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Work/Family Reconciliation

Corporate Management, Family Policies, and Gender Equality
in the Finnish Context

Helsinki 2011

Work/Family Reconciliation: Corporate Management, Family Policies, and Gender Equality in the Finnish Context

Key words: Work/family reconciliation, work-life balance, work/family policies, family friendly policies, corporate management, family policies, gender equality

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1 INTRODUCTION

Helsinki, March 10th, 2011

The cross-party, national, governmental and labour union group that had two years prior from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health been given the mission to reform the Finnish family leave system handed in its memorandum – unable to unanimously support any one of the discussed models. The fathers' quota was very much publicly discussed and debated, and different perspectives were visible: the more value-conservative political parties and organisations opposed the introduction of quotas and wanted the decision to remain within families; whereas especially left-wing political parties and organisations very strongly promoted the quota. The question remained unsolved.

In Anyplace corporation, middle manager Kim struggles with the roster: three of the employees at the department are on parental leave and no substitutes were hired, four of the employees work a shortened week due to their young children, and one just called to announce temporary care leave due to child's illness. Kim sighs and picks up the phone: "Good morning, I am so sorry to call you on your day off. Would you have any chance to jump in today, we're short of people here? At 2 o'clock would be perfect. OK, thanks."

The bus moves very slowly in the rush-hour traffic. Kim looks concerned. The bus stops and Kim hurries out, rushing towards the day-care centre yard: "Hi there, little one!" And turns towards the day-care personnel: "I'm so sorry I'm late. Again. Busy at work. Traffic was horrible. I hope I didn't mess up your evening programme..."

Work/family reconciliation is simultaneously happening on three very different levels: macro-societal, meso-organisational, and micro-individual. These blend together in managing working life, as well as state family policies and national gender equality. That is what this research is about.

This thesis addresses the reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children with a focus on organisational policies facilitating, or indeed inhibiting, this reconciliation. Equally, the focus is on societal structures that provide the setting for companies to operate within and pursue policies for the reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children. Importantly, in examining the complexity of these issues, this thesis derives from multiple perspectives and develops on several levels of analysis.

Before proceeding any further, it should be acknowledged that the basic topic itself – work/family reconciliation, or, the reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children - has a multiple character. 'Work' and 'family', and indeed 'care', can, separately and together, be defined and understood in different ways, including and excluding elements depending on from which perspective and position the topic is viewed. This issue is further discussed in Section 1.4 in this chapter.

Moving beyond the topic itself, the multiple perspectives and different levels of analysis can be summarised as follows. Firstly, the macro societal context in question in this study is Finnish society, along with the broader European and European Union (EU) context. This contrasts with much of the existing research on work/family relations, which is very much driven by the Anglophone contexts, as well as broader research traditions within these contexts (see, for example, Brannen 2005). The challenges in this are twofold. First, previous research within the same area but in a different context is not necessarily helpful in understanding the issues in this specific context; and second, it can be demanding to convey the situated knowledge and context-bound research to a larger research audience (see, for example, Haraway 1991; Harding 1993; Engelstad and Gerrard 2005). This societal context is an important feature to bear in mind throughout the thesis, but is more strongly present in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five.

Secondly, the research is located and contextualised in a specific macro -level historical perspective, namely discussing the developments of family policies and gender equality, as well as in the specific national and regional contexts. This means that the context is outlined through explaining the developments in the relevant areas in society; this helps to understand the specific settings and conditions of the given context (Clifford 1986). Explaining these developments is important, as the research is situated and context-bound. The historical developments are discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Five, and are present also in Chapters Four, 11 and 12.

Thirdly, the specific macro- and meso- institutional stakeholders in the thesis derive from different standpoints. These standpoints include in particular: first, family policies; second, gender equality, and thirdly, corporate organisations and their management. Because of this challenging but valuable way of conducting research, it is of great importance to specify ‘what’, ‘why’ and in ‘which context’ is discussed. As concepts and constructs are often used in an abstract and undefined way (Ronkainen 1999) their use can lead to careless generalisations and juxtapositions regarding, for example, the research context of a society representing a specific welfare state model or political system. Moreover, Nordic societies that are similar in many ways also differ substantially in many regards (Hiilamo 2004). So, for example knowing about the Swedish or Norwegian family policy systems does not necessarily mean that one can generalize this to the Finnish system. The institutional stakeholders are presented in the three following chapters (Chapter Two, Three and Four), and their interconnections are discussed in Chapter Five. Further, the stakeholder positions are used in building hypotheses in Chapter Five and they are used as analytical tools in Chapter 11.

These three levels of analysis above can be said to constitute the substantive multiplicity of the study.

Fourth, the research questions are explored through the use of mixed methods, both quantitative and qualitative, in order to use and analyse a richer range of data, and thus be better able to shed light on the phenomenon of work/family reconciliation. Quantitative and qualitative methods should not be seen as products of competing paradigms, but rather valued as complementary and mutually enriching when used together (Brannen 1992, 2005; Bryman 2006, 2008). In understanding phenomena, quantitative methods can be used to establish the broad frame of the study and a means to ask the most interesting questions when moving onto the qualitative phase, or vice versa. The first alternative has been applied in the present research. Mixed methods are further discussed in Chapter Six on methodology and are present on a more operational level in Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine, 10 and 11.

Fifth, the epistemological and ontological positions in this work are multiple, but can be summarised as critical realist. Epistemologically, this has meant shifting during the course of the research from a more positivist position with a more taken-for-granted mainstream epistemology and ontology (Johnson and Duberley 2000) towards a post-positivist position (Prasad 2005), where epistemological positions and ontological discussions are more explicitly articulated and problematised. A moderate critical realist position is adopted in this research, and it is acknowledged that epistemological discussions are most present in this research when discussing the research questions from a gender perspective, as well as when discussing some tensions and interconnections between the different institutional stakeholders. As Engelstad and Gerrard (2005) state: “*Science can be seen as a social construction, and scientific and academic productions of knowledge(s) as cultural productions of knowledge, not ‘value neutral’ or ‘objective’ nor separate from culture and society*” (p.3). In having

different positions, we abandon the objective of finding one, static 'truth' (Alvesson and Deetz 1996; Burrell and Morgan 1979; Grosz 1987). The methodological positions are further discussed in this chapter, in Section 1.3.1., as well as throughout the thesis.

