expenses for reimbursement, subject to manager discretion and approval and a separate policy. Finally, the company arranges an Occupational Health

and Safety Assessment, where a third-party inspector visits the domestic workplace, assesses the workplace, then writes a formal report for Human Resources. This report may contain additional requirements for the employee, to create an acceptable domestic workplace.

If the employee passes all these hurdles, Human Resources issues formal written agreements, which are signed by the employee and returned. The policy has lengthy sections on health and safety in the domestic workplace; and security of Tech property and information. The document also discusses pros and cons of remote working, including reducing time and cost of commuting, improving commitment and morale, loneliness, loss of motivation, and potential resentment from co-workers who do not have remote or flexible arrangements.

Despite these formal policy provisions, in this study several employees had informal agreements with their managers for working from home. Other employees, having applied many years ago, noted that there was minimal follow-up from their manager and from Human Resources after the initial application. The policy does allow for Human Resources to conduct an annual inspection and for review when an employee changes jobs or is promoted. None of the participants in this study mentioned any follow-up.

4.1.3.3 Parental Leave

Tech offers a comprehensive leave policy that offers eight different types of leave. For the study, three types of leave are relevant: parental leave, personal/carer's leave, and extended leave without pay. There are other forms of leave but these are not germane to this study.

Parental leave is offered to all parents – the policy does not use gender-specific language, except for 'birth-related leave' applying to the mother only. Parental leave can be taken for birth of a child or for adoption. The entitlement is 12 months of unpaid leave. Parental leave may be extended by up to an additional 12 months, unpaid. Parental leave must be taken in a single continuous period.

The policy describes concurrent leave, where both people in a couple are employed at Tech. Here again the policy uses non-gender-specific language, referring to the 'first employee' and the 'other employee'. The other employee may take three days of paid leave, concurrently with the first employee's parental leave. Then the other employee may take additional days of unpaid leave up to eight weeks. Other than the concurrent leave period, the policy specifically states that the other employee's leave must start immediately after the first employee's period of leave.

The policy describes birth-related leave for female employees giving birth to a child (thus excluding adoption cases, and fathers). The entitlement is 10 weeks of paid leave.

Special maternity leave is offered to female employees where the employee cannot work because of a pregnancy-related illness, or the pregnancy ends other than by birth (thus, stillbirth). This entitlement forms part of the 12-month parental leave period.

The policy provides for up to ten days of paid leave for 'keeping in touch' days during the period of approved parental leave. Overall, the policy conforms to the National Employment Standards of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

In addition to the entitlements of the Tech policy, parents are also able to access government paid parental leave, and Dad and Partner Pay, under the *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010* (Cth). However, these payments are made at the national minimum wage rather than replacement wage. It is reasonable to assume that Tech employees would consume company paid leave entitlements first, then consume government paid leave entitlements, then consume unpaid leave entitlements, to maximise the financial benefit and to minimise the period of unpaid leave as far as possible.

Maternity leave is not always as simple as it seems, though. As we shall see, where the employee had a manager in Australia, maternity leave was well understood. Several participants had managers that were outside of Australia. Those with US managers especially found that maternity leave was a contested area. In the US, mothers are only eligible for a short period of maternity leave, typically three months, and the mother is expected to return to full-time work when maternity leave ends.

The parental leave policy does not mention fathers or paternity leave directly. Instead, fathers are eligible to use unpaid parental leave. The policy permits the employee to take paid leaves such as annual leave and long service leave at the same time as parental leave, and many fathers end up taking a few days of annual leave around the time of birth.

The literature mentions that some countries offer a 'use it or lose it' paternity leave entitlement, e.g. Norway, but this is not the case at Tech. In fact, when interviewing male participants who were also fathers, very few talked about using parental leave.

4.1.3.4 Carer's Leave

The second pertinent category of leave with the paid leave policy is called personal/carer's leave. This type of leave is essentially sick leave: unplanned leave due to illness or injury. Personal/carer's leave can be used for the employee's own illness or injury and for immediate family illness or injury. The policy specifically includes spouses (including de facto spouses), children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents, and siblings. Many participants talked about using carer's leave for sick children. The company reserves the right to request medical certificates for personal/carer's leave.

4.1.3.5 Extended Leave Without Pay

The third pertinent category of leave is called extended leave without pay. The policy defines two categories: extended compassionate leave, for situations where the timeframe is unknown, such as caring for a terminally ill relative; and personal circumstances leave, to pursue personal interests including extended overseas travel or post-graduate studies. For personal circumstances leave, the entitlement is a maximum of three months' unpaid leave; for extended compassionate leave, the policy is silent since the timeframe is unknown. In both cases, the employee must have consumed all forms of eligible company paid leave, before requesting extended leave without pay.

While the policy is formally limited to a maximum of three months, participants in this study who took unpaid leave of absence did so for more than three months. The policy requires that the employee submit an application and seek manager and Human Resources approval. As we shall see, participants that used this policy had very few barriers to taking the leave, and were well treated upon their return to Tech.

4.1.4 Knowledge Work at Tech

The nature of work tasks and interactions at Tech form a unique aspect of the context of the study. Most employees at Tech are knowledge workers: they use, process or transfer information in order to create further knowledge in service of the objectives of the organisation. Tech employees are not engaged in traditional manual work, in the sense of a factory or a production line.

Instead, employees work independently or in teams to produce knowledge-based outputs. Some employees are involved in service roles, so they provide some form of service to internal clients or Tech's external customers. Given the nature of Tech's products and services offered to the market, employees need a detailed understanding of product features and functions and also of Tech's internal business processes and procedures in order to be successful.

Teamwork is most frequently virtual and occasionally face-to-face. Some teams are located entirely in Australia but across different offices; while other teams are global with members located in several different time zones. Thus, teams use email and telephone to communicate and they use teleconferences and web conferences to conduct meetings. The product of work is often electronic; e.g. documents, presentations, spreadsheets and software code. These artefacts are shared and stored using internal file sharing repositories, wikis and internal social networking tools. Some of the work is independent, in the cases where an employee needs to craft a document or presentation or review the work of another employee. Some of the work is interdependent, especially virtual meetings that help teams to produce more knowledge and content, understand the status of the project, or make decisions. Some of the work is synchronous, although the majority of the work tends to be asynchronous because of the global and distributed nature of project teams and of the workforce in general.

Since most of the work relies on electronic files and virtual methods of collaboration, it follows that work can be done at any time and any place, provided the employee has, at a minimum, a laptop computer, a telephone and an Internet connection. Some teams occasionally rely on face-to-face interactions, but even for intact teams in the same time zone (e.g. a sales team based in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane) ultimately it is more convenient for all team members to join a teleconference rather than to travel to a central location for a face-to-face meeting. Since business travel is a visible cost, it is highly controlled and reserved for occasions and meetings that can only be done in a face-to-face mode. The default mode is more likely to be a teleconference with a web conference, especially for internal small-group meetings.

A small minority of employees maintain and service hardware for Tech customers, including computers and cash registers. Part of this work involves travelling to customer sites to make repairs; but a large portion of this work is knowledge work in the sense that these employees must understand and diagnose the problem, then search existing procedures and knowledge in order to provide a satisfactory solution.

Knowledge work at Tech thus involves capabilities of flexibility, creativity, problem-solving and analytical skills. Two important themes that have emerged recently at Tech are the need for *collaboration skills* between employees and between business units; and

the need for *change agility*, that is, the ability for employees to adapt swiftly to changing business circumstances. The information technology industry is a highly competitive world, so Tech's business strategy changes rapidly to capture and retain market share.

Managers at Tech are faced with challenges to supervise employees. Since more than half of Australian employees are not in the same location as their manager, the manager cannot rely on in-person, 'over the shoulder' supervision techniques. Even where the manager and the employee are in the same location, it is hard for the manager to know what the employee is precisely doing, even when the employee is seated at their laptop computer, since the nature of the work is knowledge work. Furthermore, occasionally employees or managers will work from home. Most commonly, managers will arrange a weekly or fortnightly team meeting or staff meeting; and then arrange a weekly or fortnightly one-on-one meeting with each subordinate. These meetings enable the manager to share information with their team and to monitor the progress of each employee.

In the absence of a visible means of measuring output or productivity, Tech managers must trust the employee's commitment and engagement. The basis for measuring performance is therefore contested: whereas in other industries or in factory settings, working hours are used as a proxy for performance, at Tech, working hours are no longer satisfactory for measuring performance. As we shall see, participants had mixed ideas about whether to pay attention to long hours or to pay attention to output.

In summary, the nature of work, the nature of tasks performed, the method of interacting with other employees, and the global and distributed nature of teams and projects, imply that the Tech workplace is complex. The next section, describing work–life culture, expands on this theme.

4.2 Work–Life Culture at Tech

In this section, I used previous models of work–family culture (Thompson et al., 1999) and work–life culture (McDonald et al., 2005) to analyse Tech's organisational culture.

4.2.1 Ideal Worker, Devoted Mother and Breadwinner Father

Given the demographic characteristics of the workforce outlined above, it is no surprise that the organisation has a dominant masculine culture. In this culture, the ideal worker norm (Brumley, 2014; Dreyfus, 2013; Kelly et al., 2010; O'Hagan, 2014) prevails strongly. Employees are expected to be fully available for work all day and all night without being encumbered by partners, children or even pets. It follows that white, male, married employees fit most closely within this dominant culture. Jackson and Tanya shared their views on the role of fathers, showing that fathers are typically expected to be providers, reinforcing their breadwinner role.

> **Jackson:** So, you know, I think, being able to have, provide for a good life for the family is clearly, obviously, hugely important, so that goes without saying.

Tanya: You know, even as a father working, you know, being successful in their career probably means being able to provide for their children.

Janine talked about her arrangement with her husband. She focused on the family while her husband focused on work, late night calls and business travel. Janine saw her role as keeping her family going—this enabled her husband to have less of a focus on family and more of a focus on work and career. Janine conformed to feminine norms of family devotion while her husband conformed to masculine norms of work devotion.

Janine: But, the main thing for us, with having one of us that, when we finish work, could step outside of work, and that's it, could switch off and focus purely on, on the family, which I've been able to do for the last number of years, five, six -- six years. And then Dylan is the one that is on the conference calls at night, who does the travel, you know. And, if he needs to do that, he has the ability to do that because I'm there to support the family.

Rachel explained her views about shifting sands of power dynamics between breadwinner and caregiver. Rachel carefully used non-gender-specific language in her explanation. In her own case, Rachel avoided being a stay-at-home mother and continued working while her children were growing up (using part-time arrangements). In her view, this gave Rachel an equal power base with her husband. Rachel's perception is that breadwinning equals power (rather than caregiving).

Rachel: And maybe because I've worked the whole time I've never given up my hand you know like been that – I see with my friends when you give up work, the pendulum switches to the person who's the breadwinner then, and the person who's looking after the house. And the power base in the home shifts a bit. I've always worked, so our power base has always stayed very equal.

Employees who do not fit into the ideal worker norm, mostly working mothers with young children, often experience bias including career penalties. (I will discuss career consequences in detail in Section 5.13.) Vanessa talked about her personal preferences for being involved with her children and caring for them while they are young, emphasising a devoted mother stereotype.

Vanessa: Yeah. So I did feel that there is a little bit of, I don't know, an expectation about the way I would be, but it's, yeah, I have this strong cultural need to be there for my kids while they are really young. And that's what I want to do.

Extending this norm, work life should have priority over private life, home and family. Career growth, in a normative sense, is perceived to come from long hours and commitment to Tech. Flexibility, paradoxically, is required *by the employer,* of the employee: the employee must be highly flexible to accommodate the demands of work, especially concerning customers or internal clients. Employees are expected to work non-traditional hours to meet the organisation's needs, rather than the more conventional framing that flexible arrangements enable employees to balance work and family.

Cherie: Good question. I mean, I think my mindset has probably changed over the years. I mean, you ask me 10 years ago, and I would actually say that, you know, those people that are doing all the long hours and working over the weekend and stuff like that, because they're doing all that work, they would be earmarked for promotion over other people who aren't necessarily, you know, putting in the same amount of time

This sets up a conflict between the demands of work and the demands of home/family. Especially for management and professional employees, conforming to the ideal worker norm might usually be taken to mean long hours as a proxy for visible commitment; and for parents, conforming to the caregiver mother and involved father norms means long hours at home with children too.

4.2.2 Gendered Nature of Policy Use

Tech's work–life culture reflects a gendered use of flexible work policies. As noted before, in this study all the part-time participants were women, reflecting a norm that part-time hours are mostly or exclusively for women, especially those women who are also working mothers that need to care for young children. Also in this study, none of the current part-time men were willing to share their stories (though Jack shared his story of previous part-time hours).

All the participants who took unpaid leave of absence were men. (One female participant had a career break before joining Tech.) The reasons for leave of absence were to spend time with family or for extended, international travel. Though male employees can access unpaid parental leave, none of the participants reported using this entitlement. This pattern of usage establishes a norm that unpaid leave of absence is most common for mid-career fathers with school-age children. Most of the part-time women reported using maternity leave, with some taking short periods and others taking up to 12 months.

Turning to work from home, 54 per cent of participants were male and 46 per cent were female. This partly reflects the gender breakdown of the sample and the Tech workforce, and partly the uptake of work from home arrangements by participants.

Overall, the picture that emerges is that part-time hours are for women and parental leave (both paid leave and unpaid leave) is also for women, reinforcing the societal norm that mothers are the primary parent. On the other hand, long periods of unpaid leave of absence are for men, while men do not take unpaid parental leave, reinforcing the norm that fathers are the secondary parent.

4.2.3 Organisational Time Demands

Several norms surrounding working time are inherent in Tech's organisational culture. In this section, I explore the ways that participants work (and when they avoid work or focus on home demands), and what the implications are within organisational culture. I describe the five cultural norms that I identified during analysis, then illustrate how these norms are operationalised by participants.

Figure 4.3 shows an overview of the cultural norms that became apparent after analysing participants' perceptions of organisational time demands. These norms ultimately shape the expectations of the ideal worker at Tech.

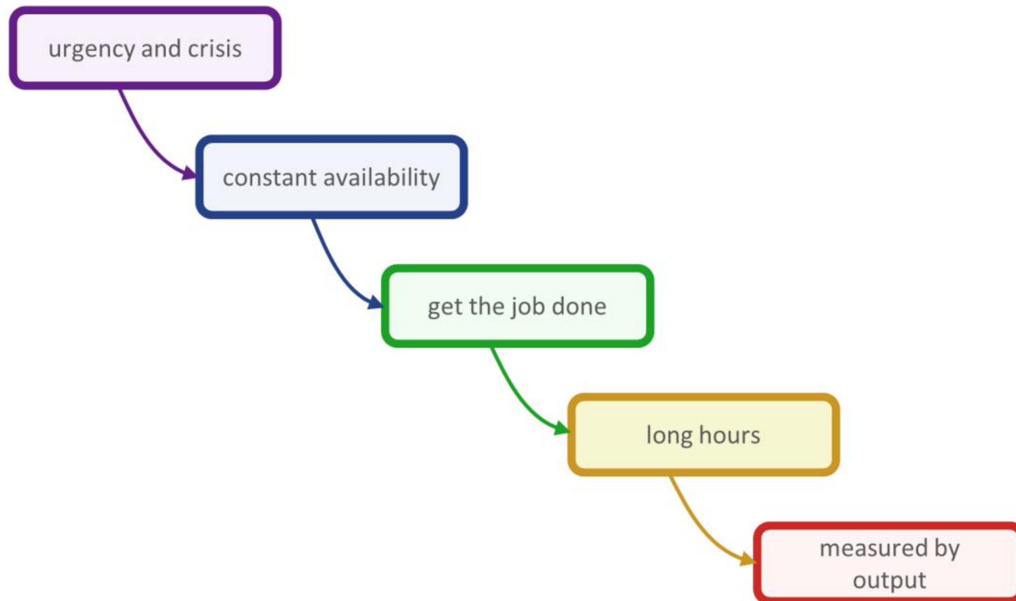

Figure 4.4 Tech cultural norms arising from organisational time demands

The cultural norm of *urgency and crisis* emerged for full-time and part-time participants. The norm was very strong where either internal clients or external customers were involved. Megan reflected, ruefully, that she had a specific 'clown hooter' ring tone for calls from Tech. When the hooter sounded at the weekend, Megan ran to her phone. Dane talked about a culture saturated with 'urgent needs' that expected instant responses to emails, even in the very early hours of the morning. Ethan noted that emergencies ('a cry for help') often shaped the way that people at Tech responded and their perceptions of what was reasonable or acceptable.

> **Ethan:** The age of being connected and the accessibility of being connected means that you're obtainable or reachable. And it's difficult to, people don't naturally want to say no to something when there's a cry for help.

For part-time employees, there were assumptions surrounding when to work on the non-working day. None of the part-time participants were able to avoid work or disconnect completely on their non-working day. Wendy, working in the Research and Development group, noted that she felt she was expected to be available for issues that were considered emergencies. Kylie, Sarah and Michelle, working in the Human Resources group, reflected similar sentiments: if a crisis arose then they expected to be contacted by either their internal clients, typically senior leaders, or by their co-workers in the HR department.

The norm of *constant availability* emerged strongly for multiple participants. Employees were equipped with mobile communication technologies, meaning that they could monitor email traffic, take incoming calls and text messages, and join teleconferences at all hours. Doing email first thing in the morning and late at night, and attending teleconferences very early in the morning or in the evening were unremarkable acts for Tech employees.

The norm of *getting the job done* was very strong for many participants. Damien, for example, expressed that he was comfortable to call co-workers in the US in their non-work

hours as 'you can get things done'. Annette reflected a similar sentiment, saying that 'you just do what you need to do to get the job done'. Kim, Kylie, Michelle, Julian and Andrew all said that the expectation was to 'get the job done'. Bruce used this phrase repeatedly during his interview, for example, 'Getting the job done is an important thing'. For participants, getting the job done implied that they would check email, attend meetings, send and receive text messages and phone calls during almost all the hours when they were awake, particularly outside of conventional working hours.

The norm of doing *long hours* as a symbol of organisational commitment and productivity is present at Tech, but weakened and modified to accommodate the virtual, global nature of work. Instead, *long hours* are the adaptive response to the norm of getting the job done. Participants were willing to do long hours to complete their assigned workload. Two participants framed *long hours* by speaking about how they avoided 'clock on clock off' measures. Annette expressed her view by saying, 'It's not […] clock on, clock off' and Damien echoed this with, 'I don't think, "I'll clock on." I am always watching it, you know.' Annette went further and contrasted her own stance with that of her husband's job, working in emergency services, where it was definitely clock on, clock off. She positioned her role as a knowledge professional as different to emergency services workers by not having to clock on and clock off.

Most participants expressed that they maintained an informal, mental time balance sheet in their heads. Some participants aimed to work roughly 40 hours per week, for full-time employees, in keeping with their expectations about conventional working hours. However, some participants worked well over 40 hours per week. Darren, working full-time hours, noted, 'I know I do more than 40 hours a week,' and Simone, working part-time hours, said, 'So basically I was doing my 40 hour a week, even more, in four days'. Emma, another part-time employee, referred to a notional full-time week of 40 hours when talking about trying to avoid working more than her part-time hours.

Two participants noted that the organisation did not discourage long hours. Carly perceived that her manager appreciated her long hours, but she added, 'He's not saying don't work on it either, at the same time'. The organisation benefited from higher productivity and output. The decision to work long hours was often framed as the participant's personal choice, supporting the notion of normative control of the workforce through cultural norms (Kunda, 1992). However, participants wishing to conform to the prevailing norms would be more likely to work longer hours to get the job done, than not. Ethan was clear in his mind that the company did not expect long hours (even though he worked long hours himself).

> **Ethan:** And the company doesn't set it as an expectation. They don't expect me to sit, or the hundreds of other people that sit on their sofas at night, doing email for the day. It's not expected, right. But it's not discouraged. And it's not regulated because there is no tack [sic] on how much work we allow to flow through to people, right.

Instead of long hours as a symbol of commitment, participants referred specifically to *output*. Andrew and Thomas, working from home, said that they were measured on 'deliverables and outputs', rather than hours worked or hours in the office chair.

Visible output was strongly linked to getting the job done, as Rachel pointed out, 'I always – sort of had a quality output. I got the job done'. Bruce also felt that his output, largely in

the form of email, was a more potent symbol of his productivity and commitment. He expressed his concern about working on projects that did *not* have visible outputs. Jack neatly explained the difference between long, visible hours in the office, and the potential difficulty of measuring contribution for employees who work remotely.

> **Jack:** The perception is very hard, isn't it? When you're at work you get credit for perception, how long you work, if you leave early then there's the perception that you're doing less. If you leave late there's the perception that you're doing more. That perception is a very easy metric to measure, but at home it's much more vague. It would be very difficult to measure your output if you don't have something, a job where your work is easily measurable in some way. [...] You've got to judge yourself literally on your output, because that's all you've got to show.

Conventional Working Hours. To analyse organisational time demands more fully, during analysis I had to grapple with the definition of conventional working hours. None of Tech's policy documents reviewed for this study stated start and end time for core hours. The lack of a precise definition means employers and managers define what is acceptable, through custom and practice. Despite this lack of policy clarity, participants had a remarkably clear picture about what conventional working hours were. Danielle illustrated this by stating the day was 'too short' when she started at 09:30 and she 'felt guilty' if she finished at 16:30. Narelle noted there had been concerns expressed in her department about a co-worker who refused to do calls before 09:30 because she had to take care of her young children.

On the other hand, the lack of clarity about start and end times afforded flexibility to many participants. Kylie was able to start early and finish early to enable her to pick up her children. Tanya was able to flex her start and end times when she had specific appointments with her children, but she was still aware of conventional working hours, which she regarded as 09:00 to 17:30.

Six participants used the '9 to 5' metaphor to describe the *opposite* of their own working patterns. For example, Jarrod said that '9 to 5 [...] is not an option'. Working as a middle manager in Customer Support, customer needs were paramount. All of Jarrod's subordinates were outside Australia, so he had to work outside conventional working hours to effectively manage and guide them. Both individual contributors and managers used this metaphor equally, as did men and women. When participants used this metaphor, they showed how Tech's organisational culture required them to make themselves available outside of conventional working hours. This metaphor was used especially by participants who had global roles, where they had to interact with co-workers in other time zones. Participants referred to the societal norm of 9 to 5 but then rejected that norm for themselves. Instead they used extended work hours to subscribe to Tech's norm of high availability.

Working in the Early Morning. Beyond conventional core hours, many participants worked before 09:00 and after 17:00. Twenty participants talked about doing work between midnight and 09:00. Four participants talked about checking their email before conventional working hours, between 05:00 and breakfast. Damien's personal approach, when wanting 'things to happen' was to get up at 05:00 and work for two hours before breakfast.

The global nature of teams meant that, in extreme cases, some participants talked about joining meetings in the early hours of the morning between midnight and 05:00. Dane said he had occasionally delivered virtual presentations at 03:00 and he labelled this 'one of my favourite things' since it was dark and quiet. Narelle was expecting to do a call at 03:00 in the week following her interview. Jarrod worked two nights a week from midnight until 04:00, saying, 'It's not unusual to have midnight calls or 02:00 calls.'

> **Jarrod:** And, I will have to be up at night, because I have meetings from 12:00 until 04:00. So I will finish work at around 04:00. Then I will sleep in. I guess I sleep until 08:30 in the morning. I get about four hours sleep. And then I start the day. [...] So, it's tough. It is tough. It is the role that I'm in. That's what I signed up for.

Working in the Evening. Thirty-two participants talked about working regularly or occasionally during the evening, between 17:00 and midnight. Julian, working mostly with a team based in China, made himself available to that team in their hours, working most weeknights until 22:00. Similarly, Simone had to work with a customer based in France and thus did several calls after 20:00, to overlap with working time in France. Carly and Tanya also mentioned doing calls between 19:00 and 21:00. Andrew worked one evening from 20:00 to 22:00 with a co-worker in India to resolve a customer problem.

In contrast, Mary expressed that she would not accept calls at 20:00 or 21:00. Mary's clients were internal and mostly based in Australia and New Zealand.

Working at the Weekend. Twenty-one participants worked at some point during the weekend. Jackson checked his email on Sundays in order to avoid 'a big effort on Monday'. Bruce and Dane, working in separate teams in the Research and Development division, noted the American team worked during the Australian Saturday and the Australian team worked during the American Sunday. They felt that in order to remain in touch they had to do some form of work during the weekend, typically checking email traffic. By way of contrast, Simone and Tanya were firm about not working at the weekend. Tanya felt that 'we all work more than we are paid for' and she did not wish to work further unpaid hours at the weekend. Simone felt she worked hard during her part-time hours (and had many evening meetings) so 'the weekend [...] it's off limits.'

Working on Holiday. The practice of remaining connected while on holiday was not widely shared, but was discussed by three participants in strikingly different ways. Jacqueline and Narelle explicitly stated they would disconnect on holiday and not login or check email or take telephone calls. On the other hand, Megan remained connected: she expressed a fear of allowing things to 'escalate out of control' and thus was willing to attend meetings while on holiday.

> **Megan:** No. I'll even take meetings or I'll take, yeah, I'll do meetings while I'm on leave too. And I've always told my team, you rather bug me while I'm on holiday and don't let something escalate out of control, because even though I'm on holiday, I can still manage it. I can deal with it, and I can get it resolved, before it turns into a nightmare.

To summarise, participants operated in an atmosphere frequently characterised by urgency and crisis (driven by client and customer emergencies), where they perceived they needed to be constantly available and get the job done by working long hours, when needed, to produce visible outputs. Participants worked frequently out of conventional

hours, early in the morning, late at night and at weekends. Some participants worked while on holiday.

4.2.4 Supervisor Support

As outlined in Chapter 2, supervisor support is considered to be one of the critical factors for employees to feel comfortable to use flexible working arrangements. Noting the policy discussion in Section 4.1.3 above, Tech offers a full range of policies and flexible working solutions. However, in terms of work–life culture, Tech managers varied in their level of support to participants who requested flexible working arrangements. There are two angles to supervisor support: the experience of participants as employees who make requests for flexible working arrangements and their perception of their manager's response; and the perceptions of participants who were managers who receive requests for flexible working arrangements from their subordinates.

Positive Supervisor Support. Forty-nine participants reported mostly positive experiences, when requesting part-time hours, parental leave, work from home arrangements, or unpaid leave of absence. Sarah's manager was supportive for part-time hours (three days per week) but was not supportive of working from home on a regular schedule. This is because Sarah's manager believed that Sarah's role in Human Resources required that she be available, face-to-face, for her internal clients. Simone's first manager, based in Australia, was supportive of part-time hours; however, her second manager, based in the US, felt he had to consult Simone's first manager for supporting evidence before he was comfortable with part-time hours. He did not question Simone's work from home arrangements.

Julian's manager was supportive of his work from home request and indicated that 'No one cares' while Megan's work from home arrangement was taken as given and she said 'they [her management] didn't mind'. These comments illustrate how unremarkable working from home is at Tech. Employees who submit requests to work from home generally receive positive answers.

Negative Supervisor Support. By contrast, nine participants had mixed or negative experiences. These cases illustrate Tech's work–life culture more sharply. These participants were all women and their requests revolved around maternity, return to work after maternity and part-time hours when they had young children. The requests were made between nine years and one year prior to interview. Seven participants had changed managers since making the first request; two participants had the same manager.

Anastasia requested part-time hours for her return from maternity leave, approximately nine years before the interview. She made the request *before* she went on leave, but her manager refused her request.

> **Anastasia:** So, before I commenced leave I worked for a lady by the name of Emily and I approached her about part-time. She said, 'No. We don't do that here'.

During Anastasia's leave, her manager left the company, so Anastasia requested part-time hours with her new manager. Her new manager turned out to be supportive, and Anastasia was 'surprised' and 'encouraged'. Bianca and Sharon's requests for part-time hours were initially refused, then approved after Australian HR managers intervened.

Leonie talked about difficulties when negotiating the length of maternity leave. Leonie's US-based manager resisted Leonie request to take the full 12 months of leave (as permitted in Australia; in the US, maternity leave is three months unpaid, except in California). Like Anastasia, the issue was resolved when the manager was made redundant near the start of Leonie's maternity leave.

Six participants shared the view that their managers were more understanding because the managers had young children of their own. Natasha mentioned that, at the time of her initial request, her UK-based manager's wife was working part-time, which she thought gave him 'lots of experience', implying he was more likely to be supportive of part-time hours. This further points to the changing role perceptions of male managers, as they become more involved fathers, and the positive consequences for their subordinates seeking flexible work arrangements.

Manager Responses to Employee Requests. Darren, Dane, and Ethan, all middle managers, felt that it was good management practice to treat work from home requests positively. Ethan specifically stated that he preferred to offer his staff flexibility and he expected that he would ultimately receive higher productivity this way. Darren said his perception was that most managers will try to be supportive because, if they are not, it will create resentment or possibly lead to resignation.

> **Darren:** Most managers will do whatever they can, if they're good, will do whatever they can, to provide some flexibility for their staff. If they don't, they're an idiot. Because if they don't and the person is fair dinkum about it, two things will happen: (1) they'll say, they'll accept 'No' and resent it and their performance will be shit and they'll make sure they share that with everyone, just because they are human; or they'll leave.

These remarks support dependency theory (Klein et al., 2000) and work disruption theory (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Ethan and Darren aimed to allow their staff to be flexible, recognising that they were dependent upon their subordinates for the overall performance of their department (dependency theory) and wanting to avoid the more extreme disruption of staff taking sick leave or resigning (work disruption theory).

Julian and Dane shared the view that their subordinates, working in large centres overseas, were not usually permitted to work from home unless for medical reasons, or on a casual basis, as an exception. These sentiments reflected the view that the specific nature of job tasks in the Research & Development division required face-to-face collaboration, rather than virtual interaction. Yet it is striking that both Julian and Dane had the overwhelming majority of their staff in overseas locations – forcing them as managers to exclusively use virtual interaction methods.

> **Dane:** So, the more senior resources who know the processes and know who to go to, that's the most important thing in Tech to know where to find the information or who to go to. Once they've got that then, for me, personally, I don't mind. I would approve working from home for those resources. And if they're associated with a major development centre, I'd encourage them to come in a couple days of week.

Overall, supervisors at Tech were mostly supportive of flexible working arrangements. However, some managers and some leadership hierarchies were less supportive of either part-time hours or of working from home, driven by a sense of lack of perceived control over employees who were not visible and present in the office.

4.2.5 Co-worker Support

Co-workers offered support around flexible working arrangements in a range of ways. Seven participants spoke about positive methods of support. The first method of support was *arranging cover* with co-workers. Sarah and Jacqueline had a mutual arrangement to act as point of contact for each other on their non-working days (Sarah had Wednesday off and Jacqueline had Friday off). Suzanne worked very closely with a counterpart at another company who also worked part-time and they arranged to work identical days each week, to enable maximum collaboration between them.

> **Suzanne:** In fact, my counterpart at BronzeCo also worked three days a week and then I moved to four and she moved to four as well. [...] Well, my counterpart worked the same three days, so it seemed to make sense and I would get childcare for those three days. [...] so I did the same as what she did and it worked out fine.

The second method of support was *sharing stories and expectations*. Mary's team, most of whom worked from home, shared their problems in informal conversations. Danielle's co-workers held an expectation that she would avoid checking her email on her day off, thus providing a norm within the team that protected Danielle's non-working day.

The third method of support was *supplying friendly warnings*. Annette and Kylie were 'warned' before joining their departments that even though they were confirmed to work part-time hours, the workload might well be larger than that.

Two participants shared negative episodes from their co-workers. Damien's US co-workers were shocked when he shared his intended leave of absence, reflecting a US norm that frowned upon taking unpaid time away from work to pursue personal goals. After Bianca's request for part-time hours was approved, her team responded negatively ('grumpy' and 'jealous'), partly due to a perception that either Bianca had unjustly received favourable treatment, or that her absence might contribute to a higher workload. However, Bianca admitted that the team climate did improve over time.

Role of Human Resources. Three participants mentioned the role of Human Resources managers stepping in to encourage or force managers to accommodate flexible working requests, especially after the request had been initially refused by local or overseas managers. This was true for Bianca, Sharon and Wendy. Sharon's story is typical.

> **Sharon:** I said to Tech, I'd like to come back part-time [...] the manager in the US said, 'No, we can't accommodate for you, that is not the way it is done here. You either come back full-time or we can't accommodate for you'. Then HR stepped in. I don't know how they stepped in, but they stepped and said, 'Actually, you need to accommodate for her. You need to find something for her.'

James, Danielle and Damien found HR supportive for their requests. James said, 'So, pretty much from the start they [his management hierarchy] were supportive and I found that that translated across to HR as well'. Damien said, 'Yes, they [HR] were quite supportive, quite accepting of it. No issues with it, you know.'

Thus, HR managers act as gatekeepers of flexible work arrangements. In difficult cases where managers opposed employee requests for flexible working, HR became involved to influence the manager to accommodate requests for flexible working conditions.