Finally, reflexivity is used as a means to serve the interests of science and research. A researcher's positioning makes a crucial difference, not only in relation to research interests and the chosen research questions, but also to data collection and analyses, interpretation of results and in relation to informants and research objects (Engelstad and Gerrard 2003: 5). A researcher must be reflexive and critically aware of his or her working methods, as well as of the network of meanings and power that are tied to these (ibid: 6). The choices must be carefully justified, and accordingly, I have sought to make my choices explicit and explicable. The researcher can also possess multiple roles in the process, depending on the personal distance to the research topic from earlier, as well as on the position of being 'inside' or 'outside' the research problem (Husu 2001; Jyrkinen 2005; Tallberg 2009). This can be both problematic and fruitful, as, when understanding that our beliefs have social causes and foundations, reflexivity enables us to move beyond the given social position we possess that would give partial and distorted claims about the world and social relations (Harding 1991).

These second three levels of analysis above can be said to constitute the methodological multiplicity of the study. All these multiple perspectives are intertwined and connected in the different levels: firstly, at the substantive and contextual levels which include societal and historical contexts and the different institutional stakeholders; and secondly, at the deeper levels of mixed methods, epistemological and ontological positions, and reflexivity.

1.1. Background

To combine, whether in everyday life, policy or analysis, major different areas in life in a meaningful way is not always easy, for individuals (micro level), organisations (meso level), or societies (macro level). Work/family reconciliation is a crucial and topical question for personal well-being and on a societal level for productivity and reproduction throughout the Western world. As Bowlby et al. (2010:11) conclude, in almost every occupation in which it is possible to work, implications of 'family' are hard to ignore, and essential to be aware of. Competing work and family roles at the micro level of individual lives have been subjected to extensive research inquiry. Equally important is study of the contextual frames within which individuals live their lives. These frames can be both meso organisational and macro societal. This is vital as research and knowledge production is always situated and context-bound (Engelstad and Gerrard 2005: 3). However, even if knowledge production is situated and produced from a particular position, it does not diminish the need to reflect carefully upon researchers' particular understandings of the world (ibid: 6).

It is also important not to privilege a particular, for example 'mainstream', Anglophone or Western, form of situated knowledge (ibid: 14); at least without clearly specifying that this is the case. The state of knowledge in work/family issues is uneven and always bound to the context, and the separation of home and work is a very ideological and indeed gendered question (Hearn et al. 2005: 117). This is because 'home' and 'family' are very private spheres to most people, and include notions of what is 'right' and socially or culturally desirable, which tend to make the questions trigger emotions, based on rooted, again socially and culturally located, beliefs. Moreover, the meaning, or possibility, of the private and the public may be very different for women and men,

at different historical times. The concepts and constructs used in this research are specifically attached to the context of the research, time and place and the subjectivity of the Finnish society as a Nordic welfare state and a member of the EU (see Ronkainen 2009).

Living in a time of intensified working culture and decreasing birth rates across Europe¹, the question of work/family reconciliation becomes increasingly important. According to Eurostat (2009: 266), the question is important enough to have crucial effects both on individual welfare and the national economy. Hence, flexible working arrangements, which may liberate individuals – both men and women – to make choices in favour of time with family and the possibility of taking care of dependants, can be seen as encouraging and enabling more people to enter the labour market, at least partially. Inflexible labour markets, on the other hand, can be seen as one of the reasons behind the reduction in birth rates, having clear implications for future labour supply and the financial sustainability of social protection systems (ibid.).

This study will explore and explain how the Finnish society works as the macro level and meso level context for work/family reconciliation, how different institutional stakeholders interconnect, and the extent of corporate-level activity for the reconciliation of work and employee childcare responsibilities. Work/family reconciliation is in this research defined as the reconciliation of paid work² and care responsibilities for children of all ages³.

As the context of the research is the Finnish society and selected companies operating within it, there are inevitably assumptions made and limitations in the study. Producing knowledge is always related to social ideologies and relations in research communities as well as in prevailing ideologies in society (Engelstad and Gerrard 2005: 22). As not all previous research is applicable in another social and cultural setting, the most relevant pieces are brought in and others left out. The choices of focusing on the relevant previous research and theories within the different perspectives are discussed along the way. To focus is, however, crucial, as the areas are wide and extensive and as not all previous research and findings within them are relevant to this specific project.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. After an introductory chapter, the first part discusses the institutional stakeholders of work/family reconciliation debates and development. Three main kinds of institution, or institutional representations, are addressed. Firstly, the Finnish family policies, their development and history, with a short section on familialistic perspective is presented and discussed. A familialistic perspective is chosen as the discussion on re-familialisation and de-familialisation has been ongoing in the Finnish society since the 1990's economic recession, which also will be discussed later, in Chapter Two. Secondly, Finnish gender equality policy, its development, and connection to studies of gender equality in organisations. This is further discussed in Chapter Three. Thirdly, Finnish corporate management and organisations represent stakeholders for organisational work/family issues, and

¹ According to the Eurostat yearbook, the birth rates in Europe have been declining since the 1970s (Eurostat 2009:133). In 2005, Europe reported the smallest share of young people and the highest share of old people across all continents (Eurostat 2009: 135).

² No distinctions among forms of employment are made, but some kind of work organisation is a requirement. The data is collected from relatively large private sector companies within the Metropolitan area in Finland.

³ This research focuses on care responsibilities for children of all ages. The Finnish legislation has stipulated on employee rights regarding work/family reconciliation concerning children up to the age of 10. When gathering data from companies, no age ceilings for employee children were included.

institutional theory as a tool to analyse the corporate level work/family policy development. These are further discussed in Chapter Four. The institutional stakeholder perspectives include levels of actual stakeholder interests and agendas, but also actors and activities connected to each area. In each case there are also connections with specific empirical and theoretical studies. The first part of the thesis is concluded by a discussion of the institutional stakeholders and their interconnections. The second part begins with a short introduction including a section on methods. This is followed by five chapters on both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, findings and discussion on results. The thesis is completed by a final chapter of discussion and conclusions, with recommendations for further research.

The structure of this introductory chapter is as follows: first, some relevant research background is presented and the present project is positioned. Next, the objectives and research questions are presented and the ontologies and epistemologies of this project are discussed. After this, key concepts for this research are defined, and, finally, the European and the Finnish contexts are discussed.

1.2. Research background

There are many different ways of classifying research on work and family life. Kelly et al. (2008: 308-312) summarise the distinctions between work/family initiatives, work/family conflict, work/family enrichment; and on the outcome perspective, both on the individual and the business level. Studies on conflict and enrichment focus on psychological and social psychological constructs of well-being, whereas studies of outcomes focus on performance. The present project is in the previously defined area of work/family initiatives, both on societal (macro) and organisational (meso) levels. This study focuses strictly on policy development, but neither ignores nor specifically looks at changes in corporate culture, psychological outcomes and performance.