4.2.6 Attributes of Ideal Remote Workers

A theme that emerged was the attributes of ideal remote workers. Six participants expressed their views about what it takes to be a 'good' remote worker. Ronald mentioned the attributes of 'self-motivating' and 'able to work autonomously' without 'handholding, mentoring, complete guidance'. Bruce felt 'discipline' was essential. Shaun said the important attributes, in his mind, were having the trust of the manager and being able to deliver a high performance level. Jessica highlighted two attributes: 'being disciplined and having good time management'. Dane stressed 'the key thing with working from home is initiative […] not to get stuck on a problem […] without reaching out'. Dane had specific views that junior staff were not suitable to work from home. Dane's views were also in line with the formal remote working policy, outlined in Section 4.1.3.

Overall these attributes re-affirmed the norm that working from home, as a remote worker, was reserved for senior staff who had sufficient capability to work autonomously. Within this norm, remote workers must be trustworthy, disciplined, organised and capable of independent work with minimal supervision. Participants reflected the organisational discourse surrounding working from home, echoing the language of Tech's remote working policy.

4.3 Affordances of Communication Technologies

In this section, I explore the different types of communication devices and technologies that participants used. I also explain the affordances of communication technologies and how participants responded to these affordances by embracing or avoiding them.

The provision of modern communication technologies at Tech is a key enabler for 'getting the job done' and for flexible working. Tech provides all employees with laptop computers when they start employment. All employees are allocated a unique telephone number and email address. All employees are eligible for a company-paid smartphone, subject to manager approval, and most employees have one, but a few employees do not.

Danielle instantly recognised the technology provided by the company enabled her to work flexibly, saying 'I find Tech really sets you up to be able to work anywhere. They really do.' Ronald eloquently expressed his personal relationship with technology by characterising his laptop as his 'Tech heartbeat'. This expression shows that Ronald regards his laptop as absolutely essential to his work and to his productivity, affording him email and phone connectivity.

> **Ronald:** Basically my Tech heartbeat is my laptop. So everything that's stored on the laptop including my [softphone], you know the ability to email, […] everything that's stored on the laptop is basically the heartbeat that I need to keep going.

4.3.1 Overview of Devices, Technologies and Affordances

Figure 4.5 shows the devices that were most frequently mentioned by participants, and the associated communication channels that were most frequently mentioned.

The laptop computer and the smartphone afforded access to email, instant messaging and enterprise social media. The laptop computer afforded access to web conferencing and videoconferencing. The smartphone and the business phone afforded access to phone calls and teleconferences, with the smartphone affording access to SMS messages. At Tech, the business phone is represented by three different devices: a physical telephone in the Tech office; a software application on the laptop computer, commonly referred to as a 'softphone'; or a physical telephone, or 'hardphone', in the domestic workplace (only an option for remote workers, ordered as a personal choice, and subject to manager approval).

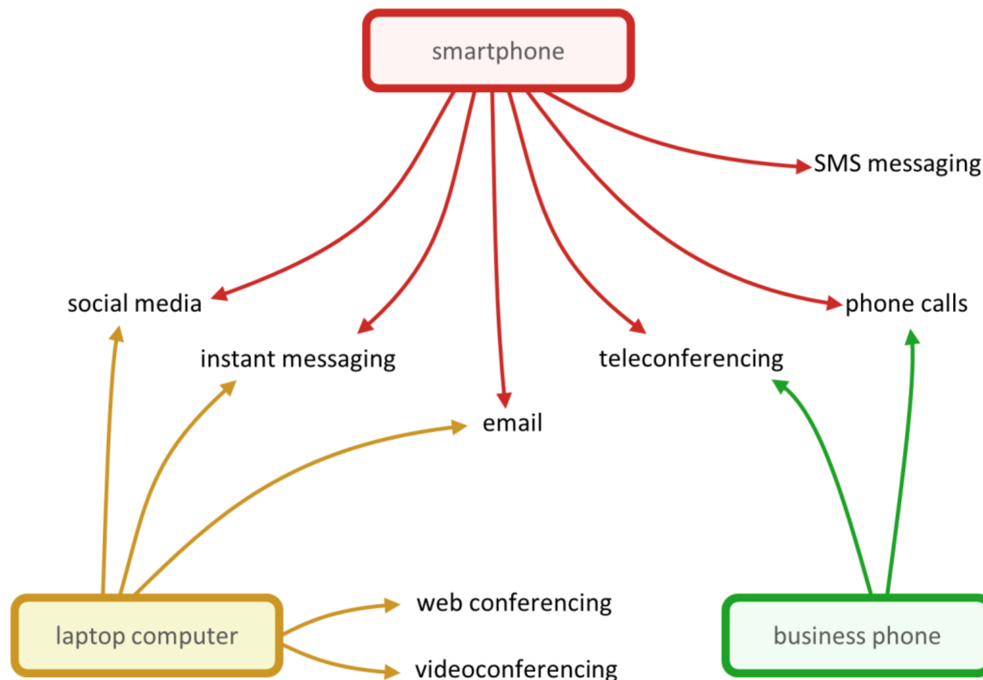

Figure 4.5 Principal communication devices and channels at Tech

4.3.2 Email and its Affordances

Email is *the* universal communication method at Tech. All participants mentioned email during their interviews—there was not a single participant who did not use email.

Four participants mentioned email's affordance of *persistence*. Participants used email as a way of documenting and timestamping their work. They used email as a memory bank, saving messages and reviewing them later as a reminder to memory or to clarify meaning.

Five participants mentioned the affordance of *editability*, being able to take time to write a message and then modify it until the meaning and the tone were satisfactory. An email message allowed the recipient to read and take time to think about the response. Some participants took extra time to think about their response to a difficult or tricky email, before crafting their text.

Three participants referred to email's affordance of *mobility and easy access* using a smartphone or tablet. Participants checked their email on iPhones, iPads, Android smartphones and laptops. They felt using these devices made processing emails easy and

simple. Other participants checked and processed email the day before a working day, reasoning that doing it this way would save time on the following working day.

One participant described email as a *lean channel*, devoid of verbal and non-verbal cues compared to other channels like the telephone, leading to occasional misunderstanding of meaning and attention.

By contrast, a different participant observed the affordance of *enhancing cross-cultural communication,* stating that co-workers in Korea and China preferred email (rather than voice communications) since it was easier for them to take the time to prepare an email message rather than having to speak English (which was not their native language). This theme also appears for instant messaging (see Section 4.3.3 below.)

Two participants mentioned email's affordance of *asynchroneity*. Tech's workforce has many global teams with team members in a range of countries and time zones, meaning that asynchronous email is often the most effective method of communication.

Asynchroneity introduces *latency*, which was a concern for another participant. He only used email for project directions (where latency was not a concern) versus more personal, ad hoc communication (where he preferred less latent communication channels).

Two participants noted email's affordance of *distraction potential*. There was a tension between needing to respond quickly to yet wanting to avoid unnecessary distractions and interruptions. Participants felt that they were not in control of the number of incoming emails, forcing them to make personal choices about how and when to filter and process emails across the course of the day.

These remarks show how email was used to respond to the cultural norm of *urgency and crisis*. Participants recognised that some emails needed swift responses. Email's affordance of mobility and easy access, and participants' stories of accessing email outside conventional working hours, in turn reinforced the cultural norms of *constant availability* and *long hours*.

4.3.3 Instant Messaging and its Affordances

Instant messaging (IM) was the second most frequently mentioned text-based communication channel. IM was usually accessed using the laptop computer and was used mainly for one-on-one conversations and occasionally group conversations. Employees had to manually add other employees as 'buddies' to the IM tool to enable mutual chat.

Four participants used IM's affordance of *public display of availability*. They explained how they paid attention to the status indicator in the IM application: green when the user was available, yellow when the user was away from the computer, and red when the user was in a meeting or did not want to be disturbed. The IM application changed the status indicator automatically per user-defined rules; for example, if there was no user activity for five minutes, then the application would set the status to 'Away'. Users could also manually change the status, when needed. Two participants mentioned how they liked IM because they could see who was online (and thus available). Some managers instructed their employees to use IM and to be online and available during working hours. Managers used the public display of availability as a tool to control subordinates and to know when

team members were available. Another participant spoke of the expectation she should always be available via IM, especially to her manager, but also to her co-workers, to answer incoming instant messages immediately.

These perceptions and behaviours show how Tech's cultural norms of *constant availability* and of *urgency and crisis* shaped the way that managers directed employees to make themselves visibly available. These behaviours also support normative control (McLoughlin et al., 2005), where employees accept 'soft' control in order to be a productive and responsive member of a team. Managers wanted to be certain their employees were available and they wanted their employees to visibly display their availability to them (the manager) and to co-workers. These norms also shaped employee behaviours and expectations about what was considered reasonable. Participants sensed that missing an incoming instant message or telephone call would cause their manager and co-workers to start questioning their work ethic. These perceptions reinforce the autonomy paradox (Mazmanian et al., 2013): employees are free to work flexibly, remotely or during non-conventional hours, but simultaneously they must satisfy intense expectations of constant availability and they are less able to disconnect from work.

Three participants mentioned the affordance of *synchroneity* and the advantages and disadvantages. Participants perceived that IM did not work well when working across time zones that were widely dispersed, when IM buddies were typically not online at the same time. On the other hand, participants with buddies in the same or nearby time zones used IM for quick questions, with some appreciating the affordance of *informality*. Allied to the affordance of synchronicity was the affordance of *immediacy*, mentioned by one participant. He used IM within his team, rather than email, for effective troubleshooting of software problems with his subordinates.

Three participants talked about the affordance of *enhancing cross-cultural communication.* These participants observed that some Asian co-workers might not have good spoken English skills but had better written English skills, in the form of IM. Some Asian co-workers even refused to do a telephone call when asked, preferring to remain with IM. This affordance is identical to the same affordance for email.

One participant noted the affordance of *persistence* in a negative way. Her co-worker saved the chat text, to use as a reference in the future, but she was not aware that the chat had been saved. Later, the participant was surprised and dismayed the chat transcript was shared via email, copying the manager. The saved transcript thus served as a formal record of the conversation, yet the conversation was originally construed as informal and private. Sharing the text with the manager raised notions of blame or missed accountability. The participant felt that she might be more circumspect in the future, when using IM with these co-workers.

Four participants noted the unwanted affordance of *distraction potential.* Incoming messages acted as a distraction or interruption. Some participants deliberately disconnected from IM to avoid being hassled at the end of a shift, or when they wanted to work on high priority tasks. Thus, some participants perceived a tension between the norm of constant availability and the affordance of speedy responses. One participant removed her availability via IM but retained her availability via email, giving her more of a sense of control by substituting IM's synchroneity with email's asynchroneity.

Two participants talked about the constraints of IM where their network of IM buddies was patchy or where buddies made themselves unavailable. Effective IM relied on having a broad and active buddy network where the buddies were online and available for chats. Participants in the Human Resources business unit cited the distraction potential of IM and the problems of a patchy network as the principal justifications for avoiding IM.

4.3.4 SMS Messages and their Affordances

The third form of text-based communication mentioned by participants was SMS messages. Seven participants mentioned SMS messages, so it was not common nor universal.

Two participants mentioned the affordance of *mobility*. Participants used text messages when they were away from the domestic workplace (most relevant for participants who worked from home); or if they were in the office and wanted to contact team members who were working at another location (a customer site or working from home).

Three participants talked about the affordance of *attracting attention*. One participant, a front-line manager, explained that his subordinates used text messages to reach him when they needed permission to attend to personal matters. Two participants either sent or received text messages from their managers. They used this channel for urgent messages, or when they wanted to attract attention and other channels (email, phone) had failed.

4.3.5 Desk Phones, Smartphones and Softphones

Voice communication using the telephone is the second category of communication technologies. Employees used their desk phones, their smartphones or mobile phones, and, remotely, they used their softphone or hardphone. The telephone was used for person-to-person calls and for hosting or attending teleconferences.

Although all participants mentioned the telephone, the frequency of use varied widely. Some participants used the telephone as the principal communication method (> 75%) while others said that the telephone was rarely used ('three or four times in five years or four years').

Many participants liked the affordance of *mobility* and applied this to their smartphones and to their softphones. Some participants used their mobile phones to make or receive calls while commuting, or to respond to calls at the weekend when they were not using their laptop. This affordance allowed participants to meet the cultural norm of constant availability. Another participant explained how he believed it was important to have both email and calendar on his phone, mandating that his subordinates have access to their calendars on their smartphones. Interestingly, he did not mention using the smartphone as a telephone in this context. This participant used the non-telephone features of his smartphone to extend his availability when he was away from his desk.

Three participants specifically talked about avoiding smartphones or having email on their phone, illustrating how mobile communication technology impacted employee work–life balance. They contested owning a smartphone in order to resist the corporate norm of constant availability. These participants regarded the corporate smartphone as saturated

with expectations of '24 x 7' availability. The affordance of mobility and constant access reinforced the cultural norm of constant availability. The specific resistance of these three participants showed how strong this norm was for employees at Tech.

Participants mentioned the phone's affordance of *invisibility and cloaking*. The employee's body and dress code could be cloaked (as we shall see when participants talk about video) and they could cloak their true work location. One participant used his softphone at home, meaning that he had the same telephone number as his desk phone. People who rang him would be able to reach him, whether he was at home or in the office. His true location was cloaked by the use of Tech's softphone technology. Some participants joined conference calls via telephone and simultaneously used non-speaking moments to do other tasks, like IM. This multitasking was enabled by being physically invisible to others joining the conference call. Multitasking was framed as saving time and being efficient, by avoiding subsequent, additional telephone calls.

By contrast, sometimes the mantle of invisibility was pierced in undesirable ways. One participant recounted how her domestic workplace was exposed when the children were screaming or the dog started barking, as she was placing a call to a customer. This example reinforcers the blurring of boundaries between work and home, but also highlights how the professional expectations of quietness from the office environment are transferred to the domestic workplace. The affordance of invisibility and cloaking also supported the norm of getting the job done and of long hours, since participants were able to make and receive calls in the domestic workplace, in addition to Tech offices, at any time of the day or night.

Five participants mentioned phone's affordance of being a *richer channel* (compared to text-based communication channels) offering more cues and more detail. In part the richer channel conveyed more emotional information and paralanguage, such as voice inflections and a sense of passion. Participants also used telephone calls when complex communications were required, for example when discussing and resolving difficult customer problems. Two participants from the Recruiting function explained how the phone was essential to their work of finding candidates and working with managers. They used the phone's affordance of richer channel to build deep relationships, where this would not be possible using email.

Six participants talked about the phone's affordance of *synchroneity* and the associated affordance of *immediacy*, and thus the phone was used for urgent and important matters, rather than ordinary matters, which tended to be handled using email or IM. The phone was sometimes used to provide a higher level of service to Tech customers (compared to email), to resolve issues or to give a status update. Two participants used the affordance of synchroneity to avoid 24–48 hour delays when working with co-workers in the US or Europe. One participant explained that he was willing to call the US in the US evening, thus interrupting home and family time there, to avoid delays with critical issues that he was working on.

The use of the phone in this way reinforced the cultural norm of urgency and crisis. Participants knew relying on email was not sufficient. They used the phone to alert co-workers that they needed an urgent response. The use of the phone further supported the

cultural norm of getting things done. Participants used the phone to reach out for information, support and decision-making, to get things done.

Similar to IM, two participants mentioned the affordance of *distraction potential*. One participant did not answer unsolicited or unexpected calls, preferring to let them go to voicemail. He took greater control using this method, deciding in his own time how he would respond. Another participant described the other side of this behaviour by explaining that when she rang people they did not answer half of the time.

4.3.6 Video

Video communication is the third category of communication technologies. Video was used by four participants and avoided by three participants. Their perceptions gave a sharp insight into video's affordances and associated cultural norms at Tech.

Video conferencing was used for one-on-one conversations and for group meetings at Tech. All Tech offices in Australia were equipped with at least one video conferencing room and employees could set up personal videoconferencing on their laptop computers. Besides the Tech videoconferencing system, participants also mentioned using Skype and FaceTime.

Participants talked about video's affordance of *rich channel,* with video providing the most interpersonal cues, such as body language, tone and manner. One team used video for group meetings, with the participant reporting that it was more personal. Another participant used Skype to remotely help a customer fix a broken printer, at the weekend. He used the rich channel to provide accurate and detailed technical support.

Two participants noted that achieving reliable, good quality video was technically complex and required pre-planning. The net impact was that the phone was often regarded as less complicated and thus more effective.

Three participants, working from home, specifically avoided video for the affordance of *visibility*. Video would naturally display their home office, their personal dress and their work behaviour during the video meeting. Participants regarded appearing in dressing gown early in the morning, in shorts and a t-shirt during the day, or in pyjamas at night, as inappropriate for business meetings. Thus, there is a contrast between phone (where the employee's body, dress and work location were cloaked) and video (where body, dress and work location were exposed and visible). A cultural norm existed about appropriate dress for business, in the office. Participants who worked from home excluded themselves from this norm, assuming that co-workers would not see them. Video smashed this assumption, so participants who were dressed casually preferred to exclude themselves from video rather than conform to the perceived norm of appropriate business dress.

4.3.7 Summary of Affordances

Table 4.5 shows a summary of the affordances of the principal communication technologies mentioned by participants.

Table 4.5 Affordances of principal communication technologies

Affordance	Email	Instant messaging	Phone	Video	SMS
Richness	Lean	Lean	Richer	Richest	–
Mobility	Mobility (easy access)	–	Mobility	–	Mobility
Visibility	–	Public display of availability	Invisibility and cloaking	Visibility	–
Attractiveness	Distraction potential	Distraction potential	Distraction potential	–	Attracts attention
Formality	–	Informality	–	–	–
Editability	Editability	–	–	–	–
Persistence	Persistence	Persistence	–	–	–
Enhance cross-cultural communication	Enhance cross-cultural communication	Enhance cross-cultural communication	–	–	–
Synchroneity	Asynchroneity	Synchroneity	Synchroneity	–	–
Latency	Latency	Immediacy	Immediacy	–	–

4.3.8 Intersection of Work–Life Culture and Communication Technology Affordances

Table 4.6 shows the intersection of cultural norms within Tech's work–life culture and the related affordances of communication technologies.

The norm of *urgency and crisis* is supported by synchroneity (enabling participants to contact co-workers in real-time), immediacy (enabling participants to advance the task or resolve a problem), attracting attention (using text messages to attract attention of co-workers who would otherwise be inaccessible), and mobility (enabling participants to collaborate with co-workers using mobile technologies, not restricted to the office). The norm of *constant availability* is supported by the public display of availability (enabling participants to visibly advertise their availability), the appropriate use of invisibility and cloaking (enabling participants to attend to work demands and incoming messages when they are not in formal work settings), and mobility (using mobile communication technologies to extend availability after conventional hours and outside conventional work settings).

The norm of *getting the job done* is supported by editability and persistence (enabling participants to craft email messages and retain emails and instant messages), the appropriate use of synchroneity and asynchroneity (where the participant uses their judgement to decide what channel is best aligned to their work task), and the appropriate use of immediacy and latency (where the participant again uses their judgement to decide what response timing would be best aligned to their work task). Furthermore, getting the job done is supported by enhanced cross-cultural communication for text-based communication methods, allowing higher quality and more precise communication between international co-workers.

Table 4.6 Intersection of cultural norms and communication technology affordances

Cultural norm	Related affordances
Urgency and crisis	Synchroneity Immediacy Attract attention Mobility
Constant availability	Public display of availability Appropriate use of invisibility and cloaking to achieve higher availability Mobility
Get the job done	Editability and persistence Appropriate use of synchroneity and asynchroneity, aligned to task requirements Appropriate use of immediacy and latency, aligned to task requirements Enhance cross-cultural communication
Long hours	Avoiding distraction potential Mobility
Measured by output	Persistence Mobility Enhance cross-cultural communication

The norm of *long hours* is hindered by the distraction potential of several communication technologies. Participants who do not manage incoming messages and distractions satisfactorily would be less productive and would have to work longer hours to complete work tasks. The norm of long hours is supported by mobility (enabling participants to work anywhere and at any time, not necessarily during conventional working hours and in the office). Finally, the norm of *measured by output* is supported by persistence (because email records are a potent symbol of work completed and output) and mobility (allowing participants to do more work and generate more output). The norm of *measured by output* is also related to enhanced cross-cultural communication, allowing participants on global teams to share their outputs to co-workers in other countries, generating a positive impression of high output.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter started with the demographic profile of the 54 participants, and an overview of the relevant policies at Tech, to provide context for the themes that emerged from analysis. Later, a deeper understanding of technology usage, organisational culture was presented.

The principal theme to emerge from these findings is the interaction effect between Tech's work–life culture and the affordances of mobile communication technologies. Cultural norms of urgency and crisis, constant availability and getting the job done shape expectations of reasonable and acceptable behaviour at Tech. In turn, the opportunities presented by mobile communication technologies and the way in which participants use these opportunities influences Tech's cultural norms. Technology is an enabler of 'work anywhere, work any time', yet this very flexibility carries advantages and disadvantages.

Some participants worked long hours while others work over a broad range of clock time each day but took personal breaks, such that hours worked were close to paid hours.

In the next chapter, I build upon Tech's organisational culture and technology to look at how participants, working flexibly, craft the work–home boundary and how flexible working arrangements intersect with career outcomes.

5. RESULTS: CRAFTING BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING CAREERS

In the last chapter, I detailed the organisational context of Tech, including salient aspects of corporate flexible working policies, work–life culture and affordances of mobile communication devices. In this chapter, I explore the intricately tangled knot that represents participants' boundaries and careers (see Figure 5.1 for an overview). Unravelling the knot was an editorial challenge, so, though the findings are presented linearly, participants' boundary realities are more tangled, knotty and meshed than the linear narrative permits.

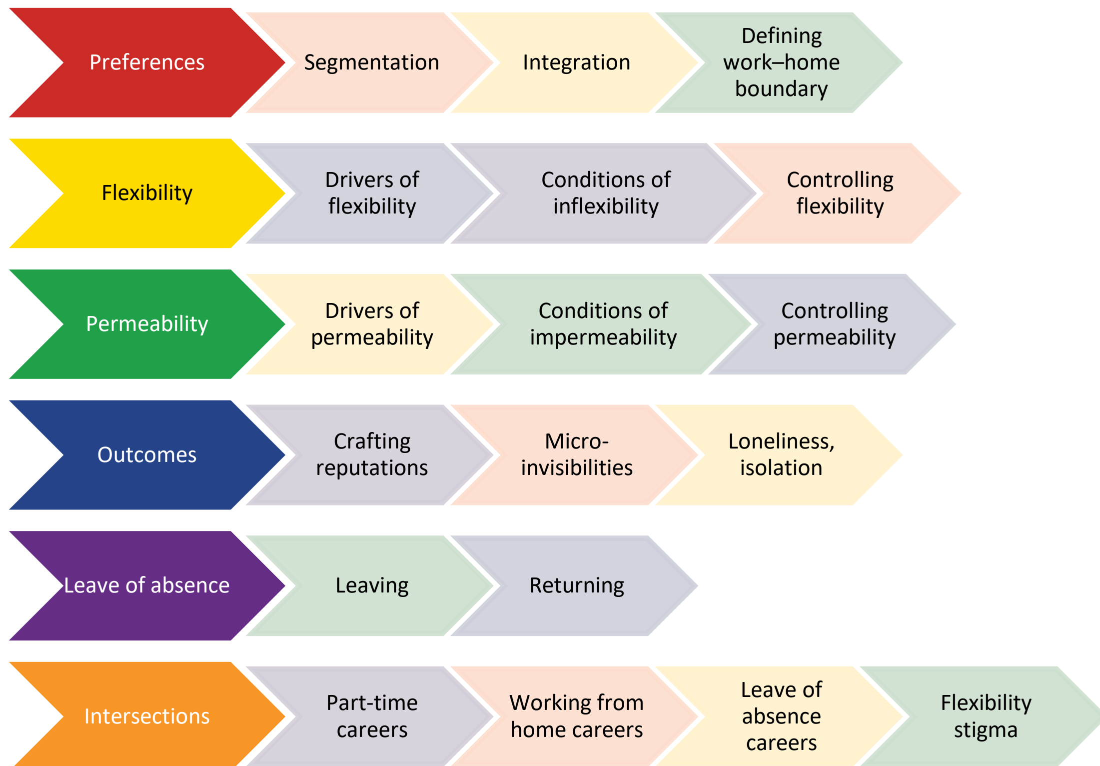

Figure 5.1 Overview of boundaries and careers chapter structure and topics

I analyse flexible working arrangements through the lens of boundary theory and border theory. I open with an investigation of participants' preferences along the segmentation–integration continuum. I describe how participants shaped and re-shaped the work–home boundary and the boundary work rituals that they performed to maintain that boundary. I look at how participants enacted temporal and spatial flexibility of the work–home boundary and I examine cases where flexibility was limited. I discuss the justifications that participants perceived for flexibility and the methods they used to monitor and control their flexibility.

Turning to permeability, I describe work demands penetrating the home domain and home demands penetrating the work domain. I examine conditions where the work–home boundary was impermeable. I look at the micro-transitions participants made between work and home, when working in the domestic workplace, and I inquire into the methods that participants used to control permeability of the work–home boundary.

Combining flexibility and permeability, I interrogate how participants use micro-invisibilities to attend to work demands and home demands. I examine how participants craft a reputation of high availability to satisfy organisational norms.

I investigate the perceptions and experiences of participants who took a leave of absence. I look at the intersection of flexible working arrangements and career outcomes, analysing the perceptions of part-time, work from home and leave of absence participants and their careers. In closing, I interpret the evidence for flexibility stigma within this sample.

5.1 Background

Australian society is essentially segmentist, treating work and home as separate domains (Pocock, 2011; Pocock et al., 2012). Work as an activity takes place at a specific location, the workplace, and at a specific time, the workday. Family, leisure and community activities take place at a different location, the home, and at different times, the evening and the weekend. While these are the traditional boundaries between work and home across space and time, employees at Tech had different experiences of the work–home boundary. Tech provided employees with communication technologies that enabled work at any time and any location, including the home. Tech's culture had a powerful influence on the behaviour of employees. Tech's culture revolved around urgency and crisis, getting the job done, being constantly available and being constantly connected. Employees crafted their work–home boundaries to respond to the unspoken assumptions of the prevailing organisational culture. They made themselves highly available (especially outside of conventional working hours) by means of almost limitless flexibility and highly permeable home boundaries.

5.2 Preferences for Segmentation versus Integration

Some participants aimed to segment home and work, while others were more comfortable to integrate home and work. This issue was especially pertinent for those working from home, because the domestic workplace was in the same spatial location as home and family. Home and office were typically only a few metres apart, so participants favouring segmentation had to do boundary work to separate them.

I analysed preferences for segmentation and integration by reviewing transcripts, identifying behaviours that represented segmentation (for example, turning off mobile phone or laptop) and integration (taking child care calls at work and taking business calls at home). Then I categorised each participant's preference as either leaning more towards segmentation or more towards integration.

When analysed this way, 70 per cent of participants were integrators (n = 38) while 30 per cent were segmentors (n = 16). However, it must be noted that the segmentation–integration landscape is more properly approached as a continuum (Ashforth et al., 2000; Bulger et al., 2007; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Subsequent sections of this chapter describe individual strategies, tactics and outcomes in rich detail to illustrate points along the segmentation–integration continuum. The range of stories and the range of justifications

suggest each participant had a unique and subjective perception of their circumstances. This subjective perception drove how each participant felt about work and home.

Segmentors. As an example, Tristan used a moderately segmentist approach. He was involved in his building's strata committee at a time prior to the interview, but he said that he would refuse to do strata tasks during his official working hours. He said others perceived that he was at home and thus available for personal work but he resisted these demands, instead making work demands the priority during conventional working hours. Tristan created a firm, impermeable boundary between work demands and home demands, even avoiding visits to the supermarket during conventional working hours. Yet, because of the global nature of Tristan's team and his projects, he often worked outside conventional working hours, but he stuck to the notion that he did not pay attention to personal demands during work hours. (In this quotation, it is striking that he repeats 'No, I'm working' three times to emphasise his point of view.)

> **Tristan:** They just think it's fantastic because you can [...] I think there is that misconception that you would have all your washing done, and housework, and you could cook dinner and it's like, no I'm working. When I was on the strata committee, [...] It was funny how many times I would get calls going, 'Can you go and do this?' It's like, no I'm working. There's this sense of, you're at home. So you can do things. And there's misconception there. Whereas, no I'm at home working.

Integrators. Other participants spoke about work and home using integrationist approaches. Andrew said he initially tried to keep work and personal life separate but found the demands of work forced him to adopt a more integrated lifestyle. He said: 'If I had lots of work to do, it didn't matter anyway, I just had to get the work done'. He explained: 'I don't have any rules at all. It is based on just what work I've got to do'. Andrew situated his working style within the broader Tech culture of *getting the job done.* Other participants showed integrationist approaches by accepting personal emails to their Tech email address, booking personal appointments in their Tech calendar, or by configuring Tech email on their personal mobile phones. These tactics suggested a weak, permeable boundary between work and home/family.

5.3 Defining the Work–Home Boundary

Participants defined the work–home boundary using a range of tactics and rituals. While some participants worked in the office all or part of the time, others worked at home all or part of the time where they performed boundary work to define the work–home boundary in the same physical location: the domestic workplace.

The most common boundary tactic was to use a separate office space in the home. For participants with formal remote working arrangements, this was a requirement, but not for participants with informal arrangements. Participants performed the ritual of entering the office to denote the start of work; leaving the office denoted the end of work. Mary had a dedicated office, where she could shut the door if needed, though she mostly worked at home alone (her spouse worked in an office in town). Mary's space was, in her perception, quiet and ideal for the high workload she expected.

Jodi and Jessica, working at home, used their clothing as a boundary tactic. Jodi and Jessica had rituals of clothing their bodies. Jodi noted that it was a myth that people who worked from home sat around in pyjamas all day. Her practice was to get changed into shorts and a t-shirt, saying 'It's no longer "lie about" time. It's now work time'. Jodi's ritual of changing from pyjamas to shorts and a t-shirt was her boundary-forming tactic: it signalled the transition from home to work. By contrast, Jessica did not dress casually: she still dressed as if she was going to the office and she specifically rejected other forms of domestic clothing, saying 'you wouldn't go to work in your pyjamas'. Her boundary tactic was to keep to business dress to give the sense that she was working.

Another boundary tactic used by Jessica was having her lunch outside the house. Her ritual of leaving the office and moving to an outdoor location marked the transition from work to home. Other participants like Megan, Simone, Tristan and Ronald used exercise, personal training or attending the gym as a ritual to move from work demands to home demands, frequently during the lunch break and occasionally at other times of the day.

Spouses, children and pets were frequently border keepers and border crossers for participants, who used a series of boundary tactics to establish the home boundary in the domestic workplace, to protect home and family from work demands and to resist intense work pressures in the home domain. Spouses, children and pets demanded attention, sometimes interrupting work. Young children, particularly, were apt to ignore and cross boundaries that participants had constructed.

Sue's dog, for example, was her border keeper. She walked the dog in the morning and the afternoon, regarding this ritual as 'my bookends for the day'. Ronald's son acted as border crosser when he asked Ronald to play football outside during Ronald's working time. Ronald's son tried to cross Ronald's work boundary, seeking attention from his father, but Ronald rebuffed this border crossing attempt, telling his son that he could only play with him 'after work'. Ronald shaped the work–home boundary more firmly during his conventional working hours.

Three participants shared stories of shutting the office door but being interrupted by knocking from their children. The closed door was intended to signal the work–home boundary, but children did not recognise this signal. Instead, they sought access to their parents, crossing the border between work and home, and presenting home/family demands into the domestic workplace. Participants did boundary work to establish the work side of the work–home boundary, when working at home with children.

5.4 Work–Home Boundaries are Flexible

Participants used extensive flexibility to shift the work–home boundary, including changing their start time, changing their end time, changing their working pattern (relevant for part-time participants), changing the duration and spread of working time during the working day; and changing the location of work. Participants used temporal and spatial flexibility to meet the perceived demands of Tech work, including managing peaks and troughs in workload, and to collaborate with Tech co-workers and customers in other time zones. Participants also used flexibility to meet home/family demands, usually in connection with pick-up and drop-off of children at childcare.

5.4.1 Flexing Hours to Manage Tech Demands

Participants used flexible working hours to increase or decrease their work duration to align with their workload. During periods of high workload, participants started work early in the morning, working at home (not the Tech office), and they continued working into the evening. Participants reported start times between 05:00 and 07:00 and end times between 22:00 and midnight, during high workload periods.

For example, Andrew worked at home and appreciated the benefit of avoiding commuting time. He explained he could 'work a 20 hour day and still function normally' supporting the cultural norms of *getting the job done* and *long hours*. As an example of flexibility, Andrew recalled he worked until 22:30 one evening with co-workers on a software patch. Andrew 'sat on the lounge in the living room from about 20:00 till about 22:30' saying that 'even then it didn't interfere with anything else'.

When the workload was lower, participants took time away from work and focused on recovery or on personal goals. Nick explained when there is less urgency, 'you can take an hour or two off during the day and just relax and then come back to it'.

Participants took advantage of flexible working arrangements to vary the location of work. Annette negotiated part-time hours when she returned to Tech after her maternity period. (She had resigned from Tech previously.) She sought this arrangement to balance work and family demands, specifically caring for her two young children. Annette's home in Sydney was located approximately 8 km from the CBD and approximately 22 km from the Tech office. She changed her work location to suit her meeting schedule and to minimise time on the road. She travelled to the Tech office when she had internal meetings and she travelled to the CBD to meet customers, but then returned home (rather than going to the office) to continue working on those days. She minimised time spent travelling and, by implication, she was more available for work demands *and* more available for family demands.

Jessica and Bruce used spatial flexibility of work location to decide where to work, on a daily basis. They judged whether to work at home or the Tech office based on work demands rather than home demands. If the work was mainly teleconferences, then they perceived it was better to work at home; if the work was sales meetings then it was better to work in the office.

Two part-time participants used flexible arrangements to vary their working days during the week. Jacqueline shifted her non-working day if there was a meeting that she needed to attend or if she felt it was important that she needed 'to be there'. She characterised her personal flexibility as a response to her manager's flexibility: Jacqueline received support from her manager for her caring responsibilities and, in return, she felt she could be flexible and not rigid about working on a day that was usually her regular non-working day.

Participants were not usually directed by managers to make themselves available, nor did they usually seek management approval for varying start and end times, especially participants working from home. Sue explained how she perceived working early mornings and occasional late nights: 'it's an expectation that I probably put on myself rather than being forced by my manager to do that,' reflecting normative control (Welch &

Welch, 2006), as opposed to manager direction. Sue had occasional work demands outside of conventional working hours and she had a flexible work–home boundary, so she could make herself available when needed.

5.4.2 Flexing Hours to Collaborate Globally

Some participants had regional or global roles at Tech. They worked with customers or co-workers in different time zones around the world. To collaborate effectively, participants worked outside conventional working hours to host or attend virtual meetings with co-workers in distant time zones.

While working globally, participants mentioned several themes. Some participants talked about *trading off, sacrificing* or *paying the price*. They recognised they had to work very early or very late hours, but this afforded them time during conventional working hours and the early evening to be with their families or to attend to personal needs. Some participants talked about choosing working hours as a *personal responsibility* or a *personal choice*. It is notable that managers did *not* formally direct their subordinates to work these hours, thus supporting normative control (Kunda, 1992) through Tech's work–life culture. Instead, participants made these choices by themselves, with an awareness of prevailing organisational norms of being highly available and of getting the job done. Allied to this theme, some participants talked about *continuing to work into personal time* and the ease of doing so when working from home. They recognised this behaviour and some regarded it as a negative behaviour, but, nevertheless, they did not stop working.

Table 5.1 shows a summary of participants who mentioned global collaboration, the location of their co-workers or projects, and the local times that they worked.

Table 5.1 Flexible working times for global collaboration

Participant	Time zone focus	Local times worked
Julian	China	18:00 – 22:00
Bruce	Europe	Up to 22:00
Thomas	New York	06:00 – 09:00
	London	20:00 – 23:00
Jackson	Singapore (meetings with manager)	23:00 – 24:00
Tristan	Global (regular team meeting)	22:00 – 23:30
	Europe	01:00 – 03:00
Dane	United States	Early mornings
	United Kingdom	20:00 onwards
Cherie	New Zealand and United States	06:00 onwards
Lauren	Global (regular project meetings)	04:00 – 05:00
		20:00 – 21:00
Megan	New Zealand	06:00 onwards
	Asia	22:00 onwards
	Europe (regular team meeting)	02:00 – 03:00
Jarrod	United States	00:00 – 04:00
Simone	Asia and Europe	20:00 – 24:00

Jackson's manager worked in Singapore, so Jackson often received calls at 23:00, framing these events as 'a lot of interruptions late in the evening'. His language suggested he believed the evening should be uninterrupted by work demands, yet he did not avoid his work commitments or interactions with his manager. Jackson conformed to the organisational norm of making himself highly available after conventional working hours. His manager acted as a border keeper, of undesirable work borders, by calling Jackson so late at night, reinforcing the expectation of continuous availability.

Bruce also used temporal flexibility to collaborate with co-workers in the afternoon and evening. His US co-workers often sent meeting requests for 01:00 and 02:00 but he generally refused them, unless the meeting was critical or requested by his manager. He was concerned about his reputation, worrying 'somebody is going to start saying "not good enough"'. Bruce made his home boundary impermeable to work demands during overnight hours, but at the same time he recognised there might be unspecified consequences from other people within Tech about his non-attendance. Bruce recognised the trade-off inherent in Tech's flexibility – it worked in his favour, but also in Tech's favour, as he worked additional hours at home, rather than sticking to a classic 9 to 5 schedule.

Tristan used temporal flexibility to vary his working hours to suit his job demands, with calls scheduled variously at 01:00, 02:00 and 06:00. He was the only member of his team based in Asia Pacific, so he needed to structure his work day so he could overlap with co-workers in the United States and Europe, to participate in projects. He was aware of the local times of each of his team members and was willing to stay up late, offering to join his regular team meeting at 22:00, to allow his team to meet conveniently at that time. Tristan perceived that he worked excessive hours but he took personal responsibility for that, saying, 'because I don't say, "No that's enough for the day"'. He noted that since he was working from home, it was easy to keep doing work tasks. Tristan viewed it as his personal accountability to decide when to work and when not to work. Work demands were perceived as important and they required attention, but it was up to Tristan (and other participants) to disconnect to resist those demands. Tristan admitted, 'Told you I'm my own worst enemy', ruefully recognising that his behaviour allowed work demands to penetrate his home domain.

Megan worked in an Asia Pacific (APAC) role meaning she had to work hours that spanned the range from New Zealand to India. In the months prior to the time of the interview, Megan had started working for a manager in Europe and she was expected to attend team meetings at 02:00. She perceived that her manager did not care about this expectation nor did he care about Megan's local time for this meeting. In Megan's case, executives and her manager expected limitless temporal flexibility. Though Megan expressed some frustrations, she did not make herself unavailable to these work demands. Megan's work boundary flexed and expanded to incorporate these additional demands, penetrating the home domain.

Jarrod's story was the most exceptional case of temporal flexibility in this study. Jarrod worked flexible hours, saying he did not have a 'set hour work [sic] at all'. Two days a week, Jarrod worked from midnight until 04:00, to interact with US co-workers during their time zones working hours. He then slept until 08:30, then resumed working. Jarrod then used spatial flexibility to work at home on Thursdays and Fridays. He tried working

in the office on Thursdays and Fridays but found the drive home became risky as he felt 'sleepy behind the wheel' so he resolved to work at home to mitigate that risk. Jarrod's perception of his working lifestyle was that 'it is tough' but 'that is what I signed up for'. Jarrod also used his car as a workspace, taking calls on his mobile phone when driving to and from the office. The use of mobile communication technologies enabled Jarrod to be constantly available, to meet work demands from customers and co-workers. Jarrod had an expanded and flexible work boundary but he also took personal time to recuperate. He used spatial flexibility to enable him to meet work demands effectively (and safely).

5.4.3 Flexing Hours to Manage Home/Family Demands

Participants used flexible hours to manage home/family demands, in addition to responding to Tech demands. Participants working from home and also with young children often used temporal flexibility to leave work and attend to home/family in the morning and in the late afternoon and early evening. Thomas and Dane both used the afternoon non-Tech time to pick up their children, take them to sports events and prepare family meals. Simone, working part-time from home, was in charge of drop-off two days per week and she started 'a bit later' on those days. On the days when she did not have to drop off her children, she started earlier 'still in my pyjamas'. Jarrod had evening calls on some days so he aimed to 'get home a bit early to spend time with the kids before they go to sleep'. He said 'that's the price I have to pay', thus recognising the flexibility sacrifice: he could work at different times and at different locations to meet work demands – in fact, he could only be effective at his job if he did it this way – but he devoted long hours to Tech consequently. These participants used temporal flexibility to achieve job goals but also to be present fathers and mothers. They framed flexible working time as a method to achieve the right work–life balance for their circumstances.

5.5 Conditions where Work–Home Boundaries are Inflexible

Participants in the Customer Support division were required to work shifts, thus start time and end time were fixed. These participants worked at home but could not take advantage of temporal flexibility, when they were on shift. At the beginning of the day, they started work early, around 07:00, in a separate room in the house, often with the door closed to signal that they were working and could not be disturbed. The spouse made breakfast, prepared the children for the day ahead, and dropped the children off at childcare or school. Melanie (part-time) noted how the first hour was challenging because her children wanted to spend time with her, yet she was officially working in that hour.

> **Melanie:** So my structure is 07:00 to 15:30. They're our working hours normally here in Support. Which can be challenging because at 07:00, so their father takes them to childcare. Childcare opens at 07:30, so that first hour of 07:00 to 08:00 can be a little bit hectic. And they'll see me on my desk, so I have a study. They'll see me on my desk and they'll know I'm working and they wanna sticky beak, etc. So between 07:00 and 08:00 to be honest with you, I do log on, I check my emails as much as possible. But I know that it is not going to be my most productive hours because it will be interrupted by the kids having a sticky beak or wanting a cuddle or to say good bye or something like that.

During the shift, participants were expected to be at their computers, to answer telephone calls and instant messaging chats immediately. Lauren worried if she did not reply immediately that her manager and co-workers might start thinking that she was not working. This explanation recognises the normative control imposed by the Customer Support division's culture and Tech's broader culture.

The shift ended around 15:00. This time aligned conveniently with their children's schedules, so participants picked up their children from childcare or school. Some participants continued to work after the shift ended, to host meetings with customers (at the customer's request) or to continue researching customer issues.

For these participants, flexibility for start and end time was not permitted, since they were expected to be available to answer customer calls and process customer issues during their shift time. Participants did boundary work to establish a boundary between being a parent (thus available to their children) and being a Tech employee, in the same spatial location, since temporal flexibility was denied to them. However, young children were liable to ignore these boundary signals, drawing the participant back into the role of parent, rather than employee. The work domain was highly permeable to home demands during the period in the early morning when the children were getting ready for the day ahead. After the shift ended, participants had an option to use temporal boundary flexibility to work longer hours to meet customer demands and assist other support teams.

Shaun's story was exceptional in this study – he was the only participant who worked his payroll hours and did not work any additional hours. He worked in the Customer Support division and worked strictly his shift hours, 08:30 to 16:30. He was not involved in drop-off and pick-up of his children and he was not involved in housework during work hours. He did not do Tech work at night and at weekends.

> **Shaun:** Yes, I'm finished, because I have plenty of other things to do. I take it [...] finish on time. [...] I don't do work in the weekends. I don't accept any of those things at all.

5.6 Controlling Flexibility: Keeping a Time Balance Sheet

Though participants had freedom to vary start times and end times, they were also aware of the need to keep to Tech expectations. They kept a time balance sheet in their minds to account for additions and subtractions of work time and personal time. To arrive at these findings, I reviewed all transcripts to identify informal rules, usual and unusual behaviours, norms and guidelines concerning time devoted to work and time devoted to home and family.

Time balance sheet calculations were always informal, except for one case (Narelle). Over a weekly basis, participants ensured that they contributed at least the minimum required number of hours to Tech. Table 5.2 shows the range of rules that participants used to add and subtract from their time balance sheets.

Table 5.2 Participant rules for keeping a time balance sheet

Participant	Additions	Subtractions
Leonie	Worked 1.5 hours on Monday (non-working day), per manager instruction	Finished 1.5 hours early on Thursday (working day)
Bianca	Worked a few hours at home in the morning then worked in the afternoon to make up hours	Subtracted time for early pick-up (at 11:30)
Wendy	Worked from 21:00 to attend conference call or to make up time	Finished work early (at 16:00) or attended personal appointment during working time
Annette	Worked in the evenings to make up time	Subtracted time when arriving at work late after drop-off or leaving early for pick-up
Sharon	Worked in the evenings, to attend meetings	Arrived at work late (deliberately)
Tanya	Worked an hour at the end of the working day to make up time	Attended personal appointment with children for one hour
Natasha	Worked an extra hour on a working day or a non-working day	Attended school or medical appointment for one hour
Rachel	Worked additional hours in subsequent week	Sometimes worked less than target of 30 hours per week
Tyler	Finished later to make up time	Started later occasionally
Dane	Worked after 20:00 to make up time	Finished at 16:30 and took children to swimming
Andrew	Worked additional hours	Attended school presentation for child
Kim	Worked from 20:00 to 22:00 to make up time	Attended personal appointment from 15:00 to 17:00
Mary	Worked in the evenings (18:30 to 19:30)	Finished earlier (16:00)
Tristan	Worked in the evenings (22:00 to 23:30)	Took personal time during the day
Cherie	Worked early mornings (from 06:00)	Finished earlier (16:00)
Simone	Started earlier than usual	Took personal time during the day

These rules illustrate that work from home and part-time participants used flexible working arrangements to shift working hours earlier or later for two reasons. Firstly, when work demands required the participant to work earlier or later than conventional working hours, they would add those hours to their time balance sheet, then subtract hours at other points during the day by taking personal time. Some participants would work in a single continuous session (e.g., Cherie, Tyler), while other participants would split the day up, alternating periods of work time with periods of personal time (e.g., Tristan, Kim). Secondly, when home/family demands required participants to attend a school or medical appointment or drop off or pick up children, they would subtract those hours from their time balance sheet, then add hours by working in the evenings or, occasionally, on the non-working day (in the case of part-time participants).

Participants constructed a flexible home–work boundary, allowing them to step away from the office, or their domestic workplace, or start late and leave early, when needed. However, participants were acutely aware that flexibility also carried with it the

accountability to work their payroll hours, at a minimum, over the course of a week. In these cases, it is notable that participants felt that they had the freedom to make these decisions without usually asking their managers. They simply used the time that they needed for school events or personal appointments, then returned to work demands later.

Only one part-time participant, Narelle, was required to complete a formal timesheet. She used this timesheet to calculate the time worked versus the time spent on home and family. She adjusted her hours to make up the required hours for Tech.

The time balance sheet rules also illustrate how the cultural norm of *long hours* (discussed in section 4.2.3) was operationalised. These participants used their time balance sheets to work what they perceived was required, but they were also careful not to work excessive hours. It is also true that participants worked early and late, so while it may appear that participants were working long hours, those participants that kept time balance sheets were more likely to be working close to perceived payroll hours. Working hours were spread throughout the day, interspersed with personal time, rather than clustered into conventional (daytime) working hours.

5.7 Work–Home Boundaries are Permeable

The boundary between work and home was highly permeable for participants. Work frequently penetrated into the home domain, at night and over the weekend, for almost all participants, and on the non-working day for part-time participants. Boundary permeability was facilitated by mobile communication technologies provided by Tech. Home demands also penetrated the work domain, especially when young children were sick and required care.

5.7.1 Drivers of Work–Home Permeability

Among other factors, two drivers of work–home permeability emerged from analysis: knowledge work colonises the mind; and checking email is not real work.

Knowledge Work Colonises the Mind. Six participants shared their insights into the nature of knowledge work. Thoughts about work remained in their minds, even after conventional working hours had ended. Participants tried to establish a mental boundary but found it difficult or impossible to switch off and found that work was on their minds all the time. The work–home boundary was thus highly permeable

Emma shared her perceptions of her role in the Customer Support division and how it was difficult to avoid thinking about her customers and their support cases.

> **Emma:** And I try to fit everything I can within those hours and try not to think about it after hours, because it's really hard taking the work home. I know I'm at home but you know, leaving my office room and not thinking about it and not looking at my computer. So you know, as soon as I login, I'm in work mode, and as soon as I switch off my computer, I try not to, you know, think about the work because our work is 24 hours a day and you know, you can get customers calling in after hours and you know, and you just have that tendency to follow up or think about it.

Checking Email is Not Real Work. Four participants spoke about their perceptions of checking and processing email. Sometimes 'doing email' was not regarded as real work. Ronald talked about checking email first, then starting his work later. He implied that checking email is something that happens before real work happens, drawing a distinction between *email* and *work*.

> **Ronald:** Very different actually, but most of time I'll start as soon as I get up, check my emails at about say 07:30. My day probably starts at about 08:00 or 08:30.

Other participants initially stated that they did *not* work at weekends, but then quickly clarified that they *did* check emails. Jarrod framed his weekend work as 'I just do it because I care for my business', so his weekend checking of email was his method of nurturing his business and making sure that nothing bad happened.

Participants saw checking and processing email as something less than or other than real work. Instead, real work was something else, perhaps creating documents or presentations, or working on software code, or having meetings with customers or internal clients. Thus, checking email at the weekend was perceived as not working, even though participants were engaged in Tech demands. The act of checking email crossed the work–home boundary and penetrated the home domain, with participants making the home domain permeable.

5.7.2 Work Demands Penetrate the Home Domain: Workday Nights and Weekends

When participants were at home, outside of conventional working hours, the home domain was usually highly permeable to work demands. This applied to full- and part-time participants, those working in the office all week, those working some of the week in the office and some of the week at home, and those working at home all week. Participants gave three principal reasons for working at home after conventional working hours: (1) serving Tech executives or collaborating with Tech co-workers in other time zones, especially the US and Asia; (2) using evening and weekend time to complete administrative tasks and process email, when conventional working hours were filled with meetings (this was especially true for managers); and (3) working with customers who had longer hours of operation (e.g., providing customer support at weekends to customers in the hospitality industry). Less frequently, the work was creating or reviewing documents, spreadsheets or presentations.

Some participants justified working at night and at weekends when their departments had busy times, typically immediately before or after the fiscal quarter ended. This was frequently the case for those in the Sales division and supporting departments like Finance and Legal. Other participants justified attending meetings late at night to participate and influence discussion within their group, rather than missing out.

Some participants chose to check and process their email late at night or early in the morning, justifying this by saying that they wanted to better manage a high workload, or to be forewarned of potential issues, or to send responses to co-workers in other time zones, aiming to receive a response in a shorter timeframe to avoid delays. In some cases, conventional working hours were filled with meetings, especially for managers, and so

individual work could only be completed in the evenings. Vanessa's experience (middle manager, working part-time) illustrates this, highlighting organisational norms about the need to respond swiftly to queries and reviews. Vanessa used the phrase 'spare time' to indicate her personal time in the evenings, yet this time was hardly spare: it was readily consumed by intense work demands that could not be met by working conventional hours.

> **Vanessa:** That's for meetings and then if I have follow on work from meetings, it's usually in spare time. So, the challenge is that, you know, there are, there are, these are people with high expectations about turnaround and availability and I try to manage it up front and clearly tell them what my situation is. And so far, it's been ok. Although I feel deep down I would prefer to be doing a better job and I would be doing a better job if I had more time. I feel like I am not really at the level that I should be, but it's the *best* I can do in the time that I have. So, it's a little bit frustrating, I guess I am trying to say. (laughs) But yeah part-time work in my role is very difficult.

Working at home at night and at the weekend was unpaid and framed as a personal choice, rather than mandated by managers or by corporate policies. Yet this so-called personal choice reflected the perceived constraints embedded within Tech's cultural norms, since these participants were striving to make themselves highly available and appear committed to Tech. The work–home boundary was permeable: work was performed in the home domain. One of the consequences of this permeability was sacrificing or trading off personal time for participants. Bruce's story was typical here.

Bruce (individual contributor, working full-time in a global team) noted that he had a large workload at times. He had to take phone calls which 'really eat into my personal time'. This remark shows how he felt it was necessary that he make himself available for work demands during what he considered was personal time. His work–home boundary was permeable to work demands. Bruce traded his personal time for work demands, but in a flexible fashion that suited him. His perception was that the flexibility was highly valuable to him. Bruce sometimes checked his email on Saturday, since it was Friday in the US, noting that 'occasionally, you can see there's been a panic overnight'. He processed his emails on Sundays, in order to make his Monday 'clear'. He framed this work as 'part of the job in some ways', saying that he felt that it was necessary in his role, so that he would have less email to deal with ('200 emails rather than 100') on Monday morning. Bruce's family had an interesting boundary-forming tactic of 'no electronic time' at particular points during the week: they all switched off all electronic devices. This made the work–home boundary impermeable, if only for that short period of time. Work demands could not penetrate the home domain during 'no electronic time' as Bruce was utterly disconnected.

Two participants, Janine and Shaun, followed segmentist strategies, avoiding work at night and deliberately separating work and home.

> **Janine:** There's nothing that I really get done at night. So, I guess it depends on the responsibilities. But, I have made a conscious effort to separate the two. When I walk out, that's it.

5.7.3 Work Demands Penetrate the Home Domain: Non-working Days for Part-timers

Non-working days for part-time participants were hardly idylls untrammelled by the demands of the workplace. Instead, part-time participants typically used a portion of their non-working day to do some form of Tech work, most of the time. Part-time participants did this work as a personal choice, except for Leonie.

Leonie was directed by her manager to work on her official non-working day. Her role involved a weekly cycle of preparing a spreadsheet of financial figures by collecting information from her team, starting every Monday, her non-working day. Her boss simply expected Leonie to make herself available by framing the time commitment as very small. But, the additional work was much more than the picture her manager had painted, especially during fiscal quarter end. She could not make personal plans on Mondays due to the higher workload. Leonie's manager regarded her non-working time as potential working time, even though it was unpaid. He readily and casually used this time without consulting Leonie and without measuring the personal impact on her. Leonie was forced to subsume her family's needs to Tech demands for at least a few hours of her non-working day. Leonie's manager shaped undesirable permeability of work demands into the home domain.

All other female participants made themselves available in some form during the non-working day. In the Customer Support division, Stacey, Emma and Melanie felt compelled to check their email inboxes and their open cases to ensure that customer requests were taken care of and not hindered, supporting normative control (McLoughlin et al., 2005) in this division of Tech. Melanie explained in detail how she structured her non-working day around Tech customer needs and around the schedule of her children – she, like all other mothers with young children, could only work when the children were asleep or occupied. This working arrangement gave her a greater sense of control over her workload and, thus, a feeling of security. Both Stacey and Melanie passed urgent cases to co-workers or managers if they could not complete the required work on their non-working day.

Like full-time participants processing email at the weekend, Bianca and Sarah spoke about checking their email on the evening of their non-working day, prior to returning to work the following day. They did this to avoid spending excessive time the next morning processing email. These participants justified their behaviour as managing the workload and preparing for the following work day in order that they could work more efficiently and work 'better' during conventional working hours. This suggests that Tech is not making appropriate adjustments to workloads for part-time employees.

5.7.4 Home Demands Penetrate the Work Domain: Sick Children

Participants' stories of sick children illustrate the permeability of the work domain for home and family demands. Sarah said that she would not normally answer her phone in work meetings, but 'if it is day care there's an emergency' and she would leave and pick her child up from day care. Other female participants confirmed that childcare providers always called the mother first if their children were ill. It was seldom that fathers were called in the first instance. This signifies the mother's role as the primary parent. When

mothers left the workplace at short notice to care for sick children, this signified to their co-workers that they had commitments outside of Tech, moving their identity away from the ideal worker. Yet, participants who reported this experience generally felt supported by their managers and co-workers rather than treated poorly.

5.7.5 Working with Children at Home

After sick children were collected from childcare providers, they needed to be cared for at home. Twenty-one female part-time participants talked about their rules for working with children at home. These practices and guidelines revealed deeper cultural assumptions about what participants felt was appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Table 5.3 depicts the four scenarios of working with children at home and the attitudes of participants.

Table 5.3 Attitudes of part-time participants about working with children at home

Health status of child	During conventional working hours	Outside conventional working hours (evenings and non-working days)
Healthy child	Unprofessional to work at home with children	Acceptable to work at home with children
Sick child	Acceptable to work at home with children	Acceptable to work at home with children

Participants used two factors to decide what was acceptable and not acceptable, when working at home with children. If the participant's child was healthy and could be cared for by others, then participants perceived that it was unprofessional to work at home with children, specifically during conventional working hours. This sentiment further implies that being a professional at Tech assumes being unencumbered by children. However, if the child was sick and the participant had to care for the child, or if the participant was working outside of conventional working hours, then it was acceptable to work at home with children. For example, Leonie told of doing a conference call with her sick child sleeping in her arms. Participants advised their managers, co-workers and customers that they were at home with their sick children and that there might be some background noise, like crying.

Vanessa used the norm of professional behaviour to describe her personal guidelines about having virtual meetings when her children were at home with her, thus echoing the image of the ideal worker. She spoke using a range of emotional markers: having to apologise, feeling that it was 'not good', feeling that it was inappropriate. After trying a few times, Vanessa eventually resolved to not work from home. The boundary between Vanessa's work and her home was crossed by her children, causing her to feel 'embarrassed'. Though she tried to establish the boundary, it was ignored by her children. In Vanessa's view, the only solution was to draw the boundary even more firmly by moving away from the domestic workplace entirely and working elsewhere (at a nearby relative's house).

Other participants avoided placing calls or answering the phone when children were in the background, making exceptions only when the identity of the caller was known and the

caller was an intimate co-worker. Yet other participants preferred to answer the phone when children were present to make themselves highly available.

Melanie contrasted her experience being full-time with being part-time and working at home with her children present. In an interesting paradox, she felt less stressed, happier, more balanced and more in control working *full-time* than working *part-time*. Though she talked about trying to build a boundary between home and work, in her case the pressure of work was intense and she felt she was sacrificing her personal downtime and also not being a good mother (conforming to the ideals and norms of motherhood) by putting the children in front of the television while she tried to work.

> **Melanie:** I was happy to work from home a couple hours here and there, but I had the kids with me, so it was incredibly difficult then, getting some quiet time to just, and that would have been my downtime, I am then sacrificing my downtime as well, or just putting them in front of the TV a little bit. So, (sigh), it doesn't always work. And I will put it, when I came back full-time, I'm actually at a much better, much happier, purely because I feel that my work is under control. And therefore I am not as stressed. So whilst I do miss out on time with children, etc., overall I feel more balanced.

Fathers had a slightly different perspective, in this study. Jack did not work extensively at home because he believed his children were a distraction. In addition, he did not have a separate office space so he worked at his kitchen table, in effect forcing him to be in view of his family and interruptible. He would have had highly permeable home boundaries when attempting to work at home. He avoided this situation, preferring to work at the office most of the time. He would (rarely) work at home when his youngest child was 'having a nap', in line with the norms and expectations expressed by female part-time participants. Samuel sometimes worked with his children at home, especially during school holidays, but they were of an age where they did not require constant attention, though he sometimes made lunch for them during the day. If his children were sick, then Samuel would apply for carer's leave. He did not try to work when his children were sick. Samuel constructed a work boundary that was mildly permeable to home demands. However, when he had a sick child, his home boundary was impermeable to work. These arrangements for fathers were opposite to what part-time women did—part-time women were willing to consider some work at home while their child was sick, whereas Samuel choose to not work under the same circumstances. This suggests that women perceived the need to establish that they were committed to Tech and serious about their work, while, for men, their commitment was more assumed. This stance clearly added to performance pressures for women.

Some fathers worked at home with school-age children, but tended to segregate working time from family time, because these children did not require constant supervision. However, this was an occasional situation rather than a permanent arrangement. Ronald, for example, worked at home with his children present on Fridays. On other days, the children were not at home.

5.8 Conditions where Work–Home Boundaries are Impermeable

The work–home boundary was impermeable to work demands under three conditions: children's breakfast and drop-off time, pick-up time, and children's dinner time. Participants' treatment of school events shows that some participants opted for permeability while others opted for impermeability.

5.8.1 Drop-off and Pick-up

The daily ritual of drop-off and pick-up shaped the work–home boundary for participants with dependent children. Some participants blocked time on their Tech calendars for the morning drop-off period, meaning that they were unavailable for meetings, making the home boundary impermeable to work demands. Parents focused on caring for children and taking them to school or childcare. In the afternoon, around 15:00, some participants picked up their children from school, including several fathers who worked from home. Some fathers did pick-up regularly, while others did it on a casual basis, either as a way to help their spouses when the spouse was busy, or at times when they did not have competing Tech meetings at the same time. Thus, participants could slip away for periods of time, temporarily leaving the domestic workplace and the work domain, crossing into the home domain to attend to family demands. The work–home boundary was thus impermeable during pick-up and drop-off.

Cherie's boundary-making tactic was to block out time on her calendar from 07:30 to 08:30 in the morning, for breakfast and drop-off, making her work–home boundary impermeable to work demands. On the one hand, Cherie was using an integrationist strategy, placing her drop-off time on her work calendar, thus mingling a personal appointment with work appointments; on the other hand, Cherie was using a segmentist strategy, separating her family time from her work time.

By contrast to other participants, Ronald managed to *avoid* drop-off and pick-up most days, with his wife taking care of the children and doing most of the housework. Ronald framed this as allowing him to continue with his fast-paced role. He said that his wife was 'just so diligent and she covers most of it whenever she is here'. Ronald created a work environment at home that allowed him to offer maximum availability for work demands, closely matching the unencumbered ideal worker.

5.8.2 School Events

As noted when discussing how participants kept a time balance sheet (Section 5.6), several participants took time out of the work day to attend school events with their children. Similar to Cherie's approach with drop-off, Anastasia booked the time in her work diary, attended the school event, then worked a few additional hours in the evening when needed. But she also pointed out that there were days when she did not work her core hours. Anastasia's use of her work diary to record personal events demonstrated an integrationist strategy. She did not ask her manager's permission, demonstrating how acceptable this practice was, and, instead, made the work–home boundary impermeable to

work demands while she attended the school event, reinforcing her role as present mother.

> **Anastasia:** I'm more like, ok, well, the girls have got something on at assembly today. Ah, I'm just going to go. So I block out my diary and I go to the assembly and enjoy it and I am present for them and then I come home and log back on. Now I might have to work a few extra hours that night after they go to bed. You do it. You just juggle it. Some days I don't even work my core hours.

In contrast, Megan was unique in that she resisted home demands when there were more important work demands. She gave the example of attending a swimming carnival with her children. Though she admitted that she felt guilty not attending school events, she prioritised Tech demands over family demands. Megan's work boundary was impermeable to home demands in this example. Her senior vice president acted as a powerful border keeper of the work boundary and she paid attention to work demands rather than home/family demands. Yet her feelings of guilt hint that she felt that she should have paid more attention to the role of being a present mother rather than being a Tech employee.

> **Megan:** Maybe both. Because I do, I feel guilty not attending school things. But if there's a swimming carnival on and there's a meeting with my senior VP, I will do the work stuff.

5.8.3 Dinner, Bath and Bedtime Story

The late afternoon and early evening period was another moment of impermeability for participants with dependent children. Participants (including part-time, full-time, and working from home) reserved family time in the early evening to take care of children by feeding them, bathing them and putting them to bed. Participants advised co-workers that they could not do calls at specific times (e.g., 18:30 to 20:30) thus erecting a firm work–home boundary, impermeable to work demands, for that time period. One participant, Wendy, even banned talk of work matters with her husband during family time in the early evening, further reinforcing impermeability of the home domain during this time.

As discussed above, if work was required, then participants would dissolve the work–boundary when the children were sleeping. Once the children were in bed, participants returned to work and checked their email, attended teleconferences, or made and received telephone calls.

Mothers and fathers used this practice equally, in this study. Some fathers, like Thomas and Jarrod (both working at home), were responsible for cooking meals for the family. They used non-working time in the late afternoon and early evening to care for their children and contribute to household labour, making an impermeable work–home boundary for that period. Jackson and Ethan (working full-time in the office) left work between 18:30 and 19:00, so they could care for their children. They resumed working on their laptop computers around 21:30, using spatial flexibility and mobile communication technologies to work at home in the evenings. They crafted firm, impermeable work–home boundaries when caring for their children, but then dismantled those boundaries to meet work demands when the children were sleeping.

5.9 Micro-transitions: Interweaving Home Demands During the Work Day

When participants worked at home, whether all of the week or only some of the week, they did boundary work to establish the boundary between work spaces and tasks, and home and family spaces and tasks. During the working day and into the night, they made multiple *micro-transitions* (Ashforth et al., 2000; Ruppel et al., 2013) between the work domain and the home domain. The micro-transitions served to weave home and family tasks seamlessly into the working day, illustrating the permeable work–home boundary in the domestic workplace. Participants reported these micro-transitions matter-of-factly, showing that the micro-transitions were considered to be unremarkable, ordinary and part of the normal day. Participants shared a range of examples, including: doing laundry, hanging up the washing, emptying the dishwasher, cooking or preparing a meal, mowing the lawn, going to the supermarket, meeting a personal trainer, going to the gym, attending a personal medical or legal appointment, having a cup of tea, or playing with children.

One theme that emerged here was the concept of *taking a healthy break:* participants recognised that work in the domestic workplace had the potential to monopolise their time. Working at home, without interruptions typical in an office environment, could be very intense, so participants had to consciously take care of themselves and be vigilant against all-consuming working patterns. Thus, when participants left their home office, they framed this as a means to insert a healthy break into the work day. They lacked the boundary markers that office-based employees employed, such as the typical commute to and from the office, or visiting the office canteen or a local café in a social group to order morning coffee, for example.

Mary framed the time spent on household chores as a sensible and healthy break from sitting at her desk. She and other participants noted the benefit of being able to complete household chores interwoven with the work week, leaving her weekends free for personal pursuits rather than housework or Tech demands.

> **Mary:** So I actually use laundry, making lunch, you know, doing garden chores or whatever, putting the laundry out, I do that to distract myself from standing all of the time and being static. So I actually fit in a lot of chores in amongst my job. So actually a lot more of my weekend is my own. Because those ten minute chores are done while I am taking a break from work. So actually it works out beautifully as far as that goes. A lot more of my weekend is to myself and work doesn't encroach on my weekend or most of my evening.