Another way of dividing research in work/family-themes is to classify them into three different research areas, into the fields of psychology, organisation studies, and societal studies (Eräranta & Käsälä 2007: 58-69). With this framework, the present research is located mainly within both organisation studies and societal studies, rather than psychological studies.

The reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities has, according to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), mainly focused on, first, work/family conflicts, and later, on work/family enrichment and spillover with a focus on, for example, individual roles, time-management, and employee satisfaction. Thus, the main focus has often been on individuals and psychological outcomes. Other researchers have drawn upon social justice theory, looking at different types of welfare states and 'gender contracts' to support work and family life (Lewis & Smithson 2001), a model of the degree of national gender equality suggesting it to be an important contextual variable positively related to organisational work/family supports (Lyness & Kropf 2005) or the existence of corporate -level policies for reconciling work and family depending on the socio-political context of the countries researched (den Dulk 2001). Hence, it is clear that research within these areas is conducted on the individual level, the corporate level and the societal level. In addition, different definitions of work, home and leisure regimes as well as boundaries between these are used in research, conducted especially on the individual level (see, for example, Kreier & Hollensbe 2006).

The social relations of home and work represent some of the most fundamental aspects of gender relations in the society (Hearn et al. 2006: 117). Indeed, some previous research on work/family reconciliation has had a strong feminist agenda. Such research has been conducted within both gender studies and organisation studies, relying on feminist theories and epistemologies. This is, of course, unsurprising as the questions within the area of work/family reconciliation have traditionally been viewed as a 'women's question', and to study issues within that area should also therefore involve some gender awareness. Furthermore, during recent decades, feminist movements and some feminist theories have had an impact on contemporary cultural analyses and organisation studies (see, for example, Calás & Smircich 2006: 212). However, the research area of work-life balance is still said to be relatively under-theorised, especially in terms of questions of gender and agency (Hobson et al. 2009: 4).

In their review of more than 150 studies of work/family issues, Kelly et al. (2008: 306) summarise their findings in terms of four conclusions: (1) there is a need for more multi-level research; (2) there is a necessity for an interdisciplinary approach; (3) there are benefits from longitudinal studies; and (4) there is a need for the translation of research into practice. The current study at least partly addresses three of these four conclusions. As noted, it is conducted mainly on the macro- (societal) and meso- (organisational) levels, though it does include elements from the micro-level when addressing individual HR managers and their perceptions. It includes elements from both organisational and societal studies, combining areas of management, gender issues, social policies and family policies. Finally, the conclusions focus both on practical and theoretical implications and, with a strong focus on the data, there is a close connection between research and practice. According to Jane Lewis (2006: 387), there is often a gap between research examining state policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children and research conducted on the organisational level, defining and examining company - level ways of promoting the balance between work and family. The present study specifically addresses this gap in our knowledge in the context of Finland.

1.3. Aim of the study and research questions

The broad aim of this study is to explore and explain the impact of societal context, in terms of institutional stakeholders and employing organisations, on work/family reconciliation in Finland.

The aim is addressed through the following more precise research questions:

- 1) (A) To what extent are there written corporate level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?
 - (B) Which policies are these?
 - (C) What is the accessibility and use of these policies in corporations?
- 2) Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

Hence, by addressing the research questions, this project strives to distinguish the following elements: the (1) existence and (2) accessibility and use of corporate policies

for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities in companies operating in Finland; (3) to explain some of the reasons for developing these corporate-level policies; and: (4) to analyse the different institutionalised stakeholder interests in work-family reconciliation issues in Finland⁴. The term, institutional stakeholders, is further discussed in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, refer to family policies, gender equality, and the Finnish (Metropolitan) corporate world.

1.4. Positioning myself

According to Duncan (2000: 1), we all live within the context of gender unequal social relations with our different expectations, opportunities and positions. This notion has very much guided this research process. The situation is very different for women, men, children and families in different countries, including those within the EU. Furthermore, the (re-)presented realities come to affect the political climate for different social policy decisions very much and, thereby, the spaces for individual, couple-based or family-unit choices for actions that are available in the reconciliation of work and family spheres. The social democratic ethos of public day care and the individual lives of women have very strongly affected and still affect the Finnish society. It has also affected many individual choices for individual and collective action in past years, including my own.

1.4.1. *Ontological and epistemological positions*

Clarifying ontological and epistemological positions can sometimes be complex. Burrell and Morgan (1979) explicate the subjective-objective dimensions in social sciences by a four-level scheme illustrating positioning in regard to ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology (p. 3). As regards ontology, the approaches range from nominalism to realism; for epistemology from anti-positivism to positivism; for human nature from voluntarism to determinism; and regarding methodology from ideographic to nomothetic (ibid.). Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000) state that realism was the main approach that came to challenge both positivism and relativism in social studies (pp. 4-5). Further, acknowledging the role of human action in the social world demands a critical position, as social phenomena exist both depending on human actions but also independently, never entirely independently from the actors who reproduce them but often independently of the researchers who study them (ibid.: 11). What distinguishes a critical realist position from social constructionism is that according to the first, an actor can produce and reproduce phenomenon without having any knowledge of them, relying on the actor's concepts of them, for example, gender relations or relations of social and economic class (ibid.: 12-13). Further, it acknowledges that these relations exist, at least to some extent, apart from specific human discourses.

Acknowledging that a researcher does not necessarily need to take a strong epistemological and/or ontological position, and that adopting a modified ontological position is possible, can be very helpful. In this research, a modified critical realist approach is adopted. Critical realism posits that to explain phenomena it is necessary to explore the underlying structures and mechanisms that generate them (see, for example, Hobson et al. 2009). According to Margolis (1986: 283), there is in critical realism a clear connection between the ontological realism that structures the world

⁴ Here, point 1 refers to research questions 1A and 1B, point 2 to research question 1C, and points 3 and 4 to research question 2.

independent from the cognitive structures of humans and the epistemological realism that views these structures through the cognitive processes of human actors.

Johnson and Duberley (2000: 103) illustrate well the on the one hand, anti-positivist and, on the other hand, anti-relativist standpoint of critical realism by stating: “*Truth must be more than the outputs of a language game, yet it cannot be absolute.*” Taking distance from both the extreme and contrasting positions of positivism and relativism, critical realism represents elements of them at once: recognising that knowledge has a socially constructed nature but with a theoretically determined order of precedence between competing knowledge claims (ibid.; see also Ackroyd & Fleetwood 2000: 12-13). The obvious problem with this is the subjective judgement of the explanatory power of a given theory, as our apprehension of the reality the theory purports to explain is also determined by the theory (see ibid.: 105).