Ronald used micro-transitions, between work tasks, meetings and emails, to spend time with his family. He easily made the micro-transition between being a Tech employee and being a father. However, his time commitment to his children was strictly limited to ‘a few minutes’ rather than hours. Yet he was also able to be an involved father during those moments.

> **Ronald:** But on the days that they [Ronald’s children] are home, every Friday for example, once Daddy shuts the door to his office it's you know they got the understanding that Daddy is now working and so he needs to be, the kids need to be,

> need to leave him alone. But it has allowed me to spend a lot more I guess you know few minutes here and there that I can spend with them. So that I'm present you know if I need to, if I get a phone call from the school and my wife is at work, and you know one of the kids needs to be picked up because they're not feeling well, it has allowed that flexibility as well for me to go and pick them up.

5.10 Controlling Permeability

Tech's flexible working policies gave participants a great deal of freedom to work at any time and in any place, yet participants also had to balance their home and family demands with Tech demands. Participants used a range of tactics to control the permeability of their personal work–home boundary, including: managing mobile device connectedness, filtering incoming calls and emails, and, for part-time participants, adopting guilt-free mindset for the non-working day.

5.10.1 Managing Mobile Device Connectedness

Participants relied on their mobile devices (smartphones and laptops) to stay connected to work demands, when at home, and especially after conventional working hours. The mobile device was the vector that penetrated the home boundary, so managing device connectedness was a method of controlling permeability. Participants used either of two tactics with their mobile phones: (1) disconnect, reflecting more impermeable boundaries and more segmentist preferences; or (2) remain connected, reflecting more permeable boundaries and more integrationist preferences. Table 5.4 shows the range of connection and disconnection tactics for mobile phones, discussed by participants.

Table 5.4 Participant tactics for managing mobile phone connectedness

Disconnection strategies	Connection strategies
Turn off phone between midnight and 06:00. Avoid answering phone when it rings. (Thomas)	Never turn off mobile phone or laptop. Answer all phone calls. (Megan)
Turn phone to silent mode. (Jackson)	Answer phone calls when awake but not during sleep. (Anastasia)
Turn phone to unavailable mode. (Ethan)	Answer phone calls even when phone rings during sleep. (Kim, Jessica)
No electronic time. (Bruce)	

Four male participants spoke about specific disconnection practices, while four female participants spoke about connection practices. Men were more likely to feel empowered to make themselves partially unavailable or to disconnect, creating a less permeable boundary at home, protecting them and their families from work demands. Women were more likely to make themselves more available, creating a home boundary that was frequently permeable to work demands. It seems women felt they had to prove their commitment and the alignment with the ideal worker norm, whereas men were assumed to be ideal workers and appeared to have more freedom to make disconnection decisions. Tanya gave an alternative reasoning for keeping the mobile phone turned on: she felt she needed to be available if school or day care called about her children, rather than being available for work calls.

Turning to laptops, some participants made a point of shutting down the laptop computer completely when the work day was finished. This shutdown ritual was a signal that the participant was transitioning from work to home, aligning the participant to a segmentist strategy. Furthermore, since the laptop was off, work could not penetrate the home domain, making the home boundary impermeable. Yet, even for these participants with a shut-down ritual, they admitted that, occasionally, they would log in during the evening when they became aware (before the work day ended) of critical or urgent tasks that needed their attention. Other participants left the computer on but modified their online status. Tristan (working from home) turned off his instant messaging application, thus he could not be contacted by his instant messaging buddies. He thus created an impermeable home boundary that was protected against work demands emanating from the domestic workplace.

Some participants had a separate mobile phone for personal use, again attempting to establish a firmer, less permeable work–home boundary. The business mobile phone could be turned off, making the participant unavailable for Tech demands and making the home domain impermeable, while the personal mobile phone would be left on.

5.10.2 Filtering Using Elaborate Heuristics

Participants (especially part-time participants) filtered incoming emails, voicemails and telephone calls on their non-working day. These filtering behaviours constituted boundary work to control the permeability of their home domain to work demands. Most often, the home domain was moderately permeable to work demands on the non-working day. Participants used specific strategies and elaborate heuristics to make themselves only partially available, rather than available to everyone all the time. They did not answer every single call or every single email on their non-working day. They used rules based on their relationship with the person making contact. If the person was of high status, or their direct manager, or an important internal client, then that would be judged as more important and it was more likely the employee would answer that call or email, making the home boundary permeable. If the call or email was from someone who was of lower status, or could be dealt with by someone else, or if the message was not perceived as urgent, requiring an immediate response, then that communication was ignored, making the home boundary impermeable. Overall, the home boundary was differentially permeable on the non-working day for part-time participants.

5.10.3 Guilt-free Entitlement

Part-time participants appreciated the ability to have a guilt-free non-work day. By being part-time, participants had the option of saying ‘No’ to work. This was another tactic to control permeability, by creating an impermeable home boundary, with a ready-made justification that the non-working day was unpaid. Participants used this time particularly to be with their children and to enjoy activities with their children. Annette explained she had ‘elected to have one day guilt-free per fortnight’, wanting to ‘keep balance and be a mother and to switch off and plug out’. Danielle felt that overall she had a high workload and worked long hours, but she ‘was willing to sacrifice that [her personal time at night and at weekends] in order to have that one day with that one-on-one time with my child’.

In all these cases, participants wanted to be active and involved mothers. Corporate norms expected intense work, long hours and constant availability, and these participants resisted those norms using their part-time hours to reserve guilt-free time to be the model mothers that they aimed to be.

5.11 Outcomes of Boundary Work

Participants combined flexibility and permeability of the work–home boundary to craft a reputation of high availability, while simultaneously allowing for brief and temporary absences from work, termed micro-invisibilities, during the working day. Some participants who worked from home occasionally perceived being lonely and isolated, yet others did not.

5.11.1 Crafting a Reputation of High Availability

Participants made themselves highly available using Tech's flexibility and communication technologies. They used boundary flexibility to vary the times and location of work and they used boundary permeability to work in locations other than the Tech office, principally the domestic workplace. Participants recognised the cultural norms of constant availability and getting the job done, and responded by trying to make themselves available for extended periods during the work day, and on into the night and at weekends. Their responses were not casual or accidental. Instead, they intentionally *crafted a reputation of high availability*, using mobile communication technologies to answer calls and write emails outside of conventional working hours, equivalent to the late 20th century practice of leaving a jacket on the office chair to indicate presence (Dent, 1991).

Ethan's experience as a middle manager in the Sales division illustrated crafting of reputations. As he put it, 'You're never really disconnected'. He observed that being highly available was habitual for him and he perceived that many other Tech employees did the same thing, reinforcing this behaviour as a Tech cultural norm.

> **Ethan:** Yeah. But it's, it's how it is. It's what you're accustomed to. And I think many, many people do it. You can sometimes be more assured of getting an email response at 22:00 at night from people, than you can be during the day. Because you spend so much of your day in meetings.

Tech's culture operated by invisibly exerting normative control. Ethan was keenly aware that other people were working as late as 22:00 and he certainly felt that he could not complete his work demands any other way, because he attended many meetings during conventional working hours. Interestingly, Ethan ascribed the need to do this evening work as *personal* choice, not mandated. Organisational culture powerfully shaped Ethan's behaviour and the behaviour of others surrounding him. His remarks reinforce the norm of urgency and crisis.

> **Ethan:** To do that evening? It's a self-driven, there's no expectation, other than your personal drive to be on top of or in front of or caught up on, or, but it's, you're never in

front of, right. You're always [...] You're never in front, yeah. So it's just about keeping head above water in some respects, right.

5.11.2 Micro-invisibilities

Participants who worked from home for some or all of the week frequently constructed short, temporary absences from work demands. Yet, these absences were invisible to managers and co-workers, because some work from home participants, like Dane and Andrew, did not usually announce their absences. Other participants, like Cherie and Anastasia, booked appointments in their calendars, to avoid competing work demands, yet the purpose of the 'meeting' would have been obscured to co-workers. Thus participants were able to take advantage of *micro-invisibilities* to attend to home/family demands. They could be present mothers and involved fathers, while still retaining their professional reputations as committed and hard-working employees. Flexible working arrangements permitted involved parenting, while simultaneously permitting conformity to Tech's cultural norms.

5.11.3 Loneliness and Isolation

Working at home all week could turn out to be a lonely and isolating experience. Participants working some of the week in the office and some of the week at home used the time in the office to meet their needs for social, face-to-face interaction.

When working virtually, effective work relied on having good relationships to support collaboration. Working from home required participants to form partnerships in novel ways to establish professional working relationships with co-workers. Cherie found it hard to establish new relationships when she started a new role, working from home, with co-workers in Sydney and Melbourne. To overcome this problem, she travelled to Sydney and met important co-workers face to face, then 'took them out' and 'had a coffee with them so that we could build up a little bit of rapport'.

> **Cherie:** And I'm finding since then, they're a lot -- because they know me and they know I'm an actual person, I think it's a way of working with them and finding that relationship a little bit more effective, where previously, you're kind of just a number because you know, Tech is a big corporation. And you know, being separated from everyone else and trying to deal with it remotely is very difficult unless you get that relationship going, as well.

Other participants did not feel lonely and isolated working at home, but used infrequent visits to nearby Tech offices as an opportunity for social interaction, to counteract social isolation and to connect with co-workers. Andrew was comfortable working at home by himself, but he perceived a gulf with his team in India, referring to himself as an 'outsider' and 'not part of the team', contributing to a sense of isolation.

5.12 Taking a Leave of Absence

Five male participants and one female participant told stories about taking an unpaid leave of absence. One participant was in the age group 35–39; one participant was in the

age group 40–44; and four participants were in the age group 45–49. Three were individual contributors and three were managers. The style of leave of absence varied: four participants took the leave of absence during Tech employment; one participant had one leave of absence during Tech employment and then a career break between employment, but was later rehired by Tech; and one participant had a career break before joining Tech. The duration of leave varied between three months and two-and-a-half years. The participant with a career break was excluded from analysis as their experiences did not relate directly to Tech employment policies.

The reasons for seeking a leave of absence provide intriguing insights into how participants perceived their roles and Tech's response to their requests. Darren and Thomas took their leaves to travel with their families. Damien wanted a break from work to be with his wife as she pursued her personal goals in Europe, while James wanted a break from work to accompany his wife to care for her parents in Europe. All these participants had children, so they took the children out of school for the duration of the leave. Ethan took a leave of absence after his marriage, using the time as an extended honeymoon, travelling widely to visit family overseas. None of the participants sought leave to build skills or knowledge to support career growth. Instead, the reasons were family-related. These participants appeared to put their families first during their leaves of absence. Two participants said they had 'no choice' regarding the leave, reflecting the priority and importance of family matters associated with the leave.

Darren regarded other co-workers as existing in an 'uncomfortable comfort zone' where they would not contemplate an unpaid leave of absence, but, by contrast, his own view was he felt empowered and free to negotiate what he wanted. Participants reported co-workers were surprised when each participant announced their leave of absence, expressing admiration or the wish that they could do the same thing.

> **James:** So, they were intrigued. They were intrigued. They were, 'Oh I did not know that that option was available'. And, it is publicised, so it is not like it is hidden anywhere. There is a policy, quite a clear policy.

During the months away from work, participants found themselves transformed, refreshed and recharged. Fathers took on the role of primary parent, spending extended time with their children, acting as househusbands or full-time dads. Though their original motivation for taking leave was slightly different, the connection with their children turned out to be highly valuable for these fathers. By doing this, breadwinner fathers were displaying their deep commitment to their wives or partners and their children. Taking a leave of absence thus became a potent symbol of their masculinity and their role as carer. Participants reflected deeply on their lives and their priorities, gaining valuable insights about their futures from this period of introspection. This reflection broadened their horizons and shifted their perspectives to be more inclusive of home and family demands. Participants shared how they gained personally from the experience of being on leave, using positive language like 'no regrets', 'massive difference', 'healthy and positive' and 'fantastic'.

Thomas, Darren, Damien and James kept in touch with co-workers during their leave of absence. They checked email sporadically or answered occasional phone calls from co-workers. Their home boundary, while not working, was slightly permeable to work

demands. Work demands were, however, not as important during the time of leave. But, as time wore on, they found it was less necessary to continue being involved, since they were not required or expected to make an active contribution to Tech's business while on leave. James explained as the year wore on, he realised that his contribution was in fact dispensable.

Participants shared how they were regarded by others upon returning to work. Building on the admiration and intrigue prior to the leave, they said that they were regarded as 'risk takers', 'creative', 'confident' and 'innovative', highlighting that taking a leave of absence was out of the norm of Tech's organisational culture. Yet, the very act of taking this risk imbued participants with positive character attributes in the eyes of others upon their return. Being out of the norm equipped these participants with a broader view of life and career. (This translated into positive career benefits, covered in Section 5.13.3.)

5.13 Intersection of Flexible Working and Career Outcomes

In this section, I analyse the career outcomes of participants. The first sub-section deals with part-time participants and their perceptions of their careers. The second sub-section deals with the career outcomes of participants who worked from home. The third sub-section looks at the career outcomes of participants who took a leave of absence. In these sections, I analyse the principal drivers of career outcomes for each of these groups and dominant themes that drive both positive and negative career outcomes for participants. Finally, I look at flexibility stigma and how it is manifested at Tech.

5.13.1 Career Outcomes of Part-time Participants

Participants spoke about their perceptions of the impact of part-time work on their career progression. Twenty-four participants talked about part-time hours, either as their current employment status or as a previous employment arrangement. Of this group, all but one chose part-time hours to accommodate care for children; the remaining participant was caring for an adult. Twenty-three were female and one was male, though he worked full-time hours at the time of the interview.

Since all the part-time participants were involved in caregiving, mostly as mothers, (with one father and one carer of an adult), it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the precise and unique impact of part-time hours compared to the impact of combining caregiving with paid employment at Tech. By definition, these participants worked less than full-time hours and used the unpaid time away from Tech to care for their families. As discussed in preceding sections, work demands crossed into the home/family domain. Many participants attended to work demands in their non-working time.

The results of analysis show that seven part-time participants perceived mixed or positive career outcomes. Sixteen perceived negative career outcomes. The remaining participant, Christine, talked about her career in more general terms but did not specifically mention a linkage between her part-time hours and her career outcomes, nor did she dismiss such a linkage. She worked from home in a regional NSW location, so that factor was more salient

in her mind. Table 5.5 shows a selection of quotations to illustrate perceptions of career outcomes.

Table 5.5 Illustrative quotes of part-time participants about career outcomes

Perception of career outcomes	Representative quotes
Mixed or positive career outcomes	Leonie: So I'm very happy with where I am at the moment. And my boss has always said, once you're ready to take on more and you want something more challenging, just let us know and we'll find something for you to do.
	[I asked: What is the impact of your part-time work on your career progression?] Narelle: None. But I think I am probably lucky. I think I'm probably really lucky.
	Michelle: Like, so I have direct reports now and I know that Louise restructured the team and so she has given, you know, a couple of us an opportunity. [Thus Michelle has subordinates while being part-time.]
Negative career outcomes	Vanessa: I can't pinpoint why but yeah I feel that at the moment it is quite difficult to hold up a job as senior as what I have in a part-time capacity.
	Danielle: And they haven't been, it's just connotating that they're [her managers] quite negative to that, you know.
	Katrina: So in some ways I feel like I haven't moved forward in any way.

Figure 5.2 shows a cognitive map of the drivers of career outcomes for part-time participants.

Participants expressed a range of self-constraining assumptions about what career outcomes were appropriate, suitable and aligned with part-time hours, compared to full-time hours. They framed their career decisions as personal choices, but did not often recognise the countervailing demands of organisational culture that served to constrain their careers. The dominant driver expressed by participants was the notion of *constrained time*. They were constrained at work, since they had limited time to complete Tech tasks; they were constrained at home because they often were the primary caregiver for young children. These constraints had several consequences for their career outcomes. The lack of time on the job meant they were not as visible to career supporters and decision-makers (like their own manager and managers in other business units). They did not have time to build a business network that could support future career growth. They also did not have time to build skills, through attending training. Ultimately these factors worked together to constrain career options and thus these participants faced limited choices about career opportunities.

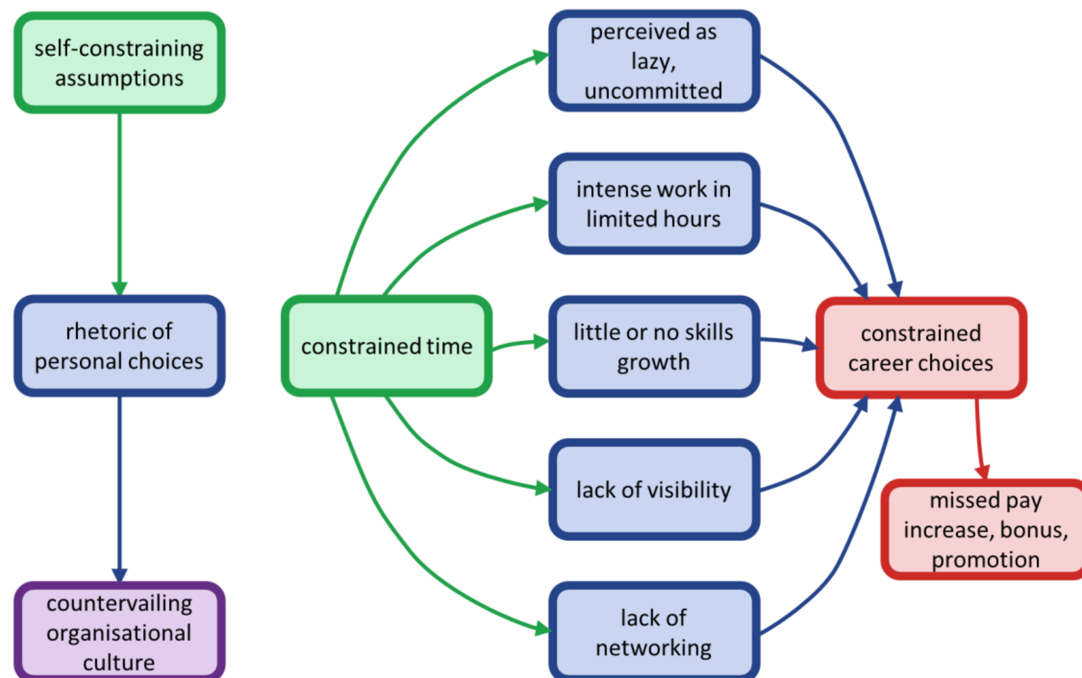

Figure 5.2 Cognitive map of drivers of career outcomes for part-time participants

Sharon worked the fewest hours of all participants, two days per week. When she took on the role, seven years prior to the interview, she clearly identified the implications.

> **Sharon:** It was a two day a week job. Yes, it meant no career growth but it was, you know, it meant a bit extra money, and so it meant getting my, I like coming into the office and interacting with people and working.

The theme of constrained time played into the perceptions of co-workers, where part-time participants were perceived as lazy or uncommitted. However, part-time participants themselves reported they had to work intensely during work time, to complete their assigned tasks, refuting the notion of being lazy.

Tanya regarded her part-time hours as a 'luxury' and accepted she would not get a salary increase because of her part-time hours. Sarah felt part-time hours carried an implicit performance gap, saying 'I don't think you can do an outstanding job in three days'. Jacqueline felt part-time hours slowed career progression but did not inhibit it, because part-time hours meant that the employee would have 'a third less experience or exposure'.

The perceived lack of visibility was mentioned by other participants. Vanessa said her colleagues 'don't know me very well' and her personal business network had dwindled. She worked in the office for only a portion of her part-time hours each week; she worked at home on the other days. She had reduced time and thus less opportunity and willingness to have social interactions with co-workers.

Three participants mentioned being included or excluded from social functions. If the social function took place on the part-time participant's day off, then they did not attend. Katrina was fortunate to have a supportive manager who included her in weekly staff

meetings and occasional social functions, but Danielle's manager arranged internal meetings for her day off, so she could not attend. Sharon explained how few social functions she had attended over the years.

> **Sharon:** I miss out on all of it. Like, we even used to have, the only social function I have ever been to in the last six years is the Customer Services week. Used to always be on a Thursday afternoon. This year it was on a Monday.

Missing out on social functions and team meetings was a career constraint for part-time participants. They reported feeling they had become invisible and marginalised. Since networking and visibility within Tech were an important component of making one's own career (and thus a protean career attitude), part-time participants who were excluded were at a career disadvantage. Sarah and Jacqueline talked about Tech's 'self-service culture' for growing careers, reinforcing that employees needed to take charge of their own careers, thus reflecting protean career attitudes.

Against the backdrop of protean career attitudes within Tech, part-time participants faced constraints which circumscribed their career choices, echoing Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981, 2005, 2006) (though that theory was originally written for children's career choices, not adults). Sarah remarked she had not pushed herself, implying her slow career advancement was a result of her personal (in)action. Wendy, similarly, said she 'blocked' herself, but she also repeated 'I don't know' three times in this quotation, reflecting, perhaps, her ambivalence about her role in her career, or reflecting her discomfort with being responsible for hurting her own career. Part-time participants framed their slow career progression in terms of their own inaction, using a rhetoric of personal choice.

> **Wendy:** So I think it does – well, I feel like I've kind of almost blocked myself and at this point, and I don't know – I don't know, I don't know.

These remarks are striking because these participants did not recognise the impact of organisational culture and policies on career outcomes for part-time employees. Tech's organisational culture was focused on long hours, being constantly available, getting the job done and measuring job contribution by output. Part-time participants could not fully conform to the norms of long hours and constant availability, though, as discussed in previous sections, many part-time participants did indeed make themselves available on non-work days, at night and at weekends. By not conforming to the dominant organisational culture, part-time participants perceived they were marginalised and faced sanctions as a consequence.

Some participants talked about the career penalties that they had faced. Two participants, Sharon and Melanie, missed out on pay rises. Natasha found that she was excluded from important, high visibility projects in her group since she was not available for meetings on Thursdays and Fridays, her non-working days.

Full-time Jobs in Part-time Hours. Another organisational factor that played into career outcomes for part-time participants was the workload of the role. Four participants in the sales workforce spoke of carrying sales than would be justified by their part-time hours. Danielle and Suzanne said that having near-full-time quota in part-time hours was 'unachievable' and 'very difficult'. Yet, interestingly, Suzanne felt that there was no

negative impact on her career from her part-time hours, justifying this by saying that she had not been denied promotion to other roles.

Nine part-time participants talked about the intensity of work and the expectations of work. They felt they worked very much more than their part-time hours, effectively working full-time hours. Melanie felt like she was 'fitting full-time into part-time'. Sarah felt she was doing four days of work when she was getting paid for three days. She said she had to work every night and at weekends, causing unhappiness with her husband. Other participants felt under pressure to perform at a high level and establish their professional reputations, but avoided raising the heavy workload with their managers.

These participants were aware of the grim reality of their workload. Their jobs were not designed to be completed in part-time hours. Instead, these participants talked of intense work more appropriate for a full-time employee, working at nights and weekends, and on the non-working day. Thus, part-time participants endured this workload by using flexible and permeable boundaries to work at home, outside of conventional working hours.

These participants' remarks show how the structure of the workload in the part-time role has a negative impact on career outcomes. They agreed that part-time roles were difficult and challenging, due to heavy workloads. There were two consequences: (1) this group of part-time participants spent a lot of personal, unpaid time doing work tasks in order to keep 'head above water' (as Annette put it); and (2), because the workload was intense, it was difficult to make a success of the role and garner the right kind of attention from managers.

Stacey told a contrasting story. She said her manager valued her high productivity – he stated she did the same amount of work in three days as a full-time employee in five days.

> **Stacey:** Basically, both him and my current manager basically, they said they value me as an employee too much to not try and compromise and meet my requirements. And, to quote my current manager, he says I can get more, the same amount of work done in three days than someone can get done in five days. So I'm too valuable to actually not have at work.

Stacey worked at a fast pace during her working days. This pace is what made her valuable to her manager. Her productivity was also an acceptable justification to her manager and her senior management chain for continuing part-time hours. When Stacey originally requested part-time hours, she was advised that 'in Support we weren't allowed to do it' and, after it was approved, she was told 'not to discuss it with anyone'. Sharon agreed, saying that 'There is no time to procrastinate'.

Seven participants spoke about managers being part-time. Five participants said it was not workable at Tech to be both part-time and a people manager. Kylie observed only full-time co-workers in her department were appointed as people managers. Kylie's perception gave an insight into how the identity of Tech managers is saturated with full-time expectations. The consensus reason given by participants for these expectations was that managers should be present to give direction to their subordinates and should be available in case their subordinates need help or have a problem. These discourses shape the role of a Tech manager as fully available and fully involved in closely supervising subordinates. However, as noted in the overview of the Tech workforce discussion, only

44 per cent of employees in Australia had their manager in the same location. For employees with managers in different cities or outside Australia, close supervision was not possible. Only virtual methods of supervision were possible. So it seems that using supervisory duties as one of the main justifications for expecting managers to be full-time does not make sense in all cases.

In fact, in this study, five part-time participants were in job codes that carried manager status. Rachel reflected on her experience as a manager working part-time and was proud of what she had achieved.

> **Rachel:** Well, I feel a little bit like a trailblazer, I guess. It does feel like a trailblazer because, you know, it showed that it could be done, it can be done, you can manage people still when you are part-time, because, if you are still giving them, you know, it's just one day I have dropped off, Friday, but if you can still give all of your experience and passion to it, you know, why not? Why couldn't you be part-time and be a manager?

At the time of the interview, Rachel had stepped back into an individual contributor role, calling it 'career suicide' because she felt it 'showed that I can't cope any more'. These two quotes together illustrate that while it is technically possible to be a manager working part-time hours at Tech, there are difficulties attached to the role. Ultimately Rachel felt the duties of the management role carried too much pressure, and she could receive the same pay and the equivalent seniority level by working as an individual contributor.

Other participants spoke about their perceptions of the job market at Tech and outside Tech. Seven participants noted that, internally, Tech never advertised roles as eligible for part-time; Bianca added that roles were never advertised as eligible for job sharing. Emma and Natasha perceived few opportunities for future career options in their particular business units, the Support business unit and the Information Technology business unit. Natasha explained that, in her business unit, the more senior roles were located in other countries, not Australia; Emma and Stacey recognised Australia was a high-cost country and that, overall, the Support business unit was moving jobs to low-cost countries. Janine said that, in her view, most part-time roles were administrative roles rather than more substantial or impactful roles, thus part-time work constrained the range of career choices.

These perceptions show that part-time participants have fewer career opportunities than other employees. The boundaryless career (Arthur, 2014; Arthur et al., 2005; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), much vaunted in the literature, may only be boundaryless if the individual conforms to the ideal worker norm. In this study, part-time women experience constraints, especially of time, and thus their career opportunities end up being limited. For these participants, their career trajectory is bounded, not boundaryless.

There is another factor at Tech that works in opposition to the boundaryless career concept. Participants working part-time recognised the flexibility within Tech for part-time hours and working from home was, in fact, a significant benefit. They also noted it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find similar working conditions outside Tech.

Janine: It's hard, being in the company allow you, for so long, I guess allows you some of that flexibility. And if I had to step outside JadeCo[2] and look for a new job, there's no way I'd have a situation like I do now where there's flexibility and understanding.

In summary, part-time participants experienced a range of constraints that circumscribed the career choices they perceived, making personal choices about what roles (and what battles) to pursue while working part-time hours. They also made assumptions about what roles were viable for part-time hours. Sharon summarised it eloquently, covering her perception of circumscribed choices.

Sharon: It's limited the job I can have. That is what it has done for me. Being part-time has limited the job that I can have. You, I feel, I haven't got the confidence to approach, you know, a role and say I'd love to take this role on but I can only do it in this amount of time. See, if I, there are other roles, there are other areas in Tech that I'd like to, you know, approach but I don't feel that I'd be welcomed as a part-time person.

5.13.2 Career Outcomes of Participants Working From Home

Participants shared their perceptions of the impact of working from home on their career outcomes. Thirty participants talked about working from home; some used formal arrangements and some used informal or ad hoc agreements with their manager.

Seven participants perceived a positive perception of the career impact of working from home. Of these seven, four are men, which is disproportional within the group of thirty participants. Six participants (five women; one man) perceived a negative impact. Eleven participants (four women; seven men) perceived no impact. Six participants had no specific opinion regarding the impact of working from home (two women; four men). Of this last group, three participants stated they seldom worked from home and this may be one reason for not being able to share a specific view. Table 5.6 shows quotations illustrating these perceptions.

Table 5.6 Illustrative quotes of work from home participants about career outcomes

Perception of career outcomes	Representative quotes
Positive career outcomes	Samuel: I think, as I say, it make [sic] me more, just, more satisfied with the job and make [sic] me happy to stay on the position, yeah.
	Nick: Um, I think it has definitely contributed to career satisfaction.
	Ronald: So the impact has only been positive because it has allowed me to have a global view of the microcosm that Tech is.
No impact	Leonie: I don't think it's had an impact.
	Shaun: No, nothing at all.
	Dane: I think, so, I don't think working from home for my role and where I'm based, has any impact at all.
Negative career outcomes	Stacey: It probably doesn't put my face or name out there.
	Bruce: Well, it goes back to what we said before. I think it's that isolation. And not necessarily considered for roles.
	Christine: I sometimes think I'm invisible.

[2] JadeCo is the pseudonym for a company acquired by Tech.

Figure 5.3 shows a cognitive map of the drivers used most frequently as justifications by participants, to explain their perceptions.

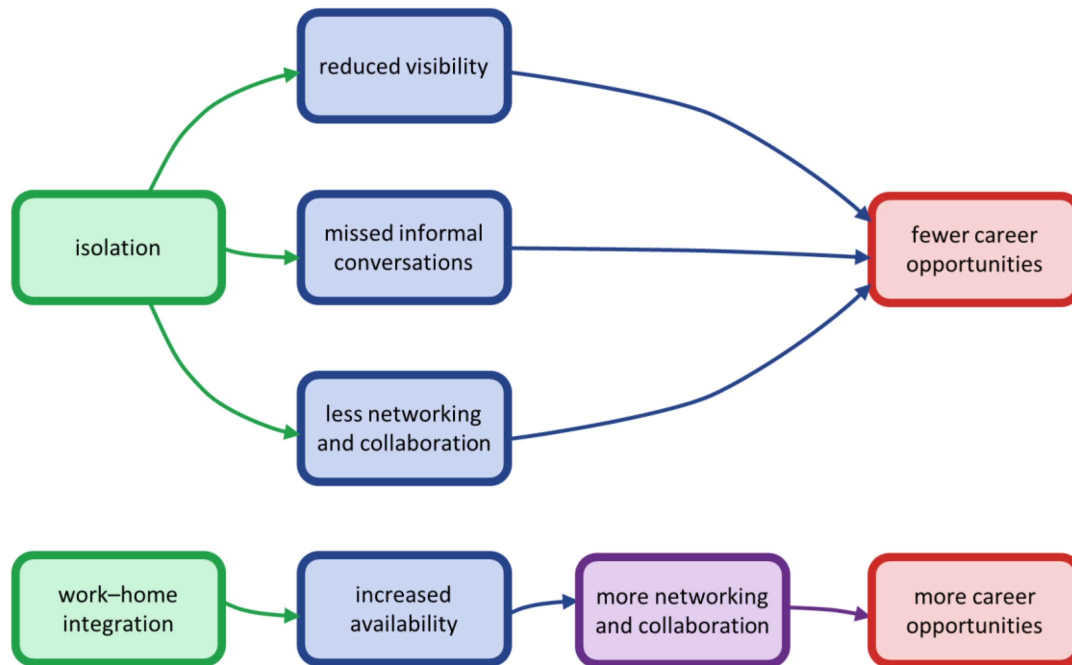

Figure 5.3 Cognitive map of drivers of career outcomes for participants who work from home

There were two opposing dominant themes expressed by participants. The first theme was the *isolation of working from home*. The principal consequence of that isolation was reduced visibility with career supporters and decision-makers like managers. Another consequence was missed informal conversations – participants occasionally referred to this using terminology like 'gossip', 'watercooler conversations', or 'the grapevine'. However, there were a handful of participants who felt that informal conversations were essential to their career success. Another consequence of isolation was the perception of less networking and collaboration. Ultimately, these factors taken together contributed to a perception of fewer career opportunities.

The second theme of *work–home integration* opposed the first theme. Participants working at home were able to blend work demands with home/family demands (as discussed in preceding sections); for example, dropping off and picking up children, or attending school events for their children. By blending work and home/family demands, participants were able to make themselves more available for work demands. They were, for example, able to join conference calls out of regular office hours. The consequence of this was more networking and more collaboration, contributing to a perception of more career opportunities.

By comparison to part-time participants, it is striking that participants did *not* speak about missed salary increases, bonuses and promotions. This evidence suggests working from home was normalised at Tech and, though participants had some concerns, employees who worked from home were treated similarly to employees working in the office. It is

also striking that participants did not speak about virtual and mobile communication technologies as a barrier to their careers. Furthermore, both part-time participants and work from home participants had the same concerns regarding reduced visibility in the workplace and the importance of business networking for future career growth and opportunities.

Isolation and Reduced Visibility. Three participants linked visibility to their career outcomes. Mary was unequivocal about the consequences. Yet, she continued her remarks by invoking the rhetoric of personal choice. This echoes sentiments expressed by part-time participants, reflecting protean career attitudes. Mary believed she could have a different career if she wanted, but she had made a deliberate choice to work from home.

> **Mary:** I think it's probably made me less visible, which is not necessarily a good thing for career. But if I wanted to be more visible and pushing my career then I could be. It's my choice to work from home.

Megan's story contains interesting contrasts. When asked, Megan said working from home did not impact her career progression because 'I've been promoted to a director while I've been working from home'. Yet, at the time of the interview, Megan was facing redundancy. Her manager, based in Europe, delivered a stark message about his views about how her role needed to be positioned in relation to 'the business' (Megan's internal clients at Tech). His reasoning almost justified her redundancy by promoting the notion that Megan needed to be in the office rather than working from home.

> **Megan:** It's actually funny because that was one thing that Cody said to me very clearly, is he said to me, 'Megan there's no business where you are. My attitude is we are a service to the business. You need to be in the office where the business is. And you need to be seen as a service provider to them.'

Stacey noted how she and her manager worked from home. She explained her view that the consequence was she would not have a profile outside of her business unit, Support. Her comment implied her career options were limited to within her own business unit, because she worked from home.

> **Stacey:** My manager works from home as well. In terms of career progression, within Tech, what I'm trying to say is that you're just stuck within the Support line of business. You wouldn't be seen or be known to other managers or that sort of, working sideways or things like that.

Isolation and Reduced Networking, Reduced Collaboration and Missed Informal Conversations. Four participants noted the importance of networking and collaboration for their career outcomes. Bruce, for example, noted how working from home was isolating for him, and his manager's limited expectations ended up shaping his own career path. (Bruce's manager was based in Europe, so he did not interact with him face-to-face, nor was there even an opportunity to do so.) Bruce was left wondering who he should talk to. Bruce perceived a limitation in career outcomes because working from home reduced or limited his collaborative interactions with potential career supporters.

> **Bruce:** There is, there is a separate isolation concern that goes more with career path development, is, I can see that the role is ending up a bit of a dead end in terms of career development as I can't seem to get past my boss's expectations of where I should move next, I'm kind of shaped by him. And because I only work from home, it's like who

> do I talk to? Who do I impress? Who do I work out where the next role is? […] But, you know, there is, there is that isolation, does work against that career path.

Christine used the metaphor of being on an island to describe the isolation of working from home. She was connected to the Tech grapevine and had heard about layoffs and this created uncertainty and anxiety for her. She spoke about her feelings and how she felt invisible to her team and to her manager.

> **Christine:** That's right, and it does make you very uncertain, you know, you think, especially if there's other things going on, there could be, you know, you hear other people are being made redundant, or, you know, whatever and that sort of puts you in a position where, ah, am I, are you on the list? Makes you very very uncertain, so, that's what I meant be being a little bit invisible and you know, I sometimes feel like you're on an island, and you're not included, and your manager doesn't always have team meetings. […] Don't feel like I'm part of a team. That's what I mean by being invisible.

Five participants talked about the importance (or not) of informal conversations. Nick mentioned how he was aware that water cooler conversations were occurring and he might not be involved in those conversations, because he worked from home.

> **Nick:** You don't get all that water cooler conversations, you don't sort of hear things going on around you that come up in conversation that you really need to be involved with.

By implication, Nick was worried missing out on informal conversations could hurt his career, since he might miss being involved in important projects. Megan, too, recognised the water cooler as a site of useful, informal interactions. Missing out carried feelings of isolation for Megan. She recognised there was a career penalty arising from this isolation.

> **Megan:** I don't get to bounce ideas off of other people. I don't get that social interaction you get from standing at the water cooler. I know that's very, you just don't get any of that. And lots of people that I've spoken to say that they feel very, very isolated working from home.

By contrast, Jodi and Ross were clear they were not interested in the grapevine or water cooler gossip, and by implication they did not consider missing out on the grapevine to be detrimental to their career outcomes. Dane said missing out on informal conversations in the Melbourne office was not an issue for him because, in his group, the important conversations were conducted in the US and the UK.

Work–Home Integration and Increased Availability. Participants appreciated the flexible nature of working from home, allowing them to integrate work and home/family, when needed, and yet still being able to meet work demands. Three participants spoke about integration of work and home. Thomas joined a fortnightly call starting at 23:00, when his group was determining the marketing strategy for the upcoming fiscal year. He did have the option to delegate but instead recognised these strategy-forming meetings as an important venue where he could influence and be seen to influence, thus supporting his ongoing and future career success.

> **Thomas:** I would say working from home, for me personally, has probably increased my level of career success because of the flexibility I have to be able to get involved in some of the key planning activities and execution activities that matter, in terms of the strategy that we're executing.

Thomas's remarks indicated that, in his mind, he made a clear linkage between his future career, continuing at Tech and enjoying the flexibility of working from home, versus moving to another company. Though his career could be boundaryless, and he was definitely aware of his employability, he weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of leaving Tech, and, at the time of interview, he felt Tech offered the perfect combination of what he wanted. The boundaryless career was indeed bounded by whole-of-life decision-making for Thomas (including his family and his perception of acceptable work–life balance), rather than being purely focused on moving to another company for higher salary and presumably more status. This supports life designing theory (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009).

Work–Home Integration and Increased Networking and Collaboration. Four participants spoke about the positive consequences of more networking and collaboration afforded by working from home. Julian perceived that working from home did not negatively impact his career outcomes, noting he could cover more time zones, stretching from the US, to Asia, to the UK, thus increasing the opportunity to network and collaborate with co-workers.

> **Julian:** I don't think it does because effectively working from home, working with a global team, right, effectively, I think it would be an issue if I am not able to, you know, to communicate well, because of time zone differences or, that would impact me from getting things done on time. But right now, is not a big issue, because in fact I'm getting better coverage now, [...] in Australia I get overlaps the entire day, from the US, China, India and UK. There's good overlaps there. So, if anything, it might just make myself more, you know, available. Yeah.

5.13.3 Career Outcomes of Participants with Leave of Absence

Six participants had a leave of absence or a career break. Four participants took leave of absence while employed at Tech, one participant had both a leave of absence and a career break, and one participant had a career break prior to Tech employment. Four participants initially stated their leave of absence did not impact on their careers; two participants stated their leave of absence resulted in positive consequences. Male participants who took a leave of absence said they did not aspire to senior executive roles (such as managing director or vice president), instead seeking good work–life balance and time with their families, aligning more with subjective career success rather than objective career success.

Participants who took a leave of absence take on the status of hero because they were willing to give up paid employment and do something out of the ordinary. Other employees perceived the leave of absence as somewhat of a risk (this perception was a second-hand impression, as reported by each participant when I asked them about the reactions of co-workers). The status of a confident, risk-taking hero has positive career benefits. Darren, for example, reported 'I've not had a single person say, "That was a dumb thing to do for your career". Not a single person.'

Thomas and Ethan had roughly similar leave experiences. When they announced their intention to take a leave of absence, their managers expressed resistance, aligning with work disruption theory (Powell & Mainiero, 1999): a leave of absence causes a headache

for managers, as they have to reassign the absent employee's workload to other staff during the leave, then again reassign work when the employee returns from leave. According to this theory, managers judge the extent of disruption and then they approve requests for flexible working where they perceive less disruption. Thomas and Ethan counteracted perceived work disruption using succession planning by grooming subordinates to take on their role while they were away. Their leave of absence, thus, had unexpected career benefits for their subordinates, allowing the subordinates to take on roles of higher responsibility and to 'sit in the chair for a little while', boosting their capabilities, and potentially their future career success.

Four months after returning from leave of absence, Ethan received a promotion. He perceived that the leave of absence did not impact his career and it was 'completely independent of the three month break'. Ethan also explained how this promotion was a 'succession planning appointment', implying that he had been included as a candidate successor in succession plans for his manager's role, despite taking unpaid leave. Thomas was contacted by Tech while on his leave of absence and offered a 'big opportunity' provided he returned to Tech immediately, signifying his worth to Tech and his high employability. He expressed his preference to work at Tech (rather than resign and find another position) because of the *flexibility* offered, compared to other companies. In both cases, the absence did not interfere with manager perceptions of commitment to Tech, thus the participants received a career boost following their leave.

Leave of absence participants reflect both protean and boundaryless career attitudes. Darren explained his approach to career opportunities at Tech, emphasising personal confidence, willingness and proactivity. Darren said 'You've got to make them [career opportunities] happen' thus reflecting a protean career attitude. Darren's career trajectory was also boundaryless because he moved between companies, first working at Tech, then taking a leave of absence, then working for another firm, then returning to Tech. His approach could also be construed as a life designing approach (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009) because he deliberately chose to take career breaks at appropriate times to focus on personal and family goals then, later, he returned to paid employment.

Jacqueline, who had a career break, shared her views about the pressures that apply to *women* who return from maternity leave (which is an unpaid leave of absence).

> **Jacqueline:** So I think there's sort of, you know, self-pressure, I think that there's a partnership pressure and I think that there is the pressure when they do come back to work to feel that they have to work twice as hard, or harder, maybe not twice as hard, harder, to re-establish their credibility almost.

The contrast between Jacqueline's perceptions and the men's perceptions hints at the gendered expectations applied to employees who take a leave of absence, and the gendered career consequences. Men accrue career premiums from taking a leave of absence (even though, in all the cases in this study, the leave was for family or travel reasons, *not* for education or career development reasons). Men returning from leave are cast as confident, risk-taking heroes and are rewarded by their managers and by the organisation. Women accrue career penalties and stigma. They find themselves under pressure to respond to work *and* home/family demands, yet Tech culture questions their

true organisational commitment, so, to respond, they have to redouble their efforts and re-display their commitment to the organisation.

5.13.4 Flexibility Stigma

Previous studies on flexibility stigma engaged US samples (Berdahl & Moon, 2013; Coltrane et al., 2013; Stone & Hernandez, 2013; Vandello et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2013). In this section, I analyse perceptions of participants about the stigma, penalties and benefits surrounding flexible working arrangements. Since this sample contains only Australian employees in the information technology sector, this analysis provides a counterpoint to previously published studies.

To begin, Tech's organisational culture was characterised by an atmosphere of urgency and crisis, and the norm of constant availability. For participants, being constantly available was a symbol of organisational commitment. Being able to respond swiftly to emails, instant messages and telephone calls was one of the key measures used by participants to display organisational commitment.

Part-time participants had less time available for Tech demands (as discussed in detail in preceding sections) and experienced conflict between Tech demands and home/family demands. Part-time participants experienced deep stigma arising from the perception they were less committed to Tech. Some part-time participants (like Sharon and Tanya) did not receive salary increases or bonuses over many years; others (like Wendy) spoke about receiving bonuses and stock options. Natasha and Wendy perceived they had been given lower status work that allowed for reduced time involvement, but they recognised the negative career consequences of being allocated to these types of projects. Four participants (including Stacey and Suzanne) deliberately concealed their part-time status from external customers and, sometimes, from internal clients. They were attempting to portray a work ethic that was more aligned with full-time hours. Stacey was even advised by her manager not to tell her colleagues that she had been approved for part-time hours. Suzanne explained:

> **Suzanne:** And I think that, you know, I worked hard and I try to camouflage a lot, so I would take calls on my non-work days, I would sometimes, you know, attend meetings on my non-work days, I often do calls on my work – on non-work day and you know, that continues today.

There was also pluralistic ignorance (Lovitts, 2001) among part-time participants (except in the Human Resources department). Pluralistic ignorance refers to 'a situation in which most members of a group do not know or understand something' (Lovitts, 2001, p. 38). Participants like Bianca stated they did not know other part-time employees, implying there was not a network between part-time employees at Tech. Without this network, each part-time participant felt she was the only person struggling, not realising that perhaps other part-time employees might have very similar issues and perceptions. Pluralistic ignorance contributed to feelings of isolation and possibly supported flexibility stigma against part-timers (because they did not usually share their stories with other part-timers, leading to a sense of marginalisation).

Tech also played a part in marginalising part-time employees: many part-time participants observed that roles were never advertised as part-time, implying that full-time hours were the expected norm. In addition, part-time hours were granted as a temporary arrangement, rather than a permanent arrangement. Stacey explained her frustrations:

> **Stacey:** But, the letters that I get from HR are very pressure, you know, it's only a temporary arrangement and you will cease this and I always get those letters that you will come back full-time and they always end-date it. [...] I feel annoyed that I've proven myself over the last four years that they continually have this pressure on me that I feel that I have to return full-time to work, otherwise I won't have a job.

Tech's actions framed part-time hours as deviant and abnormal, giving rise to severe stigma for part-time participants.

Some manager participants shared their views about hiring employees in part-time roles or creating part-time roles. Ethan said sales roles were difficult part-time; Jarrod did not permit part-time hours at all; Jackson said he was not in favour of part-time requests from his staff. Jackson explained in detail that part-time hours created complexity for sales quotas. For him, part-time hours introduced uncertainty as to how to handle customer requests when the employee was away from work. Furthermore, he felt he would not ask other team members to step in when the part-time employee was away, as this would create a higher workload for the others. Jackson's remarks support dependency theory (Klein et al., 2000): the manager's performance is an aggregate of subordinates' performance and, thus, managers are reluctant to entertain requests for flexible working that might reduce group achievement and thus reflect poorly on the manager. The implication was that, in Jackson's department, the workload was unpredictable and could not be planned for. The only solution was to have full-time employees who were available all the time and, thus, could absorb peaks in the workload, rather than part-time employees. Again, these sentiments marginalise part-time employees and give rise to stigma.

Turning to working from home, in this study there is much less stigma. Employees who work from home tend to have more time available for Tech demands, though participants in this study cleverly made use of their time to craft a reputation of high availability and connectedness. They did this mainly by working out of core hours (e.g.: Jarrod, Tristan, Megan, Thomas and Dane). Some participants did indeed work long hours while others worked close to standard hours, but took breaks during quieter times of the day and then made themselves available again late at night or early in the morning. Because of this perceived higher availability, work from home participants spoke much less about stigma and discrimination.

As a manager, Ethan's view was it was 'difficult to manage remote workers' but he also pointed out that coming to the office did not suggest better performance (compared to working at home). Darren, also a manager, suggested employees in a specific Tech office needed to come to the office, to collaborate with each other and to avoid slacking performance. Generally though, most participants associated working from home with a neutral or positive performance impact.

At Tech, working from home was normalised. It was taken for granted and participants did not report difficulties from others when doing their work. Employees who worked from

home were not seen as deviant or abnormal, compared to part-time participants. In fact, some participants (like Bruce, Julian, Tristan and Megan) could not have performed their roles, which required collaboration with Tech employees in other time zones, if they did not work from home. Some participants did perceive working from home hampered career paths, though this is more likely to be associated with having a manager in a different country and concerns about visibility, rather than working from home *per se*.

Turning to leave of absence, participants who took a leave of absence were officially not available during their time away from work. However, participants like Damien, Thomas and James did stay in touch with their managers and Tech co-workers during their time away. Leave of absence participants reported a smooth re-entry after being away. Darren returned to a fair and reasonable salary (in his view), after a career break and five years away from Tech. Ethan received a promotion months after returning. Thomas was encouraged back to work earlier than he had planned to take up an exciting new opportunity. These stories contrast with the literature (Coltrane et al., 2013) where fathers who took a leave of absence for family reasons experienced a wage penalty. In this study, leave of absence participants did not speak about dissatisfaction with salary; Darren indicated he was satisfied with his salary negotiation. (However, this study did not investigate participants' salary history longitudinally compared to equivalent co-workers.)

Leave of absence participants received a career boost for other reasons: for being confident, heroic risk-takers (as discussed in detail in preceding sections). Though they made themselves unavailable for lengthy periods (between three months and one year), Tech appeared to welcome them back enthusiastically. There is little stigma associated with leave of absence, in this study.

Traditional gender roles also play into flexibility stigma at Tech. Traditionally, women were expected to make caregiving their primary focus; men were expected to be breadwinners and make work their primary focus. The demands of caregiving suggest that women have lower organisational commitment. When caregiving is combined with part-time hours, this impression is only strengthened, giving rise to penalties and supporting flexibility stigma. Annette's remarks are interesting here: though she claimed that part-time hours did not negatively influence her career progression, she felt her status as a mother of small children was more salient.

> **Annette:** I don't think that it [part-time hours] is having a negative influence. I think, for the most part, all of my colleagues, the managers here whose teams that I engage with, who know me, I don't think they even probably realise that I am part-time. I think they probably all realise that I've come back as a mother of small children. But I don't know if they know on paper that I am technically meant to be doing a shorter week.

Annette's remarks support the 'mommy track' concept (Quesenberry, Trauth, & Morgan, 2006). Annette, as an example, used part-time hours to continue her career and to take care of her children. Yet, she identified her 'working mum' status was the factor that was most visible to co-workers and management. In other parts of her interview, Annette spoke about the difficulty of being productive, saying 'I was successful for many years, so it's been quite a shock that I haven't been delivering as much as I'd expected yet'. Annette was trying to balance Tech demands with home/family demands but found it challenging.

Men, traditionally, were expected to be breadwinners without extensive caregiving. But the rise of involved fathers (Ladge et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2013) has modified those expectations. At Tech, fathers like Dane, Jack, Ethan and Andrew combined their flexible working (at home or in the office) with fathering. While they did not deliberately conceal their fathering duties, they were also able to simultaneously conform to normative, masculine expectations about being devoted employees of Tech and of being available for work at all times. Thus, they were able to simultaneously perform their role of father and their role of Tech employee by taking advantage of flexible working arrangements. This could be considered the 'daddy track' (Coltrane et al., 2013), but in contrast to Coltrane's study, there is less of a fatherhood penalty at Tech, partly because these men work full-time rather than part-time (Jack being the only exception). Again, as noted above, this study did not investigate fathers' salary history longitudinally compared to equivalent co-workers, so it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about wage penalties from this study.

5.14 Summary of Findings

Participants defined the work–home boundary using boundary tactics and rituals such as having a separate home office (the domestic workplace), using specific types of clothing associated with work, turning mobile phones and laptops on and off, having lunch outside the domestic workplace, and interacting with children or pets at specific times. The work–home boundary was highly flexible for most participants, both temporally and spatially. They varied start and end times, duration of the working day, working patterns and their work location, to meet perceived work demands. Some participants in global roles used boundary flexibility to collaborate with co-workers in distant time zones, while some participants used boundary flexibility to manage home/family demands. Participants in the Customer Support division worked shifts, thus their start and end times were inflexible. Participants aimed to control the extent of boundary flexibility and keeping a time balance sheet was the most frequently employed mental model.

The work–home boundary was permeable for most participants. Knowledge work colonised the minds of participants. Some participants spoke of email as not being real work, allowing email to penetrate the home boundary during non-work hours. For most participants, the work–home boundary was permeable to allow work demands to penetrate the home domain during workday nights, weekends, and on non-working days for part-timers. During the work day, the work boundary was permeable to home demands when children became ill and needed care. Female participants perceived it was unprofessional to work with children at home when the children were healthy and thus could be cared for by others. But when children were sick, it was acceptable to work at home with children, showing how the work–home boundary was permeable to work demands. Male participants were less likely to work at home with children, gendering the expectations of appropriate behaviour for parents.

The work–home boundary was impermeable during children's breakfast and drop-off time, pick-up time, and during children's dinner time. Some participants felt they had the freedom to attend school events for their children during conventional working hours, while others preferred to focus on work demands. Many participants worked after

children went to bed, showing how the work–home boundary was dissolved and made permeable so the participant could continue working into the evening. Participants working at home made seamless, skilful micro-transitions between the domestic workplace and home and family, during the working day, using personal time to take a healthy break from intensive work. They did household tasks like laundry, washing dishes, mowing the lawn or going to the supermarket, yet considered these micro-transitions unremarkable. Participants aimed to control the permeability of the work–home boundary in three ways: by managing mobile device connectedness; by filtering incoming messages using elaborate heuristics; and, for part-time women, by adopting a guilt-free mindset on the non-working day.

Participants combined boundary flexibility and boundary permeability to craft a reputation of high availability, conforming to Tech cultural norms of urgency and crisis, getting the job done, and long hours. Some participants used micro-invisibilities to slip away from work and attend to home or family demands, thus being present parents. Some participants felt lonely and isolated working at home while others relished the solitude and supplemented this with time in the office, when needed. Participants wanted to appear committed, hard-working and fully available – the classic ideal workers (Brumley, 2014; Dreyfus, 2013; Kelly et al., 2010; O'Hagan, 2014). Choosing working hours was a personal choice for each participant, never a manager or corporate mandate.

Participants who took a leave of absence did so for family-related reasons, rather than education or career growth reasons. The absence from work transformed, recharged and refreshed participants. Upon return to work, participants were regarded as creative, confident risk-taking heroes.

The intersection of flexible working arrangements and career outcomes reveals interesting trends. The majority of part-time participants perceived negative career outcomes from part-time hours. The most prominent reasons were constrained time, intense work in limited hours, lack of visibility, little or no skills growth and lack of networking. Part-time participants also constrained themselves with their own assumptions that they had made a personal choice about their career. Overall, part-time participants faced a landscape of constrained career choices, often underlined by missed pay increases, bonuses and promotions.

Participants who worked from home expressed mixed perceptions about the impact of working from home on their career outcomes: some had positive perceptions, some negative, and some participants said there was no impact. The most prominent reasons were the isolation of working from home, reduced visibility, missed informal conversations and less networking. Countering this was increased work–home integration, increased availability and more networking. Thus, some participants perceived fewer career opportunities, while others perceived more career opportunities. These participants had a range of different views on career outcomes, rather than uniform views, reinforcing the finding that subjective perceptions of career progression and career outcomes come down to the individual's perception of their circumstances. Objective views of career success and career outcomes were less important to participants, in this study. Working from home is remarkable in this study because at Tech it is *unremarkable*. It was seen as a working arrangement that was very normal, rather than special. It also

allowed participants to make themselves highly available, conforming to prevailing expectations of Tech's organisational culture.

Leave of absence participants perceived neutral or positive career outcomes. They gained the status of confident, risk-taking heroes, leading to promotions or better career opportunities. Some participants were able to frame their leave of absence as a succession planning try-out, giving unexpected career benefits to their subordinates.

Flexibility stigma was experienced by some participants. Part-time participants were perceived as having lower organisational commitment, partly because of their reduced hours and partly because of their parenting duties. Strong stigma was applied to part-time participants. Work from home participants and leave of absence participants experienced little stigma. Working from home was normalised at Tech while working part-time was marginalised. Traditional gender roles of caregiving mother and breadwinning father were important in reproducing stigma; the newer norm of involved father was performed by some fathers, who took advantage of flexible working practices and micro-invisibilities to craft a reputation of high availability.

5.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, two principal themes are revealed. For most participants, *work devotion was paramount*. Work often expanded into non-core working hours (early mornings, evenings and weekends) and into non-working days for part-time participants. Part-time jobs were particularly challenging, with many participants reporting that they felt they were squeezing full-time work into part-time hours. Most participants classified their non-core hour work as a personal choice, supporting normative control rather than directive control of the workforce. Participants were responding either to a heavy workload, or to perceptions of what is demanded by Tech's organisational culture, or, in some cases, work required collaboration with people in different time zones, and that required working late at night or very early in the morning.

The second major theme to emerge was the *making and breaking of boundaries*. Participants, with mobile communication technology in hand, established heuristics that guided them about when to work, when to stop, which calls to take and which calls to avoid. The home boundary was frequently permeable to work demands; occasionally the work boundary was permeable to home/family demands, most frequently when a sick child required care. Most participants followed more of an integrationist approach, rather than a segmentist approach. Work out of core hours was done at quiet times or at night, after children had gone to bed. Switching back and forth, making micro-transitions between work and home/family, was perceived as perfectly normal for participants.

The final findings around flexibility stigma make a novel contribution. Part-time participants experienced significant stigma for their reduced hours, with managers and co-workers regarding reduced hours and visible parenting duties as a proxy for lack of organisational commitment. Work from home participants and leave of absence participants had little stigma. Indeed, working from home is normalised at Tech while part-time arrangements are stigmatised. Thus, the stigma of flexibility does not apply equally to all flexible working arrangements, in this case study.

Building on differential career outcomes, in the next chapter I interrogate career success and career satisfaction, to sketch a complete picture of participants' career perceptions.

6. RESULTS: CAREER SUCCESS AND CAREER SATISFACTION

6.1 Career Success

In the previous chapter, I showed how participants with flexible working arrangements have highly flexible and permeable boundaries, with a few exceptions. An overview of this chapter is shown in Figure 6.1. In this chapter, I look at how participants define career success; the influence of salary and compensation at Tech upon career success perceptions; the changing definitions of career success over time and the triggering events; and how the metaphor of *climbing the ladder* is used by participants. Then I turn to career satisfaction, analysing how career satisfaction varies between demographic and employment groups; the impact of the manager on career; the use of the plateau metaphor to describe career satisfaction. Finally, I discuss the intersection of career success with career satisfaction.

Figure 6.1 Overview of career success and career satisfaction chapter structure and topics

This analysis answers the following research questions: What is the perception of career success? Does it vary by gender?

This information contributes to sensemaking of participants' career outcomes (see Section 5.13) and career satisfaction (Section 6.2).

6.1.1 Personal Definitions of Career Success

Participants defined career success using subjective and objective language. Across the entire sample, 70 per cent of participants (n = 38) used exclusively subjective definitions of career success, 11 per cent (n = 6) used exclusively objective definitions, and 19 per cent (n = 10) used a blend of subjective and objective definitions. Table 6.1 shows the breakdown of career success orientation by age and gender.

The proportion of male participants (80%) using subjective definitions of career success is higher than the proportion of female participants (65%) using subjective definitions. Turning to age, it is notable that the group of participants aged between 30 and 44 used a mixture of career success definitions, but for those aged 45 and above, they used only subjective career success definitions. This pattern suggests that as participants move through life stages, they craft personal definitions of career success that match their perceptions, their aspirations and their own career history. This aligns with the kaleidoscope career model's concept of balance as an important component of career trajectories (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Beyond the age of 45, participants possess an

understanding of the realities of corporate life at Tech, including the availability of salary increases and promotions (matching objective career success measures). They account for their home and family circumstances, seeking to find the 'sweet spot' between work and home/family. Thus, subjective career success measures become more important to older participants.

Table 6.1 Career success orientation breakdown by gender and age

	Number of participants		
	Subjective	**Objective**	**Both**
Gender			
Female	22	4	8
Male	16	2	2
Age group			
25–29	1		
30–34	1	1	
35–39	9	2	5
40–44	9	3	5
45–49	10		
50–54	3		
>55	5		

An analysis of career success orientation by organisation tenure, manager tenure and career level was conducted, but this analysis did not reveal any meaningful trends, so it is not discussed further here.

Table 6.2 shows the breakdown of career success orientation by household composition.

Table 6.2 Career success orientation breakdown by household composition

	Number of participants		
	Subjective	**Objective**	**Both**
Number of dependent children			
0	10		1
1	3	2	3
2	19	2	6
3	6	2	

The proportion of participants using subjective career success definitions was higher for those without children and those with three children; and lower for those with one or two children. The analysis did not reveal further meaningful trends, so it is not discussed further.

6.1.2 Subjective Career Success

Participants defined subjective career success with a range of measures. Table 6.3 displays the frequency by which these measures were mentioned by participants, including a selection of quotations from participants that illustrate the measures.

Table 6.3 Measures of subjective career success

Measure	No. of mentions	Representative quotations
Challenge in role and continuous learning	18	Sue: Um, whether I still find the job challenging or interesting, and, um, there's enough variety to keep me learning. Dane: That's an interesting one. For me, I think continued learning. Given the opportunity to work on different areas. I guess, positioning myself so that I'm seen as someone who's able to work on new functionality, new products and continue growing or even new roles.
Respect, reputation, recognition	10	Kylie: I think, I haven't thought about it really, but asking now, I want to be well respected by people that I work with, by people within the team, as well as the managers that I work with. For me, career success, reputation has a lot to do with it. Not to be liked, but to be thought of as good at my job. Sharon: Being recognised for my work and stuff, yeah. I mean I'd like to be recognised for my work and stuff, but more for me would be like to be in more of a fulfilling role. Yeah. Thomas: For me, career success has been fundamentally, 'Have I been given more responsibility?' For me, it's actually probably less about responsibility, more about, 'Am I considered a thought leader or trusted adviser in the particular field that I happen to be working in?' I do have that reputation, if you like, at the moment.
Happiness	10	Melanie: Career success for me is reaching a goal that I have set for myself whilst being happy about everything else around me. James: Probably, so, I think first and foremost, you got to be happy with what you do. So that's career success really. And maybe I formed this view whilst, you know, spending a long time thinking about life, if you like. So I don't necessarily think that you have to be at the top of a business to be successful.
Having satisfied customers or internal clients	9	Nick: To me it is happy clients, good relationships with clients, having clients trust me, it's having enough knowledge of the product so that I can help clients to resolve issues in a way that they may not be aware that they can resolve them.

Measure	No. of mentions	Representative quotations
Flexibility and balance	7	Simone: at least at that stage of my life where I've got a young family, I don't want to have too many responsibilities and too much stress in my life, so because I want to be keep focus on my kids, so, for me, you know like, that stage of my life I just want, you know, just like a job I'm, where I feel I'm contributing and doing well and, but at the same time definitely having this flexibility of, you know, still spending time with my kids, because the fact that I've got, I am working from home and I've got the part-time, you know, I can sort of have both. Annette: So yeah, it's been, so my measure of success is if I can just keep my head above water at a personal level and not crack (laughs). Keep the balance somehow, in terms of health and family, you know, work. Stacey: Career success. I guess, it'd change over time, but currently, it's to have a good work/life balance, where I'm still am able to do some work and also, on the other hand, still have enough time for my family. So it's the balance.
A sense of personal satisfaction	6	Ronald: I'm very satisfied in not just the work arrangement that I've got but the work that I'm doing at the moment, and the people that I work with.
Enjoyment	5	Mary: I just want to do something that I enjoy and that gives me satisfaction and my current job does. Lauren: And actually being able, you know, if I can find a job that I can enjoy going to every day, the money comes as a bonus, that's my career.
Family	4	Ronald: but as you become more mature, your priorities change, for example you know now that I've got a family, things of that nature. It's more about making sure that I'm doing well at work but as well that I'm putting time to really make sure that my family is secure. Dane: To be honest, the kids are the most important thing to me. So, they're almost a career focus on their own.
Manager growing and developing subordinates' skills and careers	4	Julian: Seeing the team grow, you know, under my leadership, getting people below me getting promoted. Megan: For me, now, it's about the people around me. So long as my people are happy, and I feel that I am doing the best by them that I can, I feel successful.
Making a contribution to team, company, or society	4	Jodi: Doing something that I absolutely love with people that I really enjoy working with, something that's creative and flexible and that you get, you know, you're appreciated and acknowledged for what you do. You're doing something that is benefiting others. That to me is something that is more worthwhile than anything else. Jackson: I mean, I would like to sort of exit the world with some, having some, done some public good, you know.
Life success	2	Jack: Career success is a bit of a vague term for me. I feel like it's more of a case of life success. You've got to balance your overall life achievements.

Five of these measures relate to the role or the job (challenge in role; respect, reputation, recognition; satisfied customers; manager growing subordinates; and making a

contribution). Three of these measures relate to home, family and life outside work (flexibility and balance; family; life success). Three of the measures relate to personal perspectives and attitudes (happiness; personal satisfaction; enjoyment).

The literature about career success (discussed in Section 2.4.7) includes job and role related measures and personal perspectives and attitudes, but does not include the home and family measures in the definition of subjective career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Dries, 2011; Kidd, 2008). The life designing theory of career construction (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009) does take a whole-of-life perspective. In this study, participants clearly took a broader view of subjective career success. Though the job drives a big part of subjective perceptions of career success, life outside work also drives perceptions of career success. Participants wanted flexibility to balance work and family, according to their own unique circumstances and arrangements, affirming previous findings that individuals construct their careers over time based on sensemaking across personal, work, family and community lives (Lee, Kossek, Hall, & Litrico, 2011), and affirming that balance is an important priority in career development, as per the kaleidoscope career model (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008).

Two participants put forward the concept of *life success* (without prompting) rather than purely career success. Jack and Damien both sought a successful life, including their jobs, but also including their partners and children. Both participants also made a clear-cut distinction between *life* success and *career* success.

> **Jack:** I start to think more about maybe I should be thinking about it [Jack's future career plans] more [...] I suppose, should be thinking about it more. Don't want to just be doing this [Jack's current role] my whole life. In some ways I think that's why I've taken on my own projects at home. Career success is a bit of a vague term for me. I feel like it's more of a case of life success. You've got to balance your overall life achievements.

6.1.3 Objective Career Success

Participants defined objective career success with a range of measures. Table 6.4 displays the frequency by which these measures were mentioned by participants, including a selection of quotations from participants that illustrate the measures.

Participants who used objective measures of career success most frequently referred to promotion. At Tech, this commonly means a change in job code with an upward move to a higher career level. Participants in individual contributor roles might move to a people management role (e.g., Kate), or they may move from front-line manager roles to middle manager roles (e.g., Melanie). Other participants mentioned increasing salary and achieving key performance indicators (or sales quota) as a measure of objective career success. These measures align with the definitions of objective career success from the literature (see Section 2.4.7).