So, by acknowledging the socially constructed nature of knowledge, the question remains: whose socially constructed criteria are used in evaluating the criteria for explanatory power? In this research, there is a need to look critically at the explanatory powers of the different theories used. In doing so, there cannot be a pre-given order, and the researcher has to remain humble and open-minded. The theories used as instruments in this research are in part pre-determined in the sense that they were adapted to this project even before I had been able to acknowledge more fully my ontological and epistemological positions. The process has in that sense been reversed, even if the positions had already steered the process before I formally acknowledged and labelled my position as critical realist. The research process has been a journey starting from an interest in a phenomenon, with relatively positivist⁵ assumptions in search of answers, leading to an adventure in the post-positivist world, gaining an understanding of both the questions themselves, and also of the questioning process itself. Instead of just asking the question ‘what [exists]?’ it is important to ask ‘why [something exists]?’ but also to question the underlying reasons, motives and agendas, and to remember that the position one adapts steers the way one designs the research and reads the data. Hence, even with an implicitly positivist starting point in the study, my interest in the social phenomena and uneasiness with trying to explain things without the human factor meant that the design of this research has from early in the research process emerged from a relatively post-positivist position.

In the following section of this introductory chapter, the discourses⁶ of work-life balance concepts are discussed, and thus this needs to be elaborated further in relation to positioning this research. According to Johnson and Duberley (2000: 105), the role of discourse is crucial in influencing how we understand reality. Critical realism assumes the active role of a human agent in interaction with the external and independent reality, which can both facilitate and constrain human action (ibid: 105). Events and phenomena are explained according to socio-historical variations in human understandings, but reality does not change as a result of this, unless it is dependent upon human intention and action (ibid. 105). It is possible to identify causation when exploring the underlying mechanisms and power structures generating and governing events and phenomena (ibid. 106-107). Even if structures would not be visible, explanations are sought to answer ‘why’ the structures occur.

⁵ Positivism is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences even to studies of social realities.

⁶ The discussion about the different discourses are included and relevant for illustrating the use of concepts, even if this research is not focusing on discourses nor conducting discourse analyses.

In this research, there are several levels of ontologies and epistemologies intersecting with each other. Discussions around epistemologies are more present in post-positivist⁷ research, and in this research, in the part concerning gender equality and some feminist theories⁸. In the institutional tradition⁹, epistemological positions are less often explicitly discussed and institutional theory often relies on positivism and realism more or less explicitly. That is why the discussion on epistemologies and their relation to different theories in this research has to acknowledge these different positions. The theories used are chosen from amongst the most influential ones in their respective areas. The methodological issues are dealt with throughout the thesis.

The following table partly illustrates the multiple perspectives and layers present in this research:

Table 1 Different aspects of tripartite framework

	Families	Gender equality	Companies
Stakeholders / Interests	Familialistic ¹⁰ strategies, re-familialism ¹¹ , improvement of the situation of families	De-familializing strategies, increased gender equality	Corporate interests, quest for profit, need of workforce
Stakeholders / Actors / Activities	Families, family organisations, politicians, government, ministries	Individuals, women's organisations, politicians, government, ministries	Corporate management, trade unions, other interest groups
Main policies	National family policies	National gender equality policies	Labour law, collective labour market agreements corporate level work/family policies
Associated theoretical perspectives	Familialism	Gender perspective in organisation studies	Institutional theory
Perspective presented in	Chapter Two	Chapter Three	Chapter Four

The tripartite framework of institutional stakeholders begins by discussing the family policies system and its development. The familialistic position of this perspective is briefly introduced and then further developed in Chapter Five. The following chapter discusses the development of gender equality from a moderate feminist perspective, including a gendered perspective on organisation studies and introducing some feminist theory. The perspective is further adopted in Chapter Five, where the framework is discussed. Further, Chapter Four engages with questions of work/family

⁷ Post-positivism is used to define a set of different genres, including critical realism, rejecting and questioning the notions of social reality and knowledge production in positivism (Prasad 2005: 9).

⁸ See Chapter Three.

⁹ See Chapter Four.

¹⁰ Familialism is an ideology that promotes the family as an institution.

¹¹ A turn in the recession-influenced Finnish society during the end of the 1990s, where the phenomenon or discourse of familialism gained a substantially more political and ideological tone, having a similar development to the women's movement, even if these ideologically partly oppose each other (see Jallinoja 2006: 20).

reconciliation at the organisational level, using institutional theory as an instrument to understand and explain the policy development concerning work/family reconciliation issues. The perspective is included in the discussions of Chapter Five. Agency as such is not studied from a theoretical perspective, but rather institutional activity and the underlying reasons, motives and agendas, which at times can make it challenging to engage all three perspectives in one discussion.

The levels do shift and interconnect during the presentations of the perspectives, and the positions vary depending on which perspective the researcher is integrated into.

1.4.2. Reflections on the self

“We are products of a discourse while at the same time we produce discourses, but we can introduce the instability of these categories into our discourses. We can play with them, trying to see the world differently by changing positions; lay bare the power relations which tie us to a discursive position. Of course, to convey an ironic message we must be self-ironic, we must also cast doubt on our final vocabulary. That is to say, we must not take ourselves too seriously, and we must stop believing that we have direct access to the truth.” (Gherardi 2003: 336)

Gherardi discusses relevant aspects of one’s position and positioning. Even if her focus is on discourses, and they are not the way this research seeks to explain phenomena, her words address the importance of being aware of one’s own position and the need to be able to question it and desirably even change it.

The importance of changing positions further increases when several perspectives are adopted within the same research study, conducted by one individual. One’s own experiences, values and beliefs easily form one’s positioning, and no position is truly neutral. The need to be open about one’s position exists in all research, but is even more emphasised in post-positivist research traditions. This is why a short personal reflection of ‘self’ is presented in the following sections.

A re-familialistic¹² turn in the Finnish society has been acknowledged in the recession and post-recession era of the late 1990s (Julkunen 1996). During that time my interest in family policies was aroused. The re-familialistic turn was not defined at that time, but did indisputably affect my interests and choices. This societal shift was visible in public discussion and some individual choices. However, it did not affect state policies; indeed quite the opposite, as the recession forced several public sector cuts in the Finnish society. These cuts will be further discussed in Chapters Two and Five.