Table 6.4 Measures of objective career success

Measure	No. of mentions	Representative quotations
Promotion	12	Melanie: Absolutely. So for me, my career goal is to be, within Support organisation here, the most you can really get to become is a director. And I've always just wanted to reach a director. I wanna reach the top and that is because I am ambitious to do so. And that probably explains a bit of the pressures that I put myself under. Sarah: I'd be outside [Tech], next level up. More money. Wherever that might be, giving a bit more. [...] For me, I want to be at that next level. Maybe it's a lead, maybe it's on an SLT [senior leadership team]. Anastasia: I think career success is progression. So whether it is lateral progression or upward progression, that is how I define career success, and hopefully your pay would be aligned to that, but, that would be another correlation for me.
Salary increase	3	Megan: Salary is important, but, and there's this whole 'grateful' thing going on again. And speaking to my mentor this year, I said, you know, sometimes I think do I deserve what I earn? Isn't that terrible? I bust a gut and I'm going, do I deserve it? And my husband goes, 'They should be paying you more!' And then to find out that I'm underpaid by about 40% to my male counterpart at this level.
Achieve key performance indicators	3	Suzanne: Well, I mean for me primarily my – what makes me feel satisfied is when I make my KPIs, so I get a set of five KPIs or six KPIs at the start of the year which involve different things, basically it's the sales number and then some other activities.
Become business owner (outside Tech)	1	Shaun: The future I think, I actually, it's not working for anyone. So it is more like building my own business, that kind of thing.

Shaun offered an interesting view on career success that was wholly different from all other participants, recalling that Shaun was the only participant who did *not* permit any work outside his shift hours. He had reflected on Tech's success in the information technology sector and the strategic direction of Tech's business (to cloud computing). He did not believe that Tech would survive the transition to the cloud. He did not align his own career success with Tech's business success. Instead, he preferred to strike out on his own, building his own business and being his own boss.

> **Shaun:** So things have actually changed. So I don't think, like from career perspective, I don't think I'm in a good position at all. I know that, okay. [...] So that's why I came up with different plans. [...] I don't like people defining my future, I guess. (laughs) [...] especially here in a country like Australia, there will be, the jobs are limited, okay, and I don't think you'll be able to have big career path kind of dream job. I don't think.

6.1.4 Salary Disappointments

Beyond the group of participants who mentioned salary in connection with objective career success, another group of other participants mentioned salary in a different light. Tech has operated a conservative compensation policy in recent years, limiting salary increases for many business units. In some years, employees have not received a salary

increase at all. During interviews, nine participants mentioned disappointment with salary. Of this group, two participants, Suzanne and Leonie, had defined career success using salary as a measure. Therefore, their perceptions of career success measures are aligned with their disappointment in not receiving salary increases. Both of these participants were part-time.

The other seven participants defined career success using subjective measures, or with a mixture of objective and subjective measures. Therefore, in these cases, their disappointment with salary is not aligned with their statements about how they defined career success. Four participants in this group were part-time and female and two participants were working from home, one male and one female. One participant shared the story of their partner, working part-time also at Tech (I have deliberately obscured gender, name and location to preserve anonymity for this participant).

Sharon, working part-time, shared her experiences and her frustration. Later during her interview, Sharon mentioned she had resolved to contact Human Resources to discuss her salary situation, given her disappointment.

> **Sharon:** Well, so, two days a week has worked fine for Simon because I have achieved a lot for him in the team. He always, when it comes to my performance review, he always mentions, when you review them, that I am achieving fine, but you know, if I was working more hours, then I'd be able to achieve more, and that is how he leaves it, so I never get a pay rise. I never get a bonus. I never get anything. And I've been on the same pay since I arrived in Australia.

Megan was promoted but was advised the promotion would be made without a pay increase (known as a 'dry promotion' at Tech). Her rationale was she was 'grateful' for the promotion therefore she was willing to accept the increase in status and responsibility without a corresponding increase in pay. Later in Megan's interview, she shared her view that at Tech women were paid less than men for equivalent roles, saying 'I'm underpaid by about 40 per cent to my male counterpart at this level'. She strongly indicated this was unjust, in her view. Other participants knew they were paid at the lower end of their salary range, or they had missed pay increases, but participants ascribed part-time hours, or maternity leave, or Tech's compensation policy, as the primary reason, rather than gender *per se*. This answers one of the research sub-questions: *What evidence exists about career discrimination (missed training, promotions, performance reviews, salary increases)? Does this vary by gender?*

Tyler, in contrast, had received a recent pay increase, but noted Tech had made significant profits ('all this money') but had not recognised the contribution Tech's staff were making. This suggests Tyler perceived injustice in Tech's compensation policy.

> **Tyler:** I mean, last year, we've got the first salary increase from Tech in the three years I was with them. To me, that's a bit disappointing, that you see the company making all this money each quarter, that they don't give that sort of recognition to the staff, that they've put in the hard yards to contribute towards that income.

6.1.5 Change in Career Success Definition Over Time

Participants spoke about how their definition of career success changed over time. The arrival of a child was the most significant event that caused participants to adjust their career success definition. Six participants (four men and two women) claimed their definition of career success did *not* change over time. For example, Jack initially said when his children arrived he pulled back on his work commitment in order to spend time with his family.

> **Jack:** But at the same time, particularly when the children came along I had this feeling of, 'Look, in the immediate term it's a case of, I'm okay doing it, I'm okay cruising because I feel like I want to make sure I'm there for that important time'.

Later in his interview, he appeared to contradict himself, noting his perception was his children had not impacted his career progression, saying 'Look, I don't think it would have changed me very much.'

Twelve participants (ten women and two men) shared their perceptions about notable changes in their definitions of career success, with childbirth being the most frequently mentioned change event. Participants expressed the principal constraint after having a child was lack of time. Before having children, participants were typically able to devote extended hours to Tech, enacting the work devotion schema (Blair-Loy, 2003), but after having children, participants found they had to split their time across multiple priorities. Female participants in this group reflected that family was important and career goals should either take a lower priority, or should not come at a cost to family, enacting the family devotion schema (Blair-Loy, 2003). Kylie's view was typical:

> **Kylie:** I don't have the time to devote to it that I used to. I used to travel a lot for my job and I used to be able to work until all hours of the night, or to come in for an emergency meeting. I don't have that, I don't have that luxury now. I can't, if there is an emergency on Monday, I can't just pop in. I sometimes fight that urge, I'm like, well what can I do, I can get someone to come in and look after the kids for a couple of hours and then I can pop into work, but it's not sustainable.

Participants tried to avoid business travel, where the participant travelled domestically (e.g., Sydney–Melbourne for a day trip or with an overnight stay) or internationally (typically to Asia or to Tech headquarters in Silicon Valley). Such trips were not possible without support in the home, from either a spouse/partner or paid help, to care for children. Furthermore, participants were also reluctant to consider higher status roles that involved relocation to another country. Jarrod explained his view of career success after having children:

> **Jarrod:** It could be a bit limiting at times. You don't have the same flexibility. You don't have the same, I guess, commitment of time that you would like to put in. Yeah, I think it's all part of life. I think at the end of the day it keeps you, it makes you keep a good balance between life and work. And at the end of the day it's healthy this way. So, yeah, if I didn't have the kids I would have been doing even more hours. I would have been travelling even more. I would consider relocations very easily. All these things, that I would have been able to do. But, I would have just buried myself in work. And I don't know how effective I would have been if I didn't have a good balance.

Overall, participants felt that due to the constraints they perceived, their aspirations were reduced. Instead of seeking high status roles with increased responsibility, participants sought work–life balance and flexible work arrangements that allowed them to navigate between work commitments and the needs of their young families. This point answers the following research questions: *What career choices are circumscribed? What compromises are made?*

Janine explained her perceptions, before and after children:

> **Janine:** So, definitely, much different -- I was, you know, different drivers before children. It was success, it was moving up the ladder, it was getting myself -- I wasn't heading in a CEO direction or anything like that, I was happy to get myself up to a certain level, and stay there and perfect that particular role and enjoy it. I prefer to stay at a certain level and really really enjoy the work, than, keep climbing and perhaps not enjoy it as much. Whereas now, as I've said before, having the role, having a regular job and knowing the job is there for you, and, and enjoying the job, it's -- that for me [is] career success at the moment.

6.1.6 Climbing the Ladder

During the analysis of career success, I noticed several participants used the career metaphor of *climbing the ladder*. Upon deeper investigation, twelve participants used this metaphor and two participants used language of 'climbing' without referring to a ladder.

Of this group, only Emma referred to past and future career moves as 'up the ladder'. However, she also referred to her current goals of having flexibility and balance, noting that Tech had few opportunities, in her perception.

> **Emma:** I think when I first joined Tech, oh GreenCo, I was very motivated to learn and anything about the IT industry and climb that ladder. I don't think that's changed, but I think just my vision of what, you know, for someone who thinks to be promoted it's successful for them, but for me it's not as important. Like I said, I think it's just having this job I know and do so well and having the flexibility because I've got two -- you know, I've got family and work commitments. It's a hard juggle. If I'm able to do all of it smoothly, then yeah, I would climb that ladder, but it's not realistic for me.

All the other participants referred to avoiding the ladder, were not interested in the ladder, stated that climbing the ladder would not work, or did not aspire to climb the ladder. This group was composed of nine women and four men. This group was demographically diverse: with and without spouses/partners; with and without dependent children; a range of ages, job functions and business units.

Eleven participants using the *climbing the ladder* metaphor also used a subjective definition of career success; three participants using this metaphor used mixed definitions of career success (both subjective and objective). The metaphor connotes *objective* career success, moving upwards within the organisation hierarchy, to a role of higher status or more responsibility. It is notable participants with subjective career success definitions used this specific objective career success metaphor. However, they also rejected this metaphor, reinforcing their subjective notions of career success. Vanessa explained her views:

> **Vanessa:** I just want to be appreciated and respected in the role that I am in, d'y'know what I mean. If I feel like I am doing a good job and that the business partners I am working with can show me that they think I am doing a good job in one way or another, I'm happy. And that to me is career success. Yeah I don't have major ambitions for climbing the corporate ladder (laughs).

Tanya shared her personal division of priorities between work and her family. Tanya's remarks indicated she believed that a professional person should aspire to a career path, moving up the ladder, but also this type of aspiration was not workable with children.

> **Tanya:** But for me personally, I, my priority at this stage in my life is tipping 51 per cent children 49 work. Probably not quite that percentage (laughs) higher with children. It's just, being a full-blown professional, wanting to move up the career ladder, it's just, it wouldn't work. It just wouldn't work.

James explained his views that the higher one goes up the ladder, the more compromises must be made, sacrificing lifestyle. In his view, he was not willing to make this kind of trade-off, preferring to balance work and family.

> **James:** Maybe my aspirations to climb the ladder and what have you, maybe have been tempered a little bit, because I associate with that, you know, if you go higher in your career you do so by sacrificing your, you know, lifestyle.

In summary, the metaphor of *climbing the ladder* is used by around one quarter of participants to explain the type of career success they have rejected or avoided. The use of the metaphor reflects a moderately strong cultural assumption about what career success should look like, though the results in this study show *climbing the ladder* is, in fact, what most participants do *not* aspire to. Given that the sample is composed of part-time, working from home and leave of absence employees, this finding is not surprising.

6.1.7 Summary

In this study, more participants used subjective definitions of career success than objective definitions. The most frequent measure of subjective career success was being challenged in role and continuing to learn in role. The most frequent measure of objective career success was promotion. Tech's compensation policy has resulted in minimal salary increases for some business units, but participants separated career success from unsatisfactory pay, instead seeing missed or low salary increases as an injustice. Participants changed their career success definitions over time, with the arrival of a child being the most common trigger. Typically, participants perceived that family becomes a focus and that they could not be wholly devoted to work commitments, reducing their career aspirations. Some participants referred to career success by using the metaphor of *climbing the ladder*; however, most of the participants using this metaphor also used subjective definitions of career success. They referred to the metaphor as a way of indicating what they avoided or rejected, rather than what they sought from their careers.

6.2 Career Satisfaction

6.2.1 Perceptions of Career Satisfaction

Participants shared a range of views when asked how satisfied they were with their careers. When asking this question during interviews, I did not specify a method for indicating career satisfaction. Nine participants employed a numerical scale for describing their career satisfaction, for example, a score out of five or ten, or a percentage figure. Forty-five participants described their career satisfaction using words (rather than figures).

Participant perceptions ranged between very dissatisfied to very satisfied. I coded the perceptions into three categories: (1) dissatisfied, where the participant expressed mild to extreme dissatisfaction with their career, or used percentages less than 50 per cent; (2) satisfied, where the participant expressed overall satisfaction with their career, or used qualifiers such as ‘pretty’, ‘quite’ or ‘fairly’ to describe their perceptions, or used percentages between 50 and 60 per cent; and (3) very satisfied, where the participant expressed positive satisfaction, or used qualifiers such as ‘great’, ‘very’ or ‘really’ to describe their perceptions, or used percentages greater than 60 per cent. Table 6.5 shows the breakdown of career satisfaction perceptions.

Table 6.5 Perceptions of career satisfaction

Career satisfaction perception	Number of participants
Very satisfied	21
Satisfied	25
Dissatisfied	8

The majority of participants (85%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their careers, and a small proportion of participants (15%) were dissatisfied.

Table 6.6 shows the breakdown of career satisfaction perceptions by flexible working arrangement category. (7 participants appear in 2 or 3 categories, as shown in Figure 4.3.)

Table 6.6 Career satisfaction breakdown by flexible working arrangement

	Number of participants		
Flexible working arrangement	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Part-time hours	8	12	4
Leave of absence	3	3	
Working from home	14	12	4
Maternity		2	

Part-time participants had lower career satisfaction than other participants. Part-time participants spoke about the difficulty of balancing part-time work with childcare. Part-time participants also experienced intense demands from work, often working during non-working time (as noted in the previous sections on creating, maintaining and crossing boundaries). Sharon (part-time) said she was ‘probably 40 per cent happy’ (thus dissatisfied) and Bianca (part-time) said she would ‘like more from it right now’, also

indicating her dissatisfaction. In contrast, Vanessa (part-time) explained her positive perceptions about her career satisfaction.

> **Vanessa:** I think it's been great. I am really lucky to have worked at Tech for so long. I mean, God, it's been so long, fifteen years or something. Before that you know I worked in a few banks but it's been really great. I've had a huge experience working in many different countries with different cultures. Yeah, I love it! I am really pretty satisfied.

Leave of absence participants spoke about the positive career benefits they experienced after returning from their time away. Darren (full-time, leave of absence) talked about his career satisfaction (including employment with other firms), noting the positive benefits of cross-cultural experiences, like Vanessa.

> **Darren:** Ah look, people say don't have any regrets, you should never have regrets. I, I'm, really, if I reflect back on my career, I'm really happy with it. It's taken me to some amazing places, you know. I've been able to travel with work. I've worked in 15, 20 different cultures, you know.

Participants who worked from home almost always deliberately chose this working arrangement, rather than it being imposed by Tech, so their working arrangement closely aligned with their personal preferences. Their career satisfaction was somewhat aligned with their positive perceptions (at the time of the interview) about their working conditions. Christine (part-time, working from home) shared an ambivalent view about her role, but she appreciated the flexibility of working from home (in a regional NSW location).

> **Christine:** It got me a lot of places. I've got a very flexible job, you know. I am not totally totally dissatisfied with it, I'm not necessarily over the moon about it, but, um, it's been, you know, it's been good to me. It has got me where I am now in my living situation. That's a big plus and I'm very happy about that.

By contrast, Jodi (full-time, working from home) gave the most enthusiastic response of all participants, when talking about her career satisfaction.

> **Jodi:** Very, very satisfied. […] It's become my dream job in the dream circumstances. The perfect job for me has evolved to fit me perfectly.

Table 6.7 shows the breakdown of career satisfaction perceptions by gender and age group.

Table 6.7 Career satisfaction breakdown by gender and age

	Number of participants		
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Gender			
Female	11	16	7
Male	10	9	1
Age group			
25–29		1	
30–34		1	1
35–39	8	7	1
40–44	3	8	6
45–49	5	5	
50–54	3		
>55	2	3	

Women made up the vast majority (88%) of dissatisfied participants and the proportion of women who were dissatisfied (21%) was much greater than the proportion of men who were dissatisfied (5%). As a group, female participants with dependent children struggled to balance work and family, especially experiencing conflict experienced from childcare competing with work demands. Also, part-time women perceived little or no career progression, giving support to their career dissatisfaction. Women participants may have felt less aligned with Tech's dominant masculine culture, leading to perceptions of not fitting in and thus career dissatisfaction, while men may have felt more aligned to Tech's organisational culture. Megan referred to the 'big boys club' when talking about her co-worker's career progression and her own career progression, noting that the leadership team has always been 100 per cent male. Megan's reference to a 'club' suggests the leadership team is a cadre of men, bound together and regulated by unspoken and recondite rules that exclude women.

> **Megan:** Because, and that's exactly what she'd done. She'd come into operations and become a director and then left operations for her next step up and felt that you were never going to be part of the big boys club. [The senior management team] for [business unit name] in Asia Pacific has always been a full male complement. There's never been a female on it.

Turning to male participants with dependent children, some fathers were involved in childcare while others relied on their partners to take care of their children. Overall, male participants appeared to have more time to devote to Tech demands, thus supporting their overall higher career satisfaction and conforming to Tech's culture of constant availability.

Older participants were generally more satisfied than young participants. Participants aged 50–54 had the highest proportion (100%) of 'Very satisfied'; participants aged 30–34 had the highest proportion (50%) of 'Dissatisfied'. Older participants had a deeper understanding of their personal career progression and of their role within Tech. They may also have perceived that they had found a role that was perfect for them and they were satisfied with that position at Tech. Younger participants were trying to find their feet within Tech. Younger participants with dependent children were trying to resolve the internal conflict between the career they thought they would have, prior to children,

versus the career they now had, taking into account the impact of children upon the participant's career progression. Some participants expressed how their career ambition had moderated after their children were born – some participants were comfortable with this choice while other participants expressed wanting more from their careers yet not being able to achieve this because they perceived they were constrained by the needs of home and family. Kieran (working from home), aged >55 years, spoke about his career satisfaction.

> **Kieran:** Oh, I am actually very satisfied with how things have gone. Oh yes, I'm very comfortable with where I am now. And, yeah, I have been lucky, but, well, I think, I hope that some of it has been due to me. I have tried to work hard and do my job. I guess it has paid off.

An analysis of career satisfaction by organisation tenure, tenure with manager and career level was conducted. However, this analysis did not reveal specific trends or implications, so it is not included here.

Table 6.8 shows the breakdown of career satisfaction by partner's employment status, number of dependent children and number of dependent adults.

Table 6.8 Career satisfaction breakdown by household composition

	Number of participants		
	Very satisfied	**Satisfied**	**Dissatisfied**
Partner's employment status			
No partner	1	2	2
Partner is employed	16	20	5
Partner is not employed	4	3	1
Number of dependent children			
0	5	4	2
1	3	5	
2	9	13	5
3	4	3	1
Number of dependent adults			
0	21	23	6
1		1	1
2		1	1

Single participants had a greater proportion (40%) of 'Dissatisfied' compared to participants with partners. The proportion of 'Dissatisfied' was very similar for participants with employed partners versus participants with non-employed partners; the proportion of 'Very satisfied' (50%) is slightly higher for participants with non-employed partners versus the proportion for participants with employed partners (39%).

Participants with no children had a similar proportion (18%) of 'Dissatisfied' compared to participants with two children (19%), while in the group of participants with one child, no-one perceived career dissatisfaction. Participants with three children had the highest proportion of 'Very satisfied' (50%). Looking at the small sample size of participants with dependent adults, no firm conclusions could be drawn regarding career satisfaction.

Taken together, these results imply having a partner who is not employed slightly influences career satisfaction (though noting this is based on a small sample of eight), while having one, two or three children had varying influences on career satisfaction. The non-employed partner can take care of home/family demands, allowing the participant to focus on work demands, leading to lower work–family conflict and higher career satisfaction. The range of perceptions of career satisfaction across the number of dependent children suggests subjective perception is important here. Participants reflected on their own circumstances and their career satisfaction, giving a range of responses. This also suggests other factors were more important in determining the participant's career satisfaction.

6.2.2 Manager Support for Career

All participants spoke about the impact or influence of their current and past managers on their careers. Thirty-seven participants reported their current manager was supportive of their careers; three participants reported managers who were partially supportive; 12 participants reported unsupportive managers; and two participants reported managers who were obstructive. (Some participants also talked about manager support for flexible working arrangements. This is covered in Section 4.2.4.)

Participants identified the critical role their managers' internal networks at Tech played in their career success. Their managers could share positive impressions about the participant across their business networks, building an enhanced reputation and laying a foundation for future career progression. Julian spoke about his manager's role in detail.

> **Julian:** They have to be able to see that I'm being successful in leading the team, getting the job done, getting customer issues fixed. And then, start taking a bigger role to get myself more, take more ownership, be more visible, right, on a global scale, in order to get to the next level. The next level will be director and that's going to take a bit more convincing, right. It's not just within my vertical, which is [name removed]. You also need to get buy-in from other leaders horizontally. Yeah. So my manager, my senior director will be crucial.

Some managers offered supportive words but not supportive actions. Simone's manager asked her to become an expert in a specific product, but between Simone's part-time hours, and intense customer demands, there was not sufficient additional time to devote to training and development. Simone's manager ended up prioritising customer needs (aligning to the organisational cultural norms of urgency and crisis) and was not able to arrange Simone's workload to allow for her training and development. Ultimately, Simone perceived her manager's impact on her career was 'not that much to be honest'. It could be argued that Simone's manager's inaction was in fact negative for Simone's career progression and her career satisfaction, since she was not growing her skills, yet she faced demands from her manager that she try to increase her skills by becoming an expert.

Three participants spoke about unsupportive managers. Shaun perceived his manager had 'zero' influence on his career progression. Kim and Lauren perceived their managers had deliberately intervened to block career progression. Kim felt her manager had 'massively imped[ed]' her career and Lauren said, 'I do know that he did try to hold me back'. Having

an unsupportive manager was a potent driver of career dissatisfaction for these participants.

In summary, the majority of participants at Tech had career-supportive managers, who used their influence to open up new learning and growth opportunities for their subordinates. Some participants had unsupportive or obstructive managers, who used their power to block or hinder their subordinates' career progression.

6.2.3 Stuck on the Career Plateau

Nine participants talked about their careers using the metaphor of being on a plateau or reaching a plateau, being stalled, being stagnated or on hold. Seven of the nine participants were women; two were men.

Six women used the metaphor to describe their careers in a negative way. Five of these women worked part-time hours at the time of interview; one was working full-time hours but had worked part-time hours in the past. Bianca and Stacey said their careers were 'stagnated', Rachel referred to her career as plateaued and Anastasia described her career as stagnated and plateaued. Sarah used the term 'on hold' and Narelle described her career as 'well and truly stalled'. These metaphors, taken together, indicate participants were keenly aware of the impact of children and part-time hours upon their careers. The metaphors convey a sense that these women's *expected* career progression was to move upward or forward but the *reality* was that they perceived a block, for example, reaching a plateau in upward movement, or stalling or stagnating in forward movement. Stacey used a series of rich metaphors when describing her current career trajectory, especially as a part-time employee.

> **Stacey:** It obviously puts it just sort of stagnant for a while. You sort of spin your wheels until you can, which is what, yeah. [...] It just, doing, you're sort of treading water. Doing exactly what you need to do, to get done. You're not actually moving ahead in any leaps and bounds.

One woman, Megan, used the metaphor to point out she did *not* feel stagnated in a given role and she had seen growth in her career. She judged this by referring to the series of roles she had taken on during 11 years with Tech. However, later in the interview, she explained, with some bitterness, that it took four years to receive a promotion in her current role, even though she had been promised a promotion within one year of starting the role. She ascribed this slow promotion to gender bias at Tech and within the technology industry more broadly.

> **Megan:** Whereas I hear in conversation, you know, Joe Soap, because he's a male, he's got the *potential* to be such a good manager. Let's promote him to director and give him that opportunity. But as a female, in, I especially feel this industry, you have to have proven yourself worthy, before you will be given a promotion.

The two men used the same justification for feeling they were on a plateau: they were no longer learning in their roles. Andrew commented that 'the work that I did plateaued back when I first started with Yasir' [a former manager; thus Andrew was indicating some years prior to the interview]. Later he explained he felt he was learning under Yasir, but, under his current manager, the nature of the role had changed and his learning had stopped.

Jackson shared his perceptions about his previous role, 'my learning plateaued out and I was clearly getting jaded in that role.' He reflected that his current role was more challenging, implying his learning had started up again.

6.2.4 Intersection of Career Success and Career Satisfaction

Table 6.9 shows the breakdown of career success orientation by career satisfaction.

Table 6.9 Career satisfaction breakdown by career success orientation

	Number of participants		
Career success orientation	**Very satisfied**	**Satisfied**	**Dissatisfied**
Subjective	18	16	4
Objective	1	3	2
Both	2	6	2

Participants with subjective career success orientation had the lowest proportion of 'Dissatisfied' (10.53%) compared to participants with objective career success orientation (33.33%) and participants with both career success orientations (20%). The proportion of dissatisfied participants was still small overall – the majority of participants were satisfied or very satisfied.

Participants with objective career success orientation would be seeking promotions, or pay increases, or increases in span of control and responsibility. Similarly, participants with subjective career success orientation would be seeking continuous challenges, ongoing learning, respect, recognition, happiness and satisfaction. Where participants' career outcomes fall short of their expectations, framed by their career success orientation, it is reasonable to presume they would be dissatisfied. By contrast, perceived career satisfaction would be positive where participants' career outcomes align with their expectations, framed by their career success orientation.

Shaun and Anastasia were dissatisfied with their careers and they used objective career success orientation. Shaun did not believe in a future career at Tech and he wanted to build his own business to be successful. Anastasia defined career success as progression and status, moving to roles of higher responsibility. Yet, she felt her career was 'mediocre' at the time of interview. Bianca and Kim used both orientations but were also dissatisfied. Bianca sought more development and wanted to move into a management role. Kim wanted to continue learning, be the best and 'climb the ladder' but was 'totally disappointed' in her career at Tech. These examples illustrate misalignment between the participant's career success orientation and their perceptions of career satisfaction.

By contrast, other participants showed alignment between career success orientation and career satisfaction. Nick defined career success subjectively in terms of relationships with customers and he felt he had positive working relationships with his principal clients, driving his positive career satisfaction. Tristan defined career success as wanting a challenge and being 'hands on' and he felt his current role offered this, supporting positive career satisfaction. Suzanne and Julian defined their career success objectively, using promotions as one example. Suzanne said she was satisfied with her career and Julian said his career satisfaction was 'pretty good'.

6.2.5 Summary

In this study, the majority of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their careers. A minority of participants were dissatisfied with their careers. Part-time participants had a higher proportion of dissatisfaction than other participants who worked from home, or took leave of absence or maternity leave. Women participants were the majority of dissatisfied participants. Older participants were generally more satisfied than younger participants. Participants with 3–5 years of organisation tenure and participants with 1–2 years of manager tenure showed the highest career satisfaction. Individual contributor participants had lower career satisfaction than manager participants. Participants with three children had the highest proportion of career satisfaction. Managers at Tech supported careers in a range of ways. Some Tech managers showed a lack of support or were deliberately obstructive. Some employees talked about their careers using metaphors of being on a plateau, being stalled, being stagnated, or on hold. Participants who had alignment between their career success orientation and their career outcomes are apt to perceive positive career satisfaction; conversely, participants who had misalignment between their career success orientation and their career outcomes perceived career dissatisfaction.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter and the two preceding chapters was to discuss how participants behaved as knowledge workers with flexible work arrangements, how they used technology in their work lives and the boundary issues that arose from mobile communication technologies, how they managed the boundary between work and home/family, how they defined career success and how satisfied they were with their careers. At the heart of this study, the findings also aimed to interrogate the intersection of flexible working arrangements and career outcomes and explore the evidence for flexibility stigma.

The major theme to emerge from this chapter was that *subjective career success was more salient* than objective career success, and that most participants were satisfied with their careers. The Tech workforce is an ageing workforce, though (noting the mean age was 42.65 years and rising each year), and the emphasis on subjective career success reflects the concerns of an older workforce (rather than the aspirations of a very young workforce). A sub-theme that emerged in connection with career success and career satisfaction was that Tech's *flexibility* was highly prized by participants. They appreciated the ability to craft a comfortable life, allocating time for Tech demands and home/family demands, afforded by flexible working arrangements. They also arranged micro-invisibilities during the work day to attend to home/family demands, yet all the while crafting a reputation of high availability.

In the following chapter, I will bring together principal themes from the three results chapters to provide the major conclusions of this study, discussing implications for theory and practice, limitations and future directions for research.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate the intersection of flexible working arrangements and career outcomes in the information technology sector in Australia. The three preceding chapters presented the results of analysis: the organisational context and culture; the way in which technology was used; how participants shaped and maintained boundaries between work and home/family; and their perceptions of career success, career satisfaction, and career outcomes. The overview of this chapter is displayed in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Overview of discussion and conclusions chapter structure and topics

In this chapter, I interpret the findings. I look at modern ways of working for knowledge workers, ways of balancing work and home/family, and how roles, identities and norms are reshaped in the contemporary work environment. I expand upon the differential outcomes for careers and for flexibility stigma, bounded careers and the boundaryless work–home interface, and present a new career model for knowledge workers.

Then I turn to the implications for theory and practice. I reflect on my role as researcher and my positionality. I discuss the limitations of the study and outline future directions for research.

7.1 Principal Findings

7.1.1 Contemporary Ways of Working

Modern knowledge workers have evolved a very different style of working compared to previous industrial or agricultural styles of working. In this study, individuals work a wide range of hours during the day. Of my sample, there were very few who worked exclusively

conventional or core hours. Modern, mobile communication technologies, such as laptops and smartphones, are ubiquitous, making flexible work arrangements possible. Employees now use the technology to flex their work hours and their work location.

The usage of mobile communication technologies is personal and unique. There is not a universal usage pattern for each technology offering, with each individual selecting their favourite device and favourite channel. There are not strict organisational mandates about what device or channel to use or avoid. Thus there is surprising variation across communication devices and channels.

The area of missed social events and missed informal communications presents an interesting analysis. In this study, though some participants were aware that they might be missing informal communications, I would now argue, in line with Hafermalz (2016), that the water cooler is no longer a physical object but is enacted virtually between employees, using mobile communication technologies. Informal communication remains an important component of getting the job done, but being remote or virtual is not necessarily an inhibitor of informal communication in the modern way of working.

Long Hours. This study supports the view that long hours are mythical and not the actual, worked norm for *individual contributors* in the IT sector in Australia, in line with evidence from Ireland (O'Carroll, 2015) and the US (Alegria, 2016). For *managers*, though, long hours are more likely and more probable, but managers also take advantage of flexible and permeable boundaries, and decision-making autonomy, to achieve a suitable work–home balance for themselves. There is also a difference between managers who are office-based, where presence and visibility is expected, compared to managers who are home-based, where presence can be skilfully managed using virtual methods. In fact, I argue that employees and managers are especially responding to the organisation’s work–family culture, including the expectations around high availability, constant connectivity and interacting in an atmosphere of urgency and crisis. Indeed, displays of organisational commitment are now more virtual than physical, mediated by skilful technology usage, crafting a reputation of high availability. Now, there is at least the possibility to integrate work and home/family satisfactorily.

I argue that flexible working arrangements benefit the organisation as much as the employee. In this study, many employees worked odd hours (outside of conventional working hours), and it is Tech that gained higher productivity and more collaboration at the expense of employee work–life balance. This finding aligns with European experiences (Lewis, Brannen, & Nilsen, 2009).

Normative Control. This study suggests that, at Tech, normative control operates through the expectations of work–life culture, to shape acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Especially notable is normative control in the form of the *absence* of manager directions to work extended hours. Almost all employees work at some point out of conventional working hours. Normative control is also seen where managers working late at night (22:00) observe that they are more likely to receive an immediate response to email at that late hour, than during the day. This implies those managers *and their peers* are all working at that hour, processing email, and, crucially, that this expectation of working is not questioned.

Another area where normative control operates is the detailed rules surrounding instant messaging and the display of availability, taken as a symbol for active work and a proxy for organisational commitment. Many employees sensed they needed to be online and available in the instant messaging application during working hours. This display of availability is a tool for managerial control but also for peer to peer control, entangled with fears of missing a message or, worse, being regarded as not working or absent.

This study extends the literature with rich stories about contemporary technologies, especially the rise of the smartphone, filling a gap in the literature. Many previous studies in the period 2005–2010 refer to older technologies like Blackberries (Fenner & Renn, 2010; Middleton, 2007), that are now considered defunct. Mobile communication devices evolve so rapidly that the literature has been slow to keep up with the pace of change.

This study confirms many of the affordances found by previous studies (Azad et al., 2016; Cousins & Robey, 2015; Erhardt & Gibbs, 2014; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). A novel contribution here is the affordance of *enhancing cross-cultural communication*. This is an important affordance in a multi-national corporation, where employees are communicating across time zones with other employees who speak English as a second language. Furthermore, this study sheds light on the counter-affordance of *invisibility* (as opposed to visibility). The combination of invisibility and mobility allows employees to cloak their location and their dress, yet be constantly available.