Experiencing and attending the re-familialistic turn, but still retaining the self-evident notion of gender equality that my generation had grown up with in the seemingly gender-neutral Nordic welfare state is presumably characteristic for many women and mothers of that time (see Niemistö 2005). This combination might be one of the factors in the development of feminism, indefinable by the attributes of previous generations that researchers discuss today (Julkunen 2010). With these experiences predetermining my pre-understanding, two essential areas, the societal and the

¹² As familialism is an ideology that promotes the family as an institution, a suitable definition for re-familialisation would be a new rise of more traditional values in the society. The development of the 1990s was, however, not that simple; rather, the new wave of familialism became visible alongside the de-familialistic ethos established before which strongly promotes gender equality by outsourcing care and shifting the responsibilities from the private sphere to the public sphere, thus enabling mothers to work full-time outside of homes.

personal, became the foremost interests for my research. As these interconnect and even clash, balancing my own position in this research has occasionally been demanding. However, this notion further stresses the importance of continuously reflecting on one's own position. The third perspective, working life and corporate management has on a personal level felt more 'neutral'. The positivist epistemologies of much institutional theory do not per se require extensive reflection of positions, but the post-positivist critical realist does question underlying reasons, motives, structures and agendas. The following chapters presenting the stakeholders are introduced separately and then integrated into a framework.

The use of language, discourses and concepts is related to the question of positioning, even if it is not specifically the focus for this research. It is important to distinguish and analyse the values embedded in the concepts and terminology and to define what is included in their present use, and why. Hence, in the following section, key concepts to this research are presented.

1.5. Key concepts

It is crucial to understand what we are talking about when addressing issues of work/family reconciliation or work/life balance. As mentioned above, these concepts are often used without specifically defining them, thus creating confusion and mixed understandings. Further, in some respects, the policy concepts and research concepts are used and mixed inconsistently. As policy concepts defining *specific* policies, even if at times used carelessly, are less ambiguous, they are discussed later, in Chapters Two and Four. In the following sections, the research concepts and *general* policy making concepts central to this research are defined and discussed.

1.5.1. From Work/Family to Work/Life

From the 1960s to the 1990s and onwards there has been an ongoing linguistic shift from using the concepts of 'work/family' and 'family-friendly', for example, in policy development, arguably with an implicit focus on women, towards the seemingly more gender-neutral concepts 'work-life' and 'work-life balance' focusing on both genders and also including people without children (Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport 2007: 360). These discourses seem to be both culturally and historically bounded. The focus including women has been more dominant in some countries which have more traditional gender values and roles, whereas the 'work-life balance' discourse originates from neo-liberal contexts (Lewis et al. 2007: 361).

Even if it may be useful to move from 'work/family' towards 'work/life', there is a risk when broadening the framework, as when not affecting gender attitudes or relations, this might remove issues of childcare and fathers' roles from the agenda (Lewis 1996: 4-5). In addition, the notion of 'balance' is questioned and questionable as it is indicating that a non-conflicting balance can be possible.

1.5.2. *Work-Life Balance*

The notion of ‘work-life balance’ does not measure the components of an equal balance. It is usually used as a broad concept dividing work and life into different spheres, first used in the late 1970s to expose the choices made in favour of work, neglecting areas such as family, friends, hobbies and other aspects of ‘non-work’.

The notion of work-life balance can be experienced on a very subjective level; each individual can tell his or her story that is in some sense unique. Finding a good balance between work and care is at least partly a subjective feeling and policies that are helpful to one person do not necessarily satisfy the needs of others, even within the same organisation. As already mentioned, the context, culture and societal values play an important part in the national policy framework, but they also play a part in the sense of entitlement of having and using policies (den Dulk 2001; Lewis and Smithson 2001). Additionally, the individual level consists of both those using the policies and practices in order to balance their bundles of demands, as well as those managing this process with a need to be fair and to balance the interests of both businesses and of human beings. At the micro-individual level, a well-functioning balance between work and family is likely to be a crucial factor of an individual’s subjective wellbeing. This is also an important issue in relation to work-life on a macro level, as the family contributes to work-life by reproducing the labour force, both on a daily basis and over the generations (Haavio-Mannila 1992).

Some definitions seek to capture the essentials of the concept of work-life balance, often focusing very much on the individual psychological level. Work-life balance can be defined as the extent to which an individual’s effectiveness and satisfaction with work and family roles are compatible with the individual’s life priorities (Greenhaus and Allen 2006), or as an accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains (Grzywacz and Carlson 2007).

But on the other hand, two separate discourses¹³ of work-life balance can be detected: one is located on the organisational level, focusing on the characteristics of the workplace, the existence of work-life balance -policies and flexible working arrangements, whereas the second can be located on the individual level presented above and focuses on individual’s perceptions of ‘balance’ between a demanding job and private-sphere responsibilities (Lewis et al. 2007: 361). The individual discourse is seemingly gender-neutral (ibid.: 363-365). The individual discourse also focuses on ‘choice’, neglecting gendered as well as other workplace constraints to actually freely ‘choose’ time and effort towards ‘family’ or ‘life’ instead of ‘work’ (ibid.: 366). Furthermore, the focus on, on the one hand, individuals and their choices and strategies to achieve whatever kind of a work-life balance and, on the other hand, those of households varies according to cultural contexts (ibid.: 364).

Suzan Lewis et al. (2007: 368-369) state that the work-life balance discourse uncritically accepts the values of dominant neo-liberal forms of capitalism, ignoring structural, cultural and gendered constraints. Thus, ‘quick-fixes’ are created in the form

¹³ Discussion about the different discourses is included and relevant for illustrating the use of concepts, even if this research is not focusing on discourses nor conducting discourse analysis. Accordingly, the concept of ‘discourse’ is used loosely here.

of work-life balance- policies that can ease the pressure for parent employees for a while, but leaves them alone in an ideology of personal responsibility. From this relatively uncritical position, the discourse is not challenging organisations and societies to question the underpinnings of the work-life balance- discourse and change the 'long hours' working culture of the new economy. This 'long hours' culture is, together with the image of the 'ideal worker', often combined with notions of 'commitment'. In these environments, policies to improve work-life balance can actually reciprocally increase demands on workers and the intensiveness of work, leading to less actualised work-life balance (ibid.: 366-367). This issue is further discussed in the context of working life and corporate written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children in Chapter Four.

Finally, in this section, as Ransome (2007: 375) puts it: 'Work-life balance is prompted as something that affects virtually everyone in society'. As boundaries towards care responsibilities are blurred and the quest for balance takes place between different areas of one individual's individual life as a result of his or her individual choices in a neo-liberal manner, the question touches upon everyone who has a connection to working life of some kind. In spite of the underlying neo-liberal discourse, the realities and the space for individual choices vary a great deal. In addition, decision-making within this area is strongly linked to the specific policy contexts and welfare regimes in question.

1.5.3. *Work-family reconciliation*

The word 'reconciliation' is used as seemingly gender-neutral language. However, the term 'reconciliation' has been questioned for containing an implicit criticism of women with children in the labour market (Moss 1996: 23). It also indicates a quest for a perfect balance between all the interest groups in a changing world; thus, it should be viewed more as a dynamic process (ibid.).