This study also supports previous work on the autonomy paradox or connectivity paradox (Cavazotte et al., 2014; Leonardi et al., 2010; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Stich et al., 2015), where employees perceive autonomy by using technology-enabled flexible work practices, but they also perceive control through expectations of high availability and connectivity. Here I argue that, though employees perceive the autonomy paradox, they do not perceive a conflict. Instead employees take expectations of autonomy, control and constant connectivity in their stride; indeed, in this case study, these expectations are now normalised in organisational culture. This study also reinforces previous studies around the notion that processing email is not real work (Fangel & Aaløkke, 2008), contributing to knowledge by describing an Australian case study. Also confirmed is the framing of technology usage as a personal choice (Cavazotte et al., 2014); however, it is clear that employees are blind to the strict yet unspoken rules embedded in organisational culture. Thus, they do not recognise their so-called personal choice is, in fact, deeply constrained and controlled by normative expectations within organisational culture. One consequence of this blindness is there is little resistance to working outside of conventional working hours. Employees, though, assume it might be career limiting to resist these norms, further contributing to normative control. The display of constant connectivity and constant availability is a proxy for the display of organisational commitment. Thus, if an employee reduced or limited their hours in a visible way so their manager and co-workers noticed it, then the working assumption is that the employee would suffer career penalties.

7.1.2 Contemporary Ways of Balancing

Individuals use flexible working arrangements to balance work and home/family in interesting ways. In this study, integration was normative, while previous studies found normative segmentation in the US (Nippert-Eng, 1996) and Sweden (Mellner et al., 2014).

National culture, organisational culture, and employer and government policies intersect to determine the preferred style at a country level. In this study, Australian preferences, supports and resources mean that integration is the stronger preference.

There is a surprising lack of obvious perceptions of work–family conflict in this study. Some scholars say that the preference of integration may give rise to work-family conflict (Kossek et al., 2006), and other scholars say conflict may arise where individuals prefer more flexible boundaries than the employer is willing to offer (Matthews & Barnes-Farrell, 2010), but here perceptions of conflict are low, in part because integration is the preferred style. Contrary to previous literature that equated high permeability with work–home conflict, I argue that for knowledge workers, high permeability facilitates positive work–home articulation (as defined by A. Smith, 2016). Thus, this study makes a contribution showing that perceptions of satisfactory work–life balance are achieved through integration and permeable boundaries, rather than segmentation, within the context of the IT sector and knowledge work. Here, the organisation offers maximum flexibility, meaning that the workplace is different from some other workplaces described in the literature, where flexibility is restricted to certain business units or job levels (Bohle, 2016; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2016) or contested by managers.

This study answers the call of Park and Jex (2011) to qualitatively investigate boundary tactics to identify integration moves and segmentation moves that lead to facilitation or interference. The rich, detailed case study findings here show that the knowledge workers tend to use integration tactics, mediated by modern communication technologies, to achieve balance. Urgent work-related emails (an example used by Park and Jex (2011)) are now easily processed at home in the evening or early morning. Knowledge workers regard this as the normalised way of work, supporting integration.

This study confirms that subjective perceptions of balance are more important and more salient for individuals, answering the call of Haar et al. (2014) to investigate *perceptions* of work–life balance, rather than assuming the absence of work–life conflict implies balance. Work–life balance is gendered, though not in the way expected by Gatrell and Cooper (2008). Instead, in this study, both men and women work flexibly, with men working at home framed as an accepted and normalised practice. I argue that models of work–life balance that rest upon a foundation of *incompatibility* between work and home/family (Haun & Dormann, 2016) are now outdated for the contemporary knowledge worker. In place of incompatibility, individuals blend and weave work and home, to craft a life that works for them, supporting life designing theory (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009).

In accordance with boundary theory's predictions, this study confirms that employees with an integration preference have weak boundaries that are both flexible and permeable (Ashforth et al., 2000; Bulger et al., 2007; Nippert-Eng, 1996), while employees with a segmentation preference have strong boundaries that are more inflexible and impermeable.

A novel contribution of this study is the detailed analysis of micro-transitions (Ashforth et al., 2000; Ruppel et al., 2013), particularly for telecommuting employees, showing how mobile communication technologies intersect with weak, flexible, permeable boundaries. Micro-transitions are effortless and seamless and ultimately unremarkable. Knowledge workers do not appear to question their micro-transitions, so these transitions and the

associated weak boundaries become normalised within organisational culture, supporting intense virtual displays of organisational commitment. Working from home affords micro-transitions and micro-invisibilities, whereas working in the office is a much more defined way of working in a defined place. Telecommuting also allows employees to be more present, though, in this case study, given the nature of the workforce, presence is now virtual rather than physical, contradicting the prior findings of McDonald et al. (2005), who found expectations around physical presence in the workplace. Remote or virtual employees now do the work of presencing (Hafermalz, 2016) to craft their reputations.

In fact, I argue that boundaries are so weak for integrators that they, in effect, become non-existent. Previous scholarship held that the domains were mutually exclusive (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996) and more recently that boundaries are becoming blurred (Isdell, 2016; Schieman & Glavin, 2016; Siegert, 2015). I argue that individuals operate *simultaneously* in both domains: work and home/family, given the organisational context of global projects and teams, the technology context of mobile devices and connectivity, and the organisational culture that emphasises getting the job done. The days of having a strict separation between the work domain and the home/family domain (implying segmentation) are gone. Instead, knowledge workers accomplish the tasks that need to be done, whether work or home/family, without bothering much about the distinction between the two.

This study also reinforces the asymmetrical nature and directionality of the work–home boundary (Hyland & Prottas, 2016). Work demands receive higher priority than home demands, for most employees, while parents with young children carve out set times of the day when they focus on their children. Yet, they return to work demands when the children are not present (at childcare, for example) or sleeping.

One of the most interesting findings is the impact of work–life culture on shaping employee expectations, answering the call of Olson-Buchanan and Boswell (2006) to look at possible antecedents for integration and segmentation. In this study, I argue that the unspoken assumptions of organisational culture (urgency and crisis, constant availability, get the job done, long hours, and measured by output) are particularly strong in shaping employee behaviours. Since organisational culture governs how commitment is perceived by employees and managers, career outcomes for flexible workers are partially determined by these perceptions of influential others.

This study also expands the notion of keeping a time balance sheet, referred to by Kreiner et al. (2009) as *time banking*. Boundary flexibility is a critical resource that allows for time banking. Employees control when to work and when not to work, using this tactic to ensure home and family do not suffer from excess work demands, and, equally, that work does not suffer at times when home/family demands are higher.

This study confirms both boundary congruence theory (Kreiner, 2006) extending scholarship about how knowledge workers in Australia perceive congruence. The workplace is a greedy institution but, equally, the family is greedy too (Coser, 1974). Considering competing demands for attention and commitment from work and family, and resources offered from both sides, I argue that policies of flexibility are one of the most highly valued resources offered to employees. Flexible working is a significant benefit of Tech employment, with employees commenting that they expected it would be hard to

find similar flexibility at other companies. Thus, Tech's flexible working policies act as a retention tool and reduce attrition for this group of flexible workers. It is, therefore, surprising that Tech does not make more of this in their recruitment materials and in their employment brand.

Turning to boundary fit theory (Ammons, 2013), I contend that the preference of part-time workers is to spend at least some of the week with their families, so they are displaying a partial commitment to the organisation and a partial commitment to their families. For employees working at home, managers and co-workers must employ other (virtual) evidence to judge employee commitment. When working at home, many employees choose to spend at least some time with their children during the working day. Thus, the individual's boundary preference matches their boundary enactment and, in this study, most participants were satisfied with their situation. This study also answers the call of Mellner (2016) for more qualitative studies about boundary control and boundary congruence.

This study contributes to the existing literature on strategies for balancing work and home (Cousins & Varshney, 2009; Quesenberry & Trauth, 2005) by sharing a rich picture of detailed tactics used in the information technology sector. Individuals have a high degree of control over the permeability of the work–home boundary, ranging between synchronous and asynchronous communication methods, skilfully controlling their presence and availability, according to elaborate heuristics that depend on the hierarchical position and familiarity of the sender of the message. Accessibility is now not a stable or consistent style of working; instead, employees use variable and adaptive tactics to manage their accessibility, changing their availability according to their needs and their perceptions of organisational demands. Furthermore, disconnection from mobile communication devices is increasingly rare, and gendered, with more women remaining connected than men. In this study, polychronicity is more common than monochronicity (Gold & Mustafa, 2013), aligning with the overall integrationist style of participants in this study. However, challenging the findings of Korabik et al. (2016) and confirming the findings of Dery and MacCormick (2012), lower work overload was not found. Instead, employees respond to intensifying work demands by flexing working hours. Organisational culture is the key influencer, driving expectations of when to work and how to display availability and connectivity to managers and co-workers.

This study also supports aspects of the kaleidoscope career model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2007; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008), particularly the dimensions of balance and challenge. Balance emerges as a significant factor in careers and career decision-making for knowledge workers. Challenge is also important for knowledge workers navigating their careers. A contribution of this study is that sometimes the *lack of challenge* is just as important, particularly when the employee has other priorities for a period of time, such as taking care of small children, or engaging in further post-graduate study. Though the career literature regards the individual as seeking more from their careers, there may well be times when the individual wishes to focus on other, non-work opportunities. Therefore, temporarily minimising challenge from work demands may be an important component of career development.

The flexibility and permeability of boundaries is gendered in this study. While there is scant direct evidence in the literature of gendered boundary flexibility/permeability, other

scholars have found gender and life stage differences in work–family conflict and family–work conflict (Hecht & Allen, 2009; Martinengo, Jacob, & Hill, 2010; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015), ascribed to differences in normative role expectations and age and presence of children. I infer from these studies that men and women make boundaries differently. In this study, working parents, both men and women, crafted an impermeable home boundary for part of the day when they were taking care of their children. Yet men were more likely to make themselves unavailable and craft an impermeable boundary than women, reflecting the typical division of labour within the household. While women retain the primary caregiving role, it is expected that they would tend to have impermeable home boundaries. Yet in the study, they made their boundaries more permeable, across different dimensions of permeability, to make themselves more connected and more available for work demands while in the home domain.

7.1.3 Reshaping Roles, Identities and Norms

The original conception of work–family culture rested on the definition of *integrating* work and family lives (Thompson et al., 1999), thus privileging integration, rather than segmentation, as the preferred mode for balancing work and home. This conception is supported by this study, but I do note the specific context of this study is more likely to embrace integration, namely knowledge workers enabled with mobile communication technology, working in global project teams.

The roles of devoted mother and breadwinning father are no longer stable. These roles are evolving as societal norms shift and considering flexible working arrangements. This study confirms the perceived tension between the ideals of 'Professional Women' and 'Good Mother' for working women with young children (Malatzky, 2013). I argue that part-time women are particularly stigmatised because the organisation perceives their reduced hours as reduced commitment, while simultaneously regarding their motherhood role as also diminishing organisational commitment.

While dual earner couples are now the norm in Australia, the structure of paid employment is still founded on the breadwinner/caregiver model. There are two consequences of this: firstly, this framing sustains the ideal worker model, meaning that employees should be unencumbered and available for work all the time. This problem is exacerbated by global projects and working across time zones. Secondly, the framing of breadwinner/caregiver implies that penalties and stigma are applied to those who do caring work.

Mothers face incredible complexity between work and home/family demands. They must navigate a tricky path. They are often good project managers (but this capability is poorly recognised within the organisation). When their children are sick, they get called by childcare providers, rather than the father. These practices reinforce the norm that mothers are responsible for caregiving and, furthermore, that caregiving mothers lack commitment to employers.

Fathers are now becoming more involved in caregiving, supporting findings of Humberd et al. (2014) and Ladge et al. (2014). They do not purely act as breadwinners anymore. Especially for fathers who work from home, they can do much more parenting than those

who work in the office. Fathers now take advantage of Tech's flexible working arrangements and craft micro-invisibilities. Their parenting activities and their caregiving can be hidden, or those activities are simply not discussed when they are working from home. Yet, they also make themselves highly available, for example, for early morning meetings, late in the evening, and at weekends. Fathers who work in the office also do parenting and caregiving, but more commonly in the early evening. Nevertheless, fathering is still a significant role for participants with children – working and breadwinning are not the only roles for modern fathers.

Fathers are also questioning what is possible now between work and home/family. Flexible working arrangements and evolving societal norms give fathers the room to craft new role identities. But, fathers are conscious of the penalties and stigma that flow from visible parenting. This stigma awareness leads to apparent conformity to masculine organisational norms, supporting the findings of Thébaud & Pedulla (2016). Men conform to the norms they believe other men want in the workplace. Fathers may thus take on caregiving, but in a secret and hidden way.

For men taking a leave of absence, they are conforming to ideal worker norms, by being masculine and taking a risk, but, on the other hand, they are displaying lower organisational commitment and higher family commitment during the period of leave. There appears to be less tension between norms for this group compared to women. Indeed, these men manage to work their long absence to their advantage, reinforcing their breadwinner role but also reinforcing (while away from work) their role as involved, caregiving father. The organisation rewards these men, even though they display higher commitment to their families (not the organisation) during the period of leave.

Ultimately, work devotion and virtual displays of commitment compete with family devotion (Aranda & Glick, 2014; Blair-Loy, 2003; Blair-Loy & Cech, 2016). Though roles are evolving, men are still more likely to display work devotion and organisational commitment, while women display more family devotion and are expected to be primary caregivers.

In summary, flexible working arrangements do not fully resolve the contest between work devotion and family devotion, though mobile communication technologies now make it much easier for employees to contribute productive work outside of the conventional workplace and outside conventional working hours. Masculine roles must continue to evolve with greater emphasis on parenting and family; feminine roles must continue to evolve away from purely homemaking and caregiving and move to include meaningful paid employment.

7.1.4 Differential Career Outcomes and Flexibility Stigma

Different modes of flexible working have different career outcomes and different stigmas, making a novel contribution to knowledge. In contrast to McDonald et al. (2005), this study found a more nuanced view of career consequences from using alternative work arrangements. Career outcomes are gendered, with gendered penalties and premiums. Part-time women are marginalised and stigmatised leading to negative career

consequences. Working from home results in neutral career consequences and taking an unpaid leave of absence results in positive career consequences for men.

Employees working part-time hours at Tech find their roles very difficult. Tech jobs are not often designed for part-time hours and the organisational culture of 'urgency and crisis' negatively impacts part-time employees. Some managers are complicit in discriminating against part-time employees by not taking organisational justice and fairness seriously for this group of employees. Managers think only in terms of full-time employees and they plan their department and their workload in keeping with that full-time assumption, confirming dependency theory's expectations (Klein et al., 2000) in an Australian sample. Employees working part-time hours have negative career outcomes. This is not a surprise and confirms what other scholars have published previously in the US (Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Sauté, 1999; Litrico, Lee, & Kossek, 2011), the UK (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010), Singapore (Straughan & Tadai, 2016) and Australia (McDonald, Bradley, & Brown, 2009; N. Smith & McDonald, 2015). The contribution of this study is to show how stigma persists in the face of modern communication technologies that permit employees to work at home at nights, during non-working days, and at weekends. Despite efforts of part-time women to make themselves highly available and responsive to work demands, they still experience stigma and poorer career outcomes. Their displays of commitment are still not enough to satisfy managers, or to meet organisational norms. The stench of part-time hours cannot be easily scrubbed away.

In contrast with other studies, those who work from home and those who take a leave of absence do not suffer career penalties or flexibility stigma. Working from home is entirely normalised and surprisingly career neutral. In this respect, the Tech workplace is unique, compared to other workplaces described in the literature. Employees who work from home are able to network and collaborate with co-workers worldwide, supporting the organisational norm of getting the job done. By working from home, they can increase their availability, conforming to the organisational norms of constant connectivity and availability.

Also in contrast with other studies, employees who take a leave of absence receive a career premium, upon return. Previous studies tend to regard a break in career as possibly negative to career outcomes (Panteli, 2006), especially for women. But, in the study, participants who took a leave of absence were regarded as risk-taking, confident heroes. The leave of absence ended up reinforcing their masculinity and they received a career premium from conforming to Tech's norms of masculine organisational culture. At the same time, the employees who took a leave of absence perceived personal benefits too: they became closer to their partners and children and valued the time spent with family, away from the workplace. These two views contradict each other: on the one hand, the participant becomes closer to family and on the other hand they are lauded as masculine role models.

Daddy Track. This study adds to the literature by giving a more nuanced view of flexibility stigma and the daddy track for men (Coltrane et al., 2013; Vandello et al., 2013). Not all men are penalised for flexible working. There is another pathway for male flexible workers, where care is obscured, for those men working at home all or part of the week. These men can be involved fathers and simultaneously devoted employees. They are careful to present a particular identity and craft a specific reputation to their manager and

co-workers: that of a highly available, devoted worker. Yet, in the background, they are indeed involved fathers, taking time to be with their children. By obscuring their caring, they minimise feminine attributions by others, thus avoiding flexibility stigma. Furthermore, use of parental leave by fathers is hardly spoken about, further obscuring fathering as a role identity for men. Thus, the daddy track is weak for men in this study, because of concealment of fathering roles.

Mommy Track. Parental leave, in the form of paid and unpaid maternity leave, is much more important and visible resource for women than for men, reflecting gendered policy use (McDonald et al., 2007). When a woman takes maternity leave and returns to the organisation with part-time hours (a frequent case), the mommy track is applied. Women suffer penalties, stigma and exclusion, especially so for part-time and slightly less so for full-time women with young children.

Manager Support. The manager has a key role in shaping career outcomes and reducing stigma, affirming that supervisor support and co-worker support are both vital to make flexible working a positive experience (Allen, 2012; McDonald et al., 2005; Pocock, 2011). In this study, many employees were not co-located with their managers. The location of the manager is an important influence on outcomes for the employee. One consequence of the manager's location is cross-cultural misunderstanding. Differences in national culture have been thoroughly described by previous studies (Hofstede, 2003; Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, & de Luque, 2006). Managers who are outside Australia draw on their own experience of working conditions in their country and mistakenly apply that to their Australian subordinates. The manager's assumptions of acceptable and reasonable arrangements drive career outcomes and flexibility stigma outcomes for subordinates. This is a novel contribution to knowledge: other studies have not looked in-depth at the location of the manager and how the manager’s assumptions influence employee career outcomes.

Another consequence of the location of the manager is the lack of close supervision. On the one hand, this affords greater flexibility to the subordinate located in Australia: they cannot be observed by their manager and so they can take advantage of flexible hours and locations of work. On the other hand, the manager may not be aware of the employee’s output in detail. There may be career penalties for this style of working, arising from obscured output and contribution. These findings about the location of the manager and the employee highlight how globalisation is affecting contemporary careers.

Careers are gendered but our understanding of gendering-in-context depends upon a detailed appreciation of the prevailing organisational culture, specifically the career culture. Where norms are masculine, as in this case study, those who are feminised or perceived as having feminine traits suffer career penalties, stigma, exclusion and marginalisation. The contribution to knowledge of this study is thus the detailed and rich picture of the dynamics of flexible working intersecting with career outcomes in the Australian IT sector context. Another contribution is the apparent hiding of parenting and caregiving by employees working from home. This cloaking of parenting affords compliance with the dominant career culture, enhancing manager and co-worker perceptions of organisational commitment, yet parents can still be parents to their young children. The othering of women in career culture and organisational culture more generally diminishes women’s career concerns in the eyes of the organisation. Thus,

women's contribution is undervalued and their commitment is questioned, leading to poorer career outcomes.

Career success. The contribution of this study to the career success literature is to confirm and expand several of the barriers to career success (Ng et al., 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014). Perceptions of low and high organisational commitment impacting career success are one of the key findings of this study. Employees' commitment may vary over time but they must also consider how managers, co-workers and career influencers perceive their organisational commitment, as this has a strong impact on their career outcomes. Using impression management techniques, mediated and enhanced by mobile communication technologies, they craft their reputation of organisational commitment. Job satisfaction is confirmed as another factor affecting career success. In this study, employees had varying degrees of job satisfaction; those with higher job satisfaction were more inclined to perceive they were satisfied with their careers. Yet, there were employees who were not fully satisfied with their jobs yet were satisfied with their careers. This contradictory finding is explained by the realisation that these employees were focused on their overall life success, their perceptions of balance, and their perceptions of autonomy and freedom, afforded by flexible working arrangements. These latter elements were more salient to them, for judging career success, than purely job satisfaction.

Supervisor support is reaffirmed as an important component of career success (Ng et al., 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014). Especially because flexible work arrangements are sometimes contested terrain, having a supportive supervisor who approves the flexible working arrangement and displays career supportive behaviours, is essential for overall career success. Low promotion opportunities emerged for several employees, influencing perceptions of career success. In part, this is because of the global nature of the multi-national corporation, with more senior roles not located in Australia, thus acting as a promotion blocker; another reason is that some roles were made redundant in favour of moving that work to low-cost countries.

Finally, the role of unmet expectations (Ng & Feldman, 2014) is confirmed as significant in this Australian sample. This is demonstrated by reference to career plateau, stalled and stagnated careers. Particularly this group of knowledge workers felt that there was more to their careers, creating a sense of unmet expectations, leading to lower perceived career success and perceptions of poorer career satisfaction. Yet, there is also evidence for those with low objective career success and high subjective career success, fitting the category of contented/satisficing (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). This is demonstrated by those who talk about being disappointed with their salaries (indicating low objective career success) but at the same time being satisfied with the other, subjective aspects of their career to date.

An interesting finding was the high level of career satisfaction reported. Though there were a few complaints about managers, pay, missed promotions and avoided performance reviews, most people were satisfied with their careers. In part, this reflects the overall satisfaction with flexible working in this sample, with career success becoming subsumed to the broader concept of life success. (Employees who work full-time in the office without using flexible working arrangements may well have a different view of their careers and of their life success.)

A contrasting data point from outside the study is Tech's global employee engagement survey. The survey is run every two years. One of the top three results is that employees are concerned with their career development and that they have difficulty finding suitable career opportunities at Tech. The survey population is different from the sample in this study: in the survey, all employees in the Sales, Marketing and Support business units are invited, while in the sample, only employees with flexible working arrangements participated. The survey's broader population may uncover different themes where those employees are dissatisfied with career opportunities whereas in this study, because most participants chose the flexible working arrangement that they wanted, they are more likely to be more satisfied.

7.1.5 Bounded Careers and Boundaryless Work–Home Interface

A novel contribution of this study is that careers are bounded while the work–home interface is now boundaryless. Technology, organisational culture and demands of work come together in expectations that employees are constantly available, and constantly connected to work. Employees can attend to work demands beyond the official workplace, at home and on the road. Thus, the work–home interface is now boundaryless. Yet, in this study, careers are not boundaryless: they are bounded, confirming the findings of Inkson et al. (2012) and Yao et al. (2014). Employees who are already working flexibly value the benefits of their flexibility, perceiving that such benefits would not easily be available at other employers. Their career choices are thus constrained by their perceptions of the employment market. Furthermore, some employees trade flexibility for career progression, seeking flexible work to help them to balance work and home, especially with young children under school age, affirming the proposals of Pringle and Mallon (2003). Thus, careers are bounded for flexible knowledge workers in the information technology sector. Extending the career boundary concepts suggested by Rodrigues and Guest (2010), the contribution of this study is that the career boundary for employees may be more impermeable where the employee values flexibility more highly than career progression. Thus, the permeability of the *career* boundary is determined not by *occupational* factors but by home, family and life factors. This study supports the notion that career actors are more protean, but in line with the argument above, careers are now less boundaryless, confirming the findings of De Vos and Dries (2013) for an Australian sample.

This study contributes an adult theory of circumscription and compromise, extending Gottfredson's theory (1981). The concepts of constraint and enhancement from social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) are also supported in the findings of this study. Some career options are circumscribed for adults, thus adults make compromises between less accessible, preferred options and more accessible, compatible options. For example, an individual with very young children may avoid business travel with nights away from home if they cannot make convenient arrangements to care for their families. Career decision-making is bounded, not boundaryless, with perceptions of balance and perceptions of life success taking priority. Individuals cannot ignore their roles as parents, their duties in the home, and the demands of their families. Mobile communication technologies now make the work–life interface boundaryless, supporting deeper integration between work and home than ever before. The constraints to career decision-making are not strictly occupational. Instead, home and family supply significant

constraints, sometimes even being the top priority for individuals. Furthermore career decision-making is not a single event, supporting the proposals of the chaos theory of careers (Pryor & Bright, 2003, 2011) and the systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 2006, 2015) of careers. Multiple decisions are made as life events unfold and as career events unfold. Individuals must be adaptive and flexible as they encounter unpredictable events.

This study contributes knowledge describing the maintenance phase of the life-span, life-space career theory (Super, 1980). Since most employees in this study have already established their careers, the findings paint a detailed picture of the concerns of employees during the maintenance phase, where most employees have a stable life, a stable balance between work and home (facilitated by flexible working arrangements), and an absence of overt conflict between roles (again facilitated by flexible working arrangements). This study also highlights that employees do not regard themselves exclusively as employees – they include all their roles across their life-space, including roles of (from this study) student, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker and parent. Career decisions are not governed exclusively by the worker role. Career decisions are taken with respect to overall *life success.*

This study supports and explains the establishment and maintenance phases in career construction theory (Savickas, 2005). The establishment phase is seen when individuals have a major life event, which may or may not be occupational. Typical examples from this study are the birth of a child, moving between countries or a promotion. In the maintenance phase, individuals achieve a satisfactory steady-state equilibrium between career, work, home and family. Extending this to life designing (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009), this theory is apposite to the knowledge workers in this study. They do design their lives in ways that suit their circumstances perfectly. They speak of *life success* rather than exclusively of career success, emphasising the co-creation of meaning between the individual and the other important people in their lives, including managers, co-workers, spouse, parents and children.

7.1.6 New Career Model for Knowledge Workers

Given the preceding sections about modern ways of working, modern ways of balancing work and home/family, evolving role identities and norms, differential career outcomes and flexibility stigma, bounded careers and boundaryless work–home interfaces, there is a new career model for knowledge workers. This new career model has six elements: individual agency, smart output, visibility, collaboration, networking and manager support (see Figure 7.2).

Individual Agency. In the study, employees showed protean career behaviours, supporting the element of individual agency. However, agency was not solely for career growth; agency was also directed towards home and family. They crafted work–home balance by making a series of individual decisions about flexible working and technology to suit their personal circumstances, placing themselves at their optimum spot along the segmentation–integration continuum. Individual agency is related to smart output, visibility, collaboration and networking. By taking action, employees can generate the deliverables required. They can act to make themselves visible, perhaps deciding when

visibility should be downplayed. They can use their agency to collaborate with others, seeking or providing help on projects. They can use their agency to build their business network, deliberately seeking others who are helpful, powerful or influential for their careers.

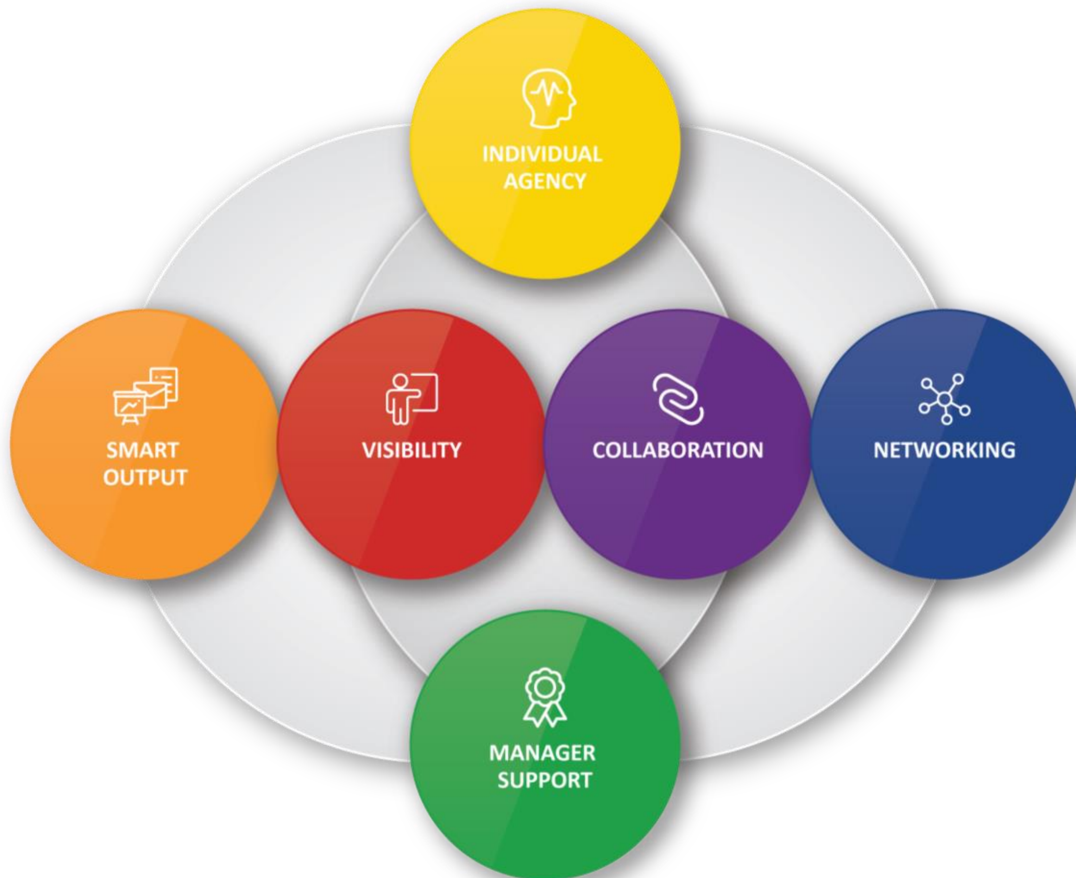

Figure 7.2 Career model for contemporary knowledge workers using flexible work practices

Smart Output. The second element in the new career model is smart output. Knowledge workers need to be seen to be getting the job done in a timely fashion, in line with organisational culture, and they also need to advertise their productivity and their completed tasks to their co-workers and to their manager, driven by individual agency. The volume of output should be in line with the manager's expectations at a minimum. Smart output facilitates manager support and managing up. The manager's awareness of the volume of output, the timing of that output, and the perceived effort that employees put in, to generate output, shape manager perceptions. Furthermore, smart output is linked to higher visibility, as employees generate deliverables that come into the awareness of peers and influential others.

Visibility. This is the third element of the model. In the study, employees believed and assumed their visibility was important in promoting their career interests. Yet, because employees work from home some or all of the week, visibility in a global, connected, knowledge-intensive workforce takes on a different meaning. Now, visibility must be achieved through virtual methods. Employees can make themselves visible (leveraging individual agency) by generating a high volume of email output, by participating in

internal social networks, by judiciously sharing positive achievements with their manager, and by joining special projects that span across business units. These impression management methods will lead to higher visibility with career decision makers such as managers and business unit leaders. Visibility facilitates manager support. If the manager is aware of employee outputs and the quality of those outputs, the manager can support employees' career narratives.

Collaboration. The fourth element in the new career model is collaboration. This behaviour is now enacted virtually, rather than face-to-face, which was more common in previous organisational models. Employees now must find ways to partner with co-workers, to share their knowledge and to contribute their value to special projects and to the organisation, again driven by individual agency. Collaboration is also a platform for informal conversations between peers, supporting higher visibility for employees across business unit boundaries. Collaboration supports smart output. Where employees work with other employees in global project teams, collaboration can lead to better or more important outputs or deliverables. Similarly, collaboration supports visibility and vice versa. Where employees work alongside peers, those peers become aware of the employee's role, reputation and contribution to project outcomes. For future projects, visibility gives the option for project leaders to reach out and involve employees in new ventures or new projects, where employees are perceived to be capable of making a significant contribution.

Networking. Alongside collaboration, networking is the fifth element in the new career model. Like collaboration, networking is now conducted virtually and globally rather than face-to-face. Especially employees who work from home must reach out and find new connections within the organisation, driven by individual agency. They need to do so using the available communication methods, including internal social networks, introductions from influential mentors, and introductions from their management hierarchy. Networking has a two-way interaction with collaboration. Greater networking increases the scope and reach of employee business interconnections, permitting greater opportunities for collaboration. More collaboration inevitably builds employee business networks, as they meet and work with co-workers in other business units. Networking also has a two-way interaction with visibility. Careful and strategic networking with influential people in the organisation delivers greater visibility; conversely, having greater visibility affords the potential for introductions and opportunities to assemble a broader business network.

Manager Support. This is the sixth element in the new career model. Employees must take great care to display their availability, connectivity, work output and organisational commitment to their manager, extending the skill of *managing up* (Baldoni, 2010; L. A. Hill & Lineback, 2013; Smullen, 2014). This is especially challenging yet even more important where the manager is located in another country or another time zone. Employees need to select from their work achievements and deliberately and skilfully share those achievements with their manager. Manager support facilitates both networking and collaboration. The manager can introduce employees to others, thus the manager shares their network with subordinates. Also, the manager can form project teams promoting collaboration, or the manager can provide resources to other projects, when requested,

thus mingling employees from different business units or backgrounds, amplifying collaboration opportunities.