In the EU-level work/family discourses the term 'reconciliation' has often been presented as gender-neutral at the same time as it has been given the meaning of a facilitated division between paid and unpaid work for women, rather than equal sharing of these two domains between men and women, even if on the European level the aim has explicitly been to move towards the latter division (Lewis 2006; Lewis 2006b: 428). Since the 1990s, the Europe-level work/family reconciliation policies have lost the dimension of equal sharing of work and care between the sexes and narrowed the focus substantially to the provision of childcare services (ibid.). This development will eventually also change the focus in regimes of care from less private to more public. At the same time they have an impact on labour markets. Explicit assumptions have been made that the unpaid work of care would increasingly enter the paid labour market (Lewis 2006b).

As 'reconciliation' has consequently been used on the EU -level, this research continues to use the concept. As noted, this is not to state that the concept is problem-free. As questions of combining work and family always seem to have strong emotional and value-based assumptions, none of the concepts can ever be totally unproblematic.

1.5.4. Family-friendliness

The concept of ‘family-friendly’ is also used in many different contexts. Often the question remains: friendly for whom? It is of great importance to understand that if employers do not feel they gain anything from initiatives that supposedly increase the support for employees with family obligations it is not likely that they will offer them (Lewis 1996: 5). Moreover, some initiatives are called ‘family-friendly’, even if there is an ongoing debate about whether it is a friendly gesture towards the employees’ families or simply supporting employment-centeredness. In Chapters Two, Four and Five, this issue is discussed further in relation to the question of the employer-provided nurse for an employee’s child who has fallen ill. Even these discussions show the context-bound nature of the concepts and the values steering them.

Often the so-called ‘family friendly’ policies are simply policies for reconciling (or ‘balancing’, ‘harmonising’, ‘combining’) work with care responsibilities. Policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities can be categorised into flexible working arrangements, leave arrangements, workplace facilities, and provision of information and advice to employees (Kivimäki and Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta 2003; Simkin and Hillage 1992). This categorisation includes both the state- and collective- labour-market-agreement levels, corporate- level written policies, and also the more informal corporate- level practices. Often an employer is considered ‘family-friendly’ when there is a broad range of work/family arrangements within the organisation (den Dulk 2001: 12). Work/family arrangements (used in parallel with policies for ‘reconciling’, ‘balancing’, ‘harmonising’ or ‘combining’ work with care responsibilities) can be either formal policies and official statements or informal practices and arrangements (ibid.: 11).

Written policies for ‘care’ are also in some ways relevant to written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children, even if these policies go beyond the care responsibilities for children and includes ways of showing care for employees within an organisation. Policies for care can be defined as courses of action adopted in a written format in the range of areas in which care may be relevant (McKie et al. 2008: 17). Implementation of policies and practices of care include human resource managers and departments, as well as line managers (ibid.).

This research addresses the formal corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children and the development of these, as well as national family policies on reconciling work with care responsibilities for children, but omits the informal corporate-level arrangements. Even if omitting the informal parts may lead to an underestimation of the level of corporate-level engagement and cultural legitimacy of the arrangements (den Dulk 2001: 11) this is done in this research, being aware of the restrictions and possible criticism of doing so. I state that for the purpose of this research, it is meaningful to do so, as the focus of this research is on formal policies – both on the national and corporate levels – and the formal availability of them. Even if the focus is on management representatives and the information is received through them, thus ignoring the views of individual employees beyond the managers themselves, this study is interested in policies, and their development, accessibility and use, which spans beyond the symbolic value of the policies (see Waters and Bardoel 2006: 679).

1.5.5. Work

‘Work’ is a socially contextualised phenomenon with its meaning and naming heavily linked to broad societal organisation (Collinson and Hearn 2005: 290). Work is also socially and societally organised, according to gendered divisions of labour, and is in itself gendered and contested (ibid.: 291). Paid work is one of major forces in the lives of many adults (McKie et al. 2008: 12). But as the markets are globalising, and the nature and structure of work keeps changing, so the temporal and contextual boundaries of work also become more blurred (ibid.: 12-13).

This research regards ‘work’ relatively broadly, including all forms of employments, but excludes non-paid work, such as housework, when talking about ‘work’. This is done whilst acknowledging that in recent critical research both public sphere and private sphere work is often included (see Collinson and Hearn 2005: 290). The reason for excluding unpaid work in the private sphere from the research is that the data is from companies and as such requires an employment of some kind to exist before the corporate-level policies become relevant to study and as the existence, accessibility and use of these policies in focus in this research. For the accessibility of policies, the organisational status of the employee might be relevant, but as such the form of the employment, for example fixed-term or permanent, is more seldom of importance.

1.5.6. Life

In discussing work/life balance, ‘life’ is vaguely defined as ‘everything outside of the realm of formal paid employment, but which falls inside the realm of family and home life’ (Ransome 2007: 377). In other definitions, life includes everything else than work. In everyday discourses there can be an ambiguous relation to the family; for example, hobbies and friends can be seen as the opposite, balancing factor, for work. According to Ransome (2007:378), loose use of definitions can narrow down usage within discourses and results in ‘work’ meaning ‘paid work’ and ‘life’ meaning ‘care work’. So, in this sense the work-life balance discourse is also seen as reproductive of the traditional gender - divided society (ibid.: 381).

1.6. The European context

For research on the interconnections of work and family, it is important to look both back in time historically and around oneself geographically. Finland joined the European Union in 1995. The country has more developed national level policies for reconciling work and family than most other EU countries.

In general, the situation for women, men and families in Europe has been changing in recent decades. The expansion of further and higher education has increased the number of women working part-time or full-time. More women are in the workforce than before. The one-and-a-half¹⁴ or dual-earner model is nowadays the norm in many European countries, the dual-earner model amounting to between 40-50% in most EU-countries (Esping-Andersen 2009). At the same time, in recent years, the overall work culture has intensified. The involvement of women in work-life has been a factor in a

¹⁴ The one-and-a-half breadwinner model refers to one full-time working and one part-time working earner within the same family. Part-time work is fairly common in many European countries, albeit nearly non-existent in Finland.

broad societal change in Europe, and it is fair to say that not all the outcomes of that development have been positive. There have been signs of increasing negative effects, ranging from the individual level to the societal level. At the individual level, there are many signs of work-family conflicts, stress among individuals and in difficulties in relationships as well as problems in well-being and individual time-management (see, for example, Grzywacz and Bass 2003; Little, Simmons and Nelson 2007). Moving up to the societal level, a shared problem in much of Europe is low fertility rates. The EU shares economic concerns about competition in the global economy and in the changed structures of the knowledge societies¹⁵. In the light of these various issues, finding the means for the reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities has become even more important.