There are indeed significant career possibilities in a virtual, global world. This new career model builds upon protean career attitudes and individual agency, because knowledge workers must be proactive in a virtual, global, connected world, to forge desirable and fitting careers.

7.2 Implications for Theory

7.2.1 Boundary Theory and Border Theory

Boundary theory and work–life border theory must now be reappraised considering modern ways of working. For knowledge workers, specifically, work can be performed at any time and in any place, meaning that domains are blended, boundaries barely exist, or they are easily and readily dissolved by individuals to achieve work or home/family goals.

Our understanding and conceptualisation of the segmentation–integration continuum must continue to broaden to include a range of domains, not just work and home. The interfaces between multiple domains gives rise to a range of inter-domain boundaries, thus the segmentation–integration continuum is multi-dimensional. Individuals have different permeabilities for different types of boundaries. In this study, I find most concordance with the work of Languilaire (2009), who mapped out two-dimensional charts of boundary permeabilities for individuals. My findings suggest a multi-dimensional life cube, incorporating work, home, family, community and personal boundaries, where the individual uses technology-enabled flexible work practices to craft an appropriate balance between competing demands.

A prior study equated a high frequency of boundary transitions with work–home conflict (Matthews, Winkel, & Wayne, 2014). Yet, in this case study, micro-transitions are seamless and unremarkable. The micro-transitions are deemed necessary and are not construed as conflict; rather, they are construed as contributing to balance. Thus, the transition component of boundary theory must be re-framed to consider those transition moves that contribute to balance, or facilitation, rather than conflict.

Turning to border theory, I challenge Clark's proposition (Clark, 2000) that individuals who identify strongly with a domain have *more* control than those who identify weakly with a domain. In this study, the salience of domain identity for the individual is not consistently associated with the level of control the individual perceives. Domain identity is but one of many factors determining the level of control that the individual perceives. Work devotion is more salient for individuals, but the level of work devotion does not imply more control over the work–home interface. In fact, since work demands are often prioritised, individuals have less control. They pay attention to work demands over home demands. This problem is especially evident for employees who work from home, where it would theoretically be possible to ignore work demands in favour of home demands. But this does not happen – individuals make work the more important priority, most of the time, with exceptions for family time or personal time at specific moments of the day.

7.2.2 Career Theories

Of the broad universe of competing career theories, there are two elements that need further theoretical development. The first portion is the concept of life success and how life success plays into career success. The theory of life designing (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009) comes closest to achieving an explanation of how individuals construct careers, but now I argue that events and significant others in non-work domains are just as important to shaping careers, as those in the work domain.

The second portion that could develop further in theory is career decision-making, allied to life success. Making career decisions as an adult is a messy process, driven by multiple factors, including not only occupational factors, but also factors from home, work and family. Older models of career decision-making that rely on personality and occupational factors and person-environment fit as the foundation paradigm are no longer adequate. Now, theory should be extended to propose multi-dimensional decision-making models for adults making career decisions. At the same time, this study has highlighted how decision-making is indeed constrained by non-occupational influences, so a revised career decision-making model should include factors that impede career success.

Turning to the career model for flexible knowledge workers, researchers might look for evidence of this model in other knowledge worker firms and in other countries. Further quantitative study of the career model's elements is called for, operationalising the elements of the model (individual agency, manager support, smart output, visibility, collaboration, networking).

7.3 Implications for Practice

There are several implications for practice that arise from these findings. Cultural norms within the organisation are *not* different for each category of flexible working. These norms apply equally to full-time, part-time and work from home employees. The implication for leaders and HR practitioners is that organisational culture must be fully inclusive of all types of flexible working, if the organisation wishes to be serious about flexibility. If the organisation is aware of flexibility stigma (as here for part-time employees), then leaders and HR practitioners should devise ways of working that include flexible workers and extend meaningful career progression opportunities, compared to full-time office workers. Indeed, in the global IT context, it is time to shift the meaning of 'remote' and 'flexible' as categories to avoid othering these workers and privileging office-based workers.

The most significant area for changing organisational culture is the contested display of commitment via face time or via long hours. Some employees work more efficiently than other employees, thus they can be more productive in the same time compared to slower, less efficient employees. In addition, where employees work from home, face time is no longer relevant as a signifier of commitment. To address this, it is worthwhile to fine-tune the organisational culture to recognise the efficiency of smart working rather than purely time on the job. Working longer hours simply for the sake of working longer hours should not be accepted as the only measure of commitment. For all employees (not just those

working from home), being judged by output and outcomes, rather than inputs, should be the benchmark.

Flexible Working Policies and Job Opportunities. The current flexible working policy applies to employees in Australia and New Zealand. If the manager is located overseas, this has implications for how well the policy is supported. Overseas managers may not understand the arrangements available within the policy and they may resist offering flexible work. HR must educate overseas managers about the policy and how it operates in the Australian context. The other implication of the policy's Australian scope is the missing recognition that the workforce operates in global project teams, collaborating with international co-workers. Employees are not working purely standard or core hours in their local, Australian time zone. Instead, people work around the clock at all hours of the day. The policy could then become overused. HR must guard against inappropriate use of the policy.

The second obvious recommendation is that flexible working policies should be regularly advertised to the workforce. Sometimes good policies exist but employees are not aware of them, or the policies were advertised at induction but then quickly forgotten. A simple intervention during the recruiting cycle (for internal and external hires) would be to advertise that roles can be worked flexibly, rather than advertising all roles as full-time. Another policy intervention would be to ensure that part-time roles are correctly sized in terms of workload and sales quota (where relevant) rather than being overloaded for the allocated hours. From a policy wording perspective, the unpaid leave policy is written with a three month maximum. The wording should be updated to offer a 12 month maximum subject to organisational and managerial approval.

Furthermore, job sharing should be increased as a policy intervention, to help the organisation manage peaks and troughs in workload and to help employees who are seeking reduced hours on a weekly basis. Using social networks internally to advertise job sharing and to find suitable sharing partners would be helpful. Another recommendation would be to create a tool where employees can indicate that they wish to work reduced hours, for a temporary period, on project work. This can be done using mobile apps or using internal social networking tools. Business units seeking short-term project resources could then select from the pool, according to the employee’s preferred availability.

Noting from the findings that older men were more interested in subjective career success, HR managers should not simply assume that older men always want a promotion or a salary increase. Instead, subjective factors are important, thus supervisors and HR staff should take a broad perspective during career conversations with older men, to canvas a range of career drivers. For women, the findings show that the birth of a child is a pivot point in women’s careers. After childbirth, women tend to talk as if their careers are severely constrained or that career growth is at an end. Thus, HR managers must recognise this thinking and gently challenge, offering appropriate policy solutions and meaningful job opportunities to parents (not just women) with young children.

One option to increase flexible job opportunities would be to transfer accountability for making suitable flexible arrangements, acceptable to the employee, *to the manager.* This would be a subtle yet powerful shift for organisations. At present, flexible working is

driven by employee requests, not direct manager action. If managers were more accountable, they would be more involved and engaged in making flexible arrangements and they would also be committed to the practice of flexibility (compared to the situation where employees submit requests and managers have the option of rejecting those requests).

Visibility and Successful Flexible Working. To increase visibility of flexible working arrangements, it is wise to share positive stories in company newsletters or online magazines about people who have worked in part-time roles, parents taking parental leave (especially men), or employees who have taken a leave of absence, then returned to work to make a success of their careers. A specific example would be senior women telling other women's stories, to normalise and promote their experiences within the organisation. Since unpaid leave of absence was a success for the men who took this option, this type of leave could be rebranded as a positive and career-enhancing option. The organisation could share success stories of men and women who have taken this option, with the aim of countering perceptions that unpaid leave of absence is harmful to career progression.

Networking. At present, most mothers returning to work after maternity leave maintain an informal support network. But the organisation could do much more by implementing a career coaching service for returning mothers, and by facilitating peer networking (via internal social media) for returning mothers. Equally, the organisation could also offer peer networking and career coaching for fathers. For returning parents generally, the organisation could offer negotiation skills training specifically to support negotiating attractive flexible working arrangements with managers, since it is recognised that some employees may have poorer negotiation outcomes in male-dominated organisations.

Also for part-time employees, it is recommended to offer an opt-in social networking group or platform. Part-timers in this study did not know many other part-timers and felt isolated. Networking via social media would alleviate these feelings of isolation.

Role Modelling. There is a significant role to play for leaders and managers. In male-dominated organisations, senior leaders (both men and women) must role model work–home balance behaviours, such as being willing to leave work to take care of sick children, or take time away from work to attend school events. These efforts should be publicised in the usual channels across the organisation, to give public visibility to these role modelling behaviours. Another area of role modelling is the use of technology and, specifically, disconnection practices. If leaders and managers are seen online outside of conventional working hours, then employees are apt to assume this behaviour is reasonable and, what is more, expected. In the context of a global firm, disconnection practices may not always be possible, so it is acknowledged that this is a difficult area to tackle.

7.4 Reflections as a Researcher

Reflexivity is about 'negotiating the swamp' (Finlay, 2002, p. 209) or 'highlighting the baggage' (Garton & Copland, 2010, p. 549), attempting to deconstruct, analyse and disclose the researcher's role in co-constructing meaning with participants. Five different types of reflexivity have been identified: introspection, intersubjective reflection, mutual

collaboration, social critique and discursive deconstruction (Finlay, 2002), illustrating that researchers must take different stances when interrogating their influence on their projects. In this section, I aim to draw upon a variety of reflexive approaches to share my positionality and my engagement with the study and with participants.

Here then is my own story, my own trail through the swamp. I have worked at Tech for over seventeen years, first at GreenCo and then later at Tech. Over the years, I have worked in Australia, Asia and the US, sometimes on the road as a consultant, sometimes in intact face-to-face teams, and now, increasingly, as a home-based knowledge worker with global connections, like many of the participants in my study. I have used all the communication methods and technologies that were mentioned by participants.

When I launched the study, I assumed that most employees were segmentors. I have a very strong segmentor preference for my work–home balance. Thus, it came as a revelation to me that most of my participants were happily integrating work and home – my inner world was not theirs. This finding made me reflect deeply on how my personal preferences might have biased my interview talk and my analysis. But throughout the project, I was keenly aware of segmentation versus integration and I strove to let participants speak their minds and share their perceptions without undue influence from my side.

My role as insider researcher was also a locus of deep reflection. As an insider, with long tenure within the corporation, I could draw upon that knowledge to come to deeper understandings of organisational culture. But at the same time, I was careful to respect the perceptions of others who held different views about organisational culture and subcultures. I paid specific attention to small talk near the end of interviews when participants asked me about preliminary results and findings. If they expressed surprise at a specific story (for example, using or avoiding telephone calls or instant messaging), then I knew that this would be a productive nexus for analysis.

Being an insider helped me to build rapport swiftly with participants. I was consistently surprised on two fronts: the willingness of participants, most of whom were initially strangers, to agree to an interview; and the depth of transparency and the extent of information participants were willing to share with me, indicating high trust. As my interviewing skill grew, so too did my questioning style: I learnt to minimise interruptions and to allow silences. I also used some self-disclosure to build further rapport and to encourage participants to share their stories. These moves, I believe, enhanced the quality of data that participants shared during interviews.

Some interviews were confessional in nature, conducted under the mantle of confidentiality and anonymity. Some participants told deeply emotional and moving stories. Most memorable to me as researcher were the two participants who shed tears during the interview, then apologised to me. I could not help but pause the interview, offer solace (and a tissue), then resume after the participants regained their composure. Again, these heightened moments were signposts for future analysis.

Following the findings of Garton and Copland (2010) that interviewing acquaintances is not a neutral practice because of shared history, I, too, found this when I interviewed co-workers whom I had known for a long time (as opposed to stranger co-workers). During

these interviews, I drew upon our pre-existing relationship and pre-existing knowledge to build up the interview. But at the same time, I had to construct a new identity for myself as researcher, in front of acquaintance participants. During pilot interviews, it took a while for me to feel comfortable inhabiting this new identity, but in later interviews I 'found my feet' and felt more accomplished as a researcher.

One of the other tensions I faced during this study was the critical decision of which texts to include and which to exclude, which voices to include and exclude and which interview segments to include and exclude. My aim was to produce a rich yet balanced picture and so I paid attention to disconfirming evidence, and cases that illustrated the opposite to the rule, as these cases sharply revealed the rule in operation.

In summary, I do not feel that I was a neutral researcher in this study. Instead, I actively engaged participants in co-creating meaning and I participated in creating meaning with them, in a messy process (Harvey, 2004). Though results and findings seem solid and well-described, I must acknowledge that knowledge produced this way is always partial and imperfect. Yet, the insider story told in this thesis is much richer for my 'insiderness' – an outsider would not, I contend, have been able to dig so deeply and richly in this case study.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study. (Limitations of the method were discussed in detail in Section 3.9.) The cross-sectional research design did not permit investigation of work–home balance and career outcomes over time. From a sampling perspective, this study did not include full-time office workers. This group of employees is the largest group within Tech and, thus, their perceptions and behaviours have a substantial influence on organisational culture and on perceptions of those who work flexibly. The study did not account for the influence of cultural background in terms of national culture or ethnicity. Individualist cultures like Australia would be more likely to align with a protean career attitude while collectivist cultures would be more likely to avoid protean career attitude and pay attention to other drivers. It is not known how cultural background influences perceptions of flexible working and balance. The study did not account for generational influences on career types, career success and career satisfaction. Younger employees may have different expectations about balance and flexible working compared to older employees and they may have different career goals.

Finally, positive response bias may influence results, particularly when using an interview method. Career satisfaction is mostly positive in the results of this study. It may be that participants were trying to impress me, or give socially acceptable answers, rather than admitting their careers were not progressing as expected. Alternatively, and plausibly for at least some participants, they were willing to trade off a superstar career including promotions and salary increases, for a different career path where they valued and appreciated flexibility and balance.

7.6 Future Directions for Research

There are some interesting future directions that research on contemporary knowledge workers, flexible working arrangements and career outcomes could take. Firstly, investigating full-time office workers who use informal flexible working arrangements would add a richer understanding of the dynamics of work–family culture and the sources of flexibility stigma. Secondly, noting that manager support emerged as critical to positive flexible working perceptions and to positive career success and satisfaction perceptions, it would be worthwhile to investigate the role of managers in knowledge-intensive firms. How do effective managers support their subordinates with work–home balance and career growth and what do less effective managers do or not do?

Future research should look at career progression longitudinally, intersecting with work–home balance. As individuals move through life stages, their needs of work and home change, and their conception of appropriate balance and appropriate life success changes too. Major (and minor) life events cause the individual to reappraise their careers and their lives more generally. Longitudinal studies would shed more light on the mechanisms at play.

The host location of the supervisor emerged as a critical factor influencing manager support for flexible work arrangements, and thus for the subordinate employee's perception of work–home balance and career satisfaction. This fact suggests that future research on the manager's location, and the impact on employees, is a rich line of further enquiry.

Turning to conceptual definitions, the definition of flexibility and the intensity and duration of flexible working have emerged as important drivers of balance and career outcomes in this study. Yet flexibility has been defined in a range of ways that are not fully consistent. Future studies should investigate the true meaning of flexibility and establish a consistent definition. Extending this work, this study has revealed that working in a different location has fewer negative career consequences than working reduced hours, while interrupting work completely has positive career consequences. Thus, future studies should investigate the mechanisms that drive these differential outcomes across different types of flexible working arrangements.

Beyond the industry sector and country scope of this study, there is a need for studies that compare flexible working across countries and across industries. Knowledge-intensive firms are more easily able to offer flexible working arrangements to knowledge workers because knowledge work is portable; other types of industries such as manufacturing, retail and healthcare would have to offer flexible working arrangements selectively, thus presenting interesting sites for comparative research and analysis.

Finally, the rapid pace of technological change presents a challenge for scholarship and the literature. Ways of working and ways of balancing are evolving rapidly in line with technology. Future studies should investigate how knowledge workers adopt newer technologies in search of better work–home balance, and the impact on their career outcomes.

7.7 Conclusion

For knowledge workers, the world of work has changed forever. The foundation and employment basis of modern families have also changed. Communication technology continues to evolve, offering new methods to connect with others, shifting the time and place of work away from the office, and bringing the home into work. Now, the boundary between work and home barely exists. Integration, not segmentation, is the way of the 21st century. Contemporary careers are also evolving, towards more fluid conceptions of why and how individuals pursue career moves and make career decisions. Sometimes constrained, sometimes free, living and working form a seamless landscape, with an unprecedented opportunity for life success in the 21st century. This study has opened a richly detailed window into that very opportunity.

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Appendix A: Interview Template

A.1 Consent

- Explain research project and arrangements for confidentiality and ethics. Obtain consent.

A.2 Demographic Data

- Collect demographic data using a paper form, containing the following fields:
  - Name (only if the participant has given permission to gather HR data from HR system)
  - Company email address (only if the participant has given permission to gather HR data from the HR system)
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Education level
  - Do you have a spouse or de factor partner?
  - Is your spouse or de facto partner employed?
  - What are the working arrangements for your spouse or de facto partner? (full-time, part-time, working from home, working in office, business travel)
  - Do you have dependent children? How many?
  - Do you have dependent parents or elders, or other family that require your care? How many?
  - Who is your manager?
  - How long have you worked for your manager?
  - Note: employment data and confidential data will be gathered from HR system using employee's email address, where employee gives consent

A.3 Employee Questions

- Questions to *employees* regarding absences, flexible working and careers
  - What type of absence did you take? (maternity, paternity, leave of absence, other types)
  - OR, What type of flexible working arrangement did you seek? (part-time in the office, work from home part-time or full-time)
  - What event or scenario triggered your request for absence or flexible working?
  - When and how did you involve your manager? What happened?
  - What information and communication technologies do you use? Why? Which ones do you avoid and why?
  - If demographic information indicates that the employee has caring responsibilities for family, ask: At home, what household or caring responsibilities do you have? How do you balance work versus home and family?
  - When you were absent, did you feel you needed to try to keep in touch and how did you do this? What happened?

  - What happened when you returned to work after absence? What did your manager say and do?
  - If you're working part-time and/or working at home all of the time or some of the time, how do you define what is work time and what is non-work time? Have there been any times when you've felt under pressure from one side or the other? What happened? What does your manager say and do? What do your family and friends say and do?
  - How do you define career success? How has this changed over time? How do you think it will change in the future?
  - When you look back on your experience, what's happened to your career? What does your manager say and do?
  - How satisfied are you with your career?

A.4 Manager Questions

- Questions to *managers* regarding absences, flexible working and careers
  - Have you requested an absence or requested flexible working or working from home? What happened?
  - How does your absence or flexible working or working from home influence your ability to manage your staff?
  - What is your impression of how your staff feel when you are not always present at the office?
  - Can you recall when an employee requested an absence or requested flexible working or working from home?
  - What happened when the employee approached you?
  - What information and communication technologies do you expect the employee to use? Why? Which ones do you avoid with the employee and why?
  - When the employee was on leave of absence, did you feel the need to 'keep in touch' or keep them involved? What happened?
  - What happened when the employee returned to work after absence?
  - If the employee is working part-time, how do you manage this? Have you ever felt under pressure for results? How did you manage this with the employee?
  - If the employee is working part-time or working from home some of the time or all of the time, how do you define what is work time and what is non-work time? Have there been any times when you've felt under pressure from one side or the other? What happened? What does the employee say and do?
  - How do you define career success? How has this changed over time? How do you think it will change in the future?
  - When you look back on your experiences with this employee, what's happened to their career? What do your peer managers and senior say about the employee's career?
  - What is your impression of how satisfied this employee is with their career?
- Is there any other information you'd like to share?

Appendix B: Supplementary Interview Questions

B.1 Participants Working From Home

For participants who indicated they were working from home, I developed a range of additional questions to understand telecommuting more deeply.

- Do you ever work very early in the morning or very late at night? Why? Is this your choice or has your manager directed you?
- Where are you more productive, at home or in the office?
- Where do you receive more interruptions?
- Where do you feel more distracted?
- What health concerns do you have about working from home?
- To what extent do you feel lonely working from home?
- To what extent do you feel isolated working from home?
- To what extent do you feel you are missing out on office gossip, the grapevine or other informal communications? How important is this to you?
- How do you blend work tasks with housework and childcare duties, when working from home?
- For participants with dependent children: Who does pickup and drop-off?
- What do your family and friends say when you mention you work from home?
- When do you make yourself strictly unavailable?
- Do you ever disconnect or turn off your laptop or mobile phone?
- What is the impact of working from home on your career progression?

B.2 Participants Working Part-Time

For participants who indicated they were working part-time, I developed a range of additional questions.

- What days of the week do you work and how did you choose those days? How has this arrangement changed over time?
- To what extent do you have time to socialise on a working day?
- To what extent do you feel you are missing out on office gossip, the grapevine or other informal communications? How important is this to you?
- To what extent do you work on a nonworking day? Why? Is this your choice or has your manager directed you to work on a nonworking day?
- What is the value, to you, of your nonworking day?
- What pressure have you had to change to full-time employment?
- How many other part-time employees do you know?
- For participants with dependent children: Who does pickup and drop-off?
- When do you make yourself strictly unavailable?
- Do you ever disconnect or turn off your mobile phone?
- What is the impact of part-time work on your career progression?

B.3 Participants with Unpaid Leave of Absence

For participants who mentioned an unpaid leave of absence, usually in the form of a sabbatical, I developed a range of additional questions.

- What was the response of co-workers when you announced the leave of absence?
- What happened during the time away from work?
- How important was it to keep in touch with work while you were away? What did you do to keep in touch?
- What benefits did the leave of absence give you?
- What negative consequences did the leave absence give you?
- How did you arrange to come back to work?
- What was the response of co-workers when you returned to work?
- What is the impact of your leave of absence on your career progression?

Appendix C: Participant Profiles

Table C.1 shows the list of participants and their gender, age group and location.

Table C.1 Participant profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	Location
Anastasia	Female	35 to 39	Sydney
Andrew	Male	40 to 44	Regional NSW
Annette	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Bianca	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Bruce	Male	35 to 39	Perth
Carly	Female	35 to 39	Melbourne
Cherie	Female	35 to 39	Brisbane
Christine	Female	>55	Regional NSW
Damien	Male	45 to 49	Sydney
Dane	Male	45 to 49	Melbourne
Danielle	Female	35 to 39	Sydney
Darren	Male	45 to 49	Sydney
Emma	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Ethan	Male	45 to 49	Sydney
Jack	Male	35 to 39	Canberra
Jackson	Male	35 to 39	Sydney
Jacqueline	Female	35 to 39	Melbourne
James	Male	40 to 44	Sydney
Janine	Female	35 to 39	Sydney
Jarrod	Male	45 to 49	Melbourne
Jessica	Female	>55	Brisbane
Jodi	Female	50 to 54	Regional QLD
Julian	Male	30 to 34	Sydney
Kate	Female	35 to 39	Melbourne
Katrina	Female	25 to 29	Sydney
Kieran	Male	>55	Regional QLD
Kim	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Kylie	Female	30 to 34	Sydney
Lauren	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Leonie	Female	35 to 39	Melbourne
Mary	Female	45 to 49	Regional VIC
Megan	Female	40 to 44	Regional NSW
Melanie	Female	35 to 39	Melbourne
Michelle	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Narelle	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Natasha	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Nick	Male	50 to 54	Brisbane
Rachel	Female	40 to 44	Melbourne

Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	Location
Ronald	Male	35 to 39	Sydney
Ross	Male	>55	Perth
Samuel	Male	45 to 49	Sydney
Sarah	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Sharon	Female	40 to 44	Sydney
Shaun	Male	40 to 44	Melbourne
Simone	Female	35 to 39	Sydney
Stacey	Female	35 to 39	Regional VIC
Sue	Female	45 to 49	Regional VIC
Suzanne	Female	40 to 44	Melbourne
Tanya	Female	40 to 44	Melbourne
Thomas	Male	45 to 49	Sydney
Tristan	Male	50 to 54	Sydney
Tyler	Male	>55	Brisbane
Vanessa	Female	35 to 39	Sydney
Wendy	Female	45 to 49	Melbourne

Appendix D: Research Questions and Answers

Table D.1 shows a mapping of questions raised in the literature review, mapped to research sub-questions (from Figure 2.4), mapped to results and conclusions.

Table D.1 Research questions mapped to findings and conclusions

Literature review question	Research sub-question	Findings
Does the perception of balance vary by gender? How do individuals subjectively define work–home conflict and work–home enhancement?	Does this vary by gender? What is the subjective definition of work–life conflict and work–life enhancement?	Covered in Section 4.1.2. Covered in Chapter 5.
For this study, it is important to understand how employees create, maintain and cross boundaries between work and home/family. Are they segmentors or integrators? How do individuals perceive flexibility and permeability of work and home/family?	What is the perception of flexibility? What is the perception of permeability?	Covered in Sections 5.4, 5.5, 5.6. Covered in Sections 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10.
For segmentors, what is their subjective experience of crossing boundaries and what challenges do they face?	What is the subjective experience of segmentors?	Covered in Section 5.2 plus examples in Chapter 5.
For integrators, what is their subjective experience of forming and maintaining boundaries, and what challenges do they face?	What is the subjective experience of integrators?	Covered in Section 5.2 plus examples in Chapter 5.
Who are the actual border-keepers in the work domain and in the home/family domain?	Who are the work–home boundary keepers?	Covered in Section 5.3 plus examples in Chapter 5.
Do women create, maintain and cross boundaries in different ways compared to men?	Does the work–home boundary vary by gender?	Covered in Section 5.10.
For this study, what evidence is there for long hours? Does it vary by gender? What is the symbolic importance of long hours and how does this impact career outcomes?	What is the evidence for long hours?	Covered in Section 4.2.3.
Of interest for this study is to verify whether employees in the information technology sector identify the policies mentioned above (paid leaves, affordable childcare, flexible work) as important in their subjective experience of trying to achieve work–life balance.	What organisational policies, e.g. parental leave, are used or avoided? What national policies, e.g. parental leave, are used or avoided?	Covered in Section 4.1.3 and 4.2.2.
What are the perceptions of flexible working and career outcomes for knowledge workers in the IT sector in Australia?	What types of flexible work are being used? What is the impact of flexible working on career outcomes?	Covered in Sections 4.1.3 and 4.2.2, and Chapter 5. Covered in Section 5.13.

Literature review question	Research sub-question	Findings
For this study, it is important to explore and critique the organisational and national policy context, regarding parental leave.	What organisational policies are used or avoided? What national policies are used or avoided?	Covered in Section 4.1.3 and 4.2.2.
For this study, it is important to understand subjective employee perceptions of their career progress; perceptions of any of the types of career discrimination noted above; and differences by gender.	What is the perception of career success? Does it vary by gender? What is the subjective perception of career progression? What is the subjective perception of flexibility stigma? What evidence exists about career discrimination (missed training, promotions, performance reviews, salary increases)?	Career success: Covered in Section 6.1. Career progression: Covered in Section 6.2. Flexibility stigma: Covered in Section 5.13.4. Career discrimination: Covered in Section 6.1 and 6.2.
It is important to investigate the extent of the 'mommy track' and the 'daddy track' in the information technology sector in Australia, given that previous studies have addressed either the information technology sector in other countries, or have addressed Australian employees in sectors other than the information technology sector.	What evidence is there for the mommy track? What evidence is there for the daddy track?	Covered in Section 5.13.4 and 7.1.4. Covered in Section 5.13.4 and 7.1.4.
The construct of work–family culture is important in understanding how employees perceive working flexibly to balance work and home/family commitments but the literature has not yet settled on an agreed definition for work–family culture. Of importance to this study is an awareness of the roles that organisational culture, in general, and work–family culture, specifically, play. Several elements emerge as critical for this study: the extent of supervisor support, the extent of manager support (for which read: organisational support), organisational working time expectations, and career consequences.	What elements of culture are salient for flexible working, career and technology? How uniform is work–family culture? How is culture manifested in subjective perceptions of the intersection of flexible working and career outcomes? How is culture manifested in subjective perceptions of technology usage?	Covered in Section 4.2 and 4.3. Covered in Section 4.1.3 and 4.2. Covered in Section 5.13. Covered in Section 4.3.
Also of interest is the extent to which normative control is experienced by employees and managers as they negotiate flexible work arrangements in the workplace.	What evidence is there for normative control?	Covered in 4.2.3, 4.3.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.11.

Literature review question	Research sub-question	Findings
Of interest for this study is to confirm whether women today share the same themes (from Quesenberry & Trauth, 2005). Have the themes shifted as the landscape of technology and knowledge work has shifted? Since the original study did not involve men in the sample, this study will look at whether men have similar or different themes when using technology to support work–life balance.	What is the role of technology?	Covered in Section 4.3 and then illustrated in Chapter 5 with examples.
For this study, it would be interesting to discover what perspective is taken by employees, especially the blurring of boundaries, the expectation of availability, and the need for collaboration between employees which may be enhanced or frustrated by mobile communication technologies in use.	What is the role of technology? What is the perception of flexibility? What is the perception of permeability?	Covered in Section 4.3 plus Chapter 5 examples. Covered in Sections 5.4, 5.5, 5.6. Covered in Sections 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10.
Of interest to this study is how the individual manages the flexibility and permeability of this boundary and what sort of technologies are preferred over others. Linking back to the previous exploration of boundary theory and border theory, is there a difference in boundary management tactics depending on the direction of influence (work to home/family, versus home/family to work)? The literature suggests that men and women have different experiences of work-life balance, boundary maintenance between work and home/family, use of technology, and ultimately different coping strategies, so for this study it is important to compare and contrast the subjective reality of men and women to reveal if this difference is found in the information technology sector in Australia.	What is the role of technology? What is the perception of flexibility? What is the perception of permeability? Does the work–home boundary vary by gender?	Covered in Section 4.3 plus Chapter 5 examples. Covered in Sections 5.4, 5.5, 5.6. Covered in Sections 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10. Covered in Section 5.10 plus more examples in Chapter 5.

Literature review question	Research sub-question	Findings
For this study, it is important to understand the boundaries that employees perceive that surround their careers. How do employees construct these boundaries? Are they maintained by the employee or do other, significant boundary keepers play a role? Are the boundaries that are formed regarding careers similar to or different from the boundaries that are formed between the work domain and the home/family domain? What is the intersection between perceived career boundaries and perceived work and home/family boundaries?	What are the subjective perceptions of career boundaries? Who are the career boundary keepers? What is the similarity to work–home boundaries? How do perceived career boundaries intersect with perceived work–home boundaries?	Covered in Section 6.1 and 6.2 plus examples in Section 5.13. Covered in Section 6.2.2 regarding managers plus examples about the value of flexibility in Section 5.13. Covered in Section 7.1.5. Covered in Section 5.13.4 (flexibility stigma) and Section 7.1.5.
For this study, it is important to consider how the individual makes career choices across life stages, and, in particular, how work–life balance and the use of information and communication technology influence such decisions. Super's theory uses the idea of theatres to denote separate spheres of the workplace and the home, so, for this study, it is important to consider how employees transition between work and home, using the concepts of boundary theory and border theory discussed previously. From Gottfredson's theory, are there any career choices which are circumscribed to the employee-as-adult because of their perceptions of the demands of work and of home/family? What compromises does the employee-as-adult make (or have they made) in relation to their career progression, taking into account their desire for work–life balance?	What career choices are circumscribed? What compromises are made?	Covered in Section 5.13, 6.1 and 7.1.5. Covered in Section 5.13, 6.1 and 7.1.5.
For this study, this approach may be a significant perspective to consider to what extent employees 'design their lives' in accordance with their needs for balance between work and home/family and in accordance with their own career aspirations.	What is the extent of life designing?	Covered in Section 5.13, 6.1, 7.1.2, 7.1.5.

Literature review question	Research sub-question	Findings
For this study, it is important to understand the perceptions of career self-management that are expressed by employees in the information technology sector. How are the individual's outcome expectations shaped by their efforts to maintain work-life balance, to build and maintain boundaries between work and home/family, and to use technology effectively in both domains? Furthermore, what are the range of adaptive behaviours that employees display as they manage their careers and seek advancement, while maintaining the home/family domain?	What shapes the individual's outcome expectations? What adaptive behaviours are displayed?	Covered in Section 6.1 and 6.2. Covered in Section 5.13, 6.1 and 6.2.
Of interest for this study is the influence of working flexibly, working at home, or absence from the workplace on the individual's career sensemaking, whether they perceive themselves as protean, and whether they perceive their careers as boundaryless. How does working flexibly shape the individual's perception of their career, their manager's perception of their career, and organisational attitudes towards the individual and their career progress?	What are the subjective perceptions of protean careers? What are the subjective perceptions of boundaryless careers? What are the subjective perceptions of manager influence on career?	Covered in Section 5.13, 6.1, 6.2. Covered in Section 5.13, 6.1, 6.2. Covered in Section 6.2.2 plus examples in Chapter 5.
Thus, the question arises: if work is boundaryless, what happens to the career success of the individual? What indicators are used by individuals to measure objective and subjective career success? What barriers do individuals perceive to their career success? To what extent do unmet expectations influence perceptions of career success?	What is the perception of career success? Does it vary by gender?	Covered in Section 6.1.