1.6.1. Welfare regimes

Reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities is a topical question around the world and has been for some time now. This debate is present in Finland both at the national decision-making level as well as in individual companies. However, the differences between countries – or welfare regimes – can be called substantial. The notion of a welfare regime is relevant when discussing the European setting. The welfare regimes have different levels of state policies for reconciling work with family. A frequently used typology by Esping-Andersen (1990) has classified states as Liberal¹⁶, Conservative and Social Democratic and, thus, setting different grounds for social policy. A traditional example of a liberal welfare state regime would be the UK, a conservative one most of the Central- and Southern-European countries and a social democratic regime being found especially in the Nordic countries. Although they have some similar characteristics, this typology has not meant identical social policy systems within the regimes.

Critiques of the typology by Esping-Andersen have been extensive (see, for example, Duncan 2000: 4-6). These include: that the typology has traditionally been gender-blind, that the regimes have been inadequately defined and that they are in change. Central and Eastern European countries have been largely ignored in the typology. Changes have taken place, for example, in the UK, which was previously known to be a liberal welfare regime, and Germany which previously was known to be a conservative welfare regime as these countries have made extensive investments in social policy and moves towards public day-care models since the late 1990s (Lewis 2006: 388), at least until recently.

In spite of this criticism, the typology is a way of roughly mapping Western European countries and obtaining some understanding about the social policy systems of the countries. Welfare states vary in the level of state level policies for reconciling work with care, which also affects the companies operating in these countries (den Dulk 2001). Finland, which is characterised by women's full-time employment and a relatively wide range of state- level social policies with relatively generous benefits for parental leaves allocated from tax revenues, can be seen as social democratic welfare state regime, even if it does in some respects differ from the other Nordic countries, which traditionally represent such a welfare state regime. Some of the differences, such as the previously mentioned full-time employment of women, which is not necessarily

¹⁵ 'Knowledge society' refers to a society where knowledge is a primarily valued product and commodity, instead of, for example, physical labour.

¹⁶ Some liberal regimes are now moving towards neo-liberal models.

the norm in the other Nordic countries and definitely not in countries within the conservative or liberal welfare state regimes, are further discussed in Chapter Four.

In addition, when including gender in the classification of different welfare states, it is possible to see a connection between the national gender equality within a state and the entitlements to organisational work/family support, which affect the individually-perceived satisfactory balance between work and family among managers in a given country (Lewis and Smithson 2001). So the different systems of social and organisational policy do affect societies, organisations and individual lives, and the context one lives in affects the feeling of entitlement to different policies. We also know that the notion of entitlement is gendered; women feel more entitled to take advantage of the work/family reconciliation arrangements than men (ibid.).

Finland remains in the social democratic welfare state regime, because even if the recession in the 1990s did cut the benefits and cut down the services within the public sector, the country has not structurally significantly moved towards a conservative or liberal regime. On the other hand, the country has never fully represented the social democratic model: at the time when the typology indicators were first measured, Finland had not yet properly reached the levels of Sweden and Denmark, the countries used as primary examples for the regime (Julkunen 2001). Further, it could be argued that Finland only reached the Nordic welfare state model in the late 1980s, and that shortly after that the first steps were already been taken to attenuate it (Heiskala and Kantola 2010). It has also been estimated that the gender order positing paid employment of married females has been the foremost 'Nordic' character of Finland, strongly contributing to its social democratic welfare regime development (Anttola and Sipilä 2000). Further similar characteristics to the other Nordic countries are the small, culturally relatively homogenous population and a form of democracy involving a positive relation between the citizen and the state (Hearn 2002: 3).

There are several key features in the Finnish case. Firstly, there is the norm of full-time employment of women, even mothers of relatively young children. Secondly, the free education system guarantees an internationally high ranking education to all children for a minimum of nine years, which secures the relatively high general education level in the country. Thirdly, the structure of the labour market has gradually shifted from a focus on the industrial fields towards a focus on and a stable growth in knowledge society work and a substantial – largely public sector – field of care and education (see Lehto and Sutela 2008: 10-13).

The Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology is used in this research as a tool to understand some of the structural differences between issues of reconciling work with care responsibilities for children in different countries, differences that have long traditions even if the countries geographically are situated close to each other.

Now, as business markets have increasingly been globalising, it is important to understand that issues that are based on shared national values, such as the division of responsibility between state and families, can be especially problematic. The state interference with private domains such as families cannot easily be applied in different cultural contexts with different traditions, values and political structures. The fact that these differences exist as strongly in a context such as the EU is still undermined in EU level politics. This issue will also be further discussed later, in Chapter Five.

2 FAMILY POLICIES

The aim of the following chapter is to discuss and highlight the perspective of national family policies in the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities. My interest here is primarily in societal development in relation to family policies, rather than in the family as an institution. This means that families as units and constructs are not analysed as such, but as users of the national family policies system. The structure of the chapter is the following. After the introduction the interests and stakeholder positions of state family policies are discussed. The family policy system is then presented and further, combined with the history of the national family policy development. At the end of the chapter, prior to the concluding discussion, familialism and re-familialisms are introduced. The introduction of familialism is important, as it to some extent contrasts with the perspective of gender equality, which is discussed later in Chapter Five. Also, (re-)familialistic and de-familialistic turns in the development of Finnish family policies are discussed in this chapter.

2.1. Introduction

To combine paid work and family life is one of the largest challenges of Finnish family policies (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:4). In this chapter the system of Finnish family policies is explained and discussed. Some EU-level comparison is introduced in order for the reader to better understand the specifics of the present context. Even if policy areas such as health care and dental care for pregnant women, children both under school age and at school as well as child protection are often included within the topic of family policies, these are omitted here, as the primary focus in this thesis is on the specific reconciliation of work with the care of children.

In the development of family policies, the political ethos and both past and current views on the family as an institution play an important role in discussions concerning working life and family. An analysis of Finnish post-war social and family policies is needed to fully understand the dimension of family policy and its significance to the research question. How parental leave rights are formed, how maternity, paternal and parental leave allowances are calculated, and the general family policies developed by the government are also important. This is a two-way street: societal development depends on family policies, as well as family policies depending on societal development. The state frames by legislation the choices made by parents and parents contribute with both reproduction of citizens and individual work inputs. The discussions on family policies are developed here by relating it to previous research in family policies, social policies, families and welfare states.

In Finnish society today there is a broad range of different types of families. The focus in this thesis is on families with children. Approximately 40% of families in Finland belong to that cluster (Statistics Finland 2008). What is relevant for this research is not the family form, but the legislation, which in its present state in general recognizes the rights of biological, yet in some cases also legal parents, but vastly ignores the rights of social parents (for a typology, see, for example, Huttunen 2001: 57–65). Thus, this research is not as such interested in the family relations, but focuses on work/family policies that can be used by parents, most often only those defined legally and/or biologically.

In social life, there is no one definition of ‘the family’; there may be a variety of features and forms of family that people consider more typical than others, some also more preferable than others (Weigel 2008). The most frequent family form in Finland in 2008 is the nuclear family with children, with parents of two different sexes – married or registered to each other in over 30% of the cases and co-habiting in a domestic partnership in 8% of the cases. Married or co-habiting couples without children add up to almost 50%. Single-parent families with children amount to approximately 12% of the total amount of family units and are divided in such a way, that mothers with children make up approximately 10% and fathers with children constitute 2%. Registered same-sex couples add up to approximately 0.03%. (Statistics Finland 2010). Single person households are not included in these official statistics. This fact ignores the parents living in single households who, thus, do not officially live with their children. In shared custody, one of the parents household remains as the ‘official home’ of the children. In this sense, the statistics are unable to describe the whole reality. Nor is it calculated whether the marriage or domestic partnership is the first in the life of the family or families, or whether the children are biologically shared or a product of one of the spouses’ previous marriage or partnership. For this work, the focus is on examining the unit of people which has the legal right to take leave from work in order to take care of the child. In the present legislative situation, a shared refrigerator is not enough to class people as ‘family’, even if different forms of shared living and informal exist in great numbers in Finnish society today.

2.2. Families and family policies as stakeholders in work/family reconciliation

Of the 1.4 million Finnish families approximately 590,000 include children. There are approximately 400,000 children under the age of seven (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:16). Even if the share of families with children for some time now had been decreasing (Kivimäki et al. 2003), the effect of the recession shows and more children were born in 2009 than in the past five years (Statistics Finland 2009; Ministry of Social Affairs 2006). Of the families with children, 20% are single-parent families and due to the high divorce rates, different combinations of new families are now also frequent. In addition, the division between those women who remain childless and those who have children is increasing. Some of the women willingly choose to remain childless, and for some, the optimal time for children seems to be all the later in life. The increased number of women obtaining a higher education postpones the time for having children, as does the insecurity of the labour market with increasing part- and fixed-time working contracts (Salmi 2004: 117). The mean age of a woman giving birth for the first time is close to 30 in Finland, thus affecting the number of children both planned and born. At the moment the country has a birth rate of 1.83 per female citizen of fertile age (Lehto and Sutela 2008; Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:4; Statistics Finland 2004), which does not enable the replacement of the population (Kuijsten 2002: 32). In a European comparison, the rate is relatively high, which divides the discussion within the nation; some researchers, politicians and other opinion-builders see the birth rate as all too low, and some see the position among the European top as a result of a successful family policies strategy and are content with the current state. The different opinions on this issue might have a connection to whether one prefers maximum employment or a high birth rate in a society, which further complicates the discussion at the national level. This issue and the competing strategies of re-familialism and de-familialism are both defined and discussed further in the end discussion of this chapter as well as in Chapter Five, where the different perspectives and their interconnections are discussed.

Women's active participation in the labour market has promoted the development of public care for small children as well as labour market legislation on questions regarding the employment security of employed parents (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:12). On the EU level, the Barcelona Council has set a target for the provision of childcare services to reach 33% of the children below the age of three and to reach 90% of the children above three years and up to pre-school age (Lewis et al. 2008: 3). The consequences of this strategy are further discussed later in this chapter.

Different regimes of care can be distinguished, with a division between the public and the private care regimes (see Strell and Duncan 2001; Pfau-Effinger 2005). The Nordic countries, including Finland, predominantly represent public care regimes, even if Finland is said to be receding from it due to its relatively high proportion of children outside of public day-care (see, for example, Wall 2008), which is the result of the in the mid-1980s established home care allowance -system. Reforms in social policies together with the recession years and high unemployment rate in the early and mid-1990s have even in Finland led to small steps toward a more family-centred welfare model (see, for example, Julkunen 2002).

2.3. The family policy system

Finland has been defined as a country of relatively long parental leave and relatively high financial support levels in relation to salaries (Anttonen 2003). For the compensations paid to the parent employee, the employer can apply for their own compensation from the public sector¹⁷.

Finnish maternity leave legislation dates back to 1964. Maternity leave precedes parental leave, lasts for approximately three months (105 days), and has to be taken by the mother. Parental leave lasts for 158 weekdays, and can be divided among the parents according to the parents' joint decision. The division can be done either periodically or by simultaneously shortening the working time and partly being on leave. The level of compensation is based on salary, with a minimum level of approximately 15euros/weekday and is taxable income (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 10-11). Additionally, fathers are entitled to 18 weekdays of paid fathers' leave with an additional bonus of up to 12 days, if the father takes up at least 12 days of parental leave at the end of the parental leave period (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 11).

Even if attitudes seem to be slowly changing, the absolutely clear majority of the care takers still are mothers; in 2005 parental leave was only used by 9.5% of the fathers. Still, the number of fathers taking up parental leave has been continuously rising (Lehto and Sutela 2008: 145; Lammi-Taskula 2007: 145-147; Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 11). Paternity leave is used more frequently; in 2005, as much as 69% of the fathers took up their right to stay at home with the baby (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 11). However, paternity leave is often used at some point during the maternity- or parental leave of the mother. In recent years the governments have begun to promote fathers' role and active participation in different ways, both in staying at home taking care of the baby and in reconciling work with family demands later on. According to Haataja (2004; 2005c: 91-95), fatherhood has been in the focus of the societal level developments during the 1990s. Besides formally increasing the length of the paternity leave and including a bonus with it, if the father additionally takes a part of the parental leave, the attitude campaigns have been represented by leading male

¹⁷ From KELA, the Finnish Social Insurance Institution.

politicians giving statements that are positive towards fatherhood and fathers' role as carers.

After parental leave, the parent employee has the choice of staying on care leave. Care leave is an optional extension to parental leave, giving the parent a legislated choice to remain at home and take care of the child up to 3 years of age, without losing his or her job. Care leave is not compensated by the employer, but the parent receives a monthly compensation for the care from the public sector¹⁸ in the form of the so-called home care allowance; for the child it gives the right to be taken care of in the home by a parent. Home care allowance is considered flat-rate, taxable income (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:15).

It is also possible for the parent employee – or both parents simultaneously – to shorten their weekly or daily working time. This is possible if their period of employment has lasted for at least six months (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 12). This means that parents can choose to take part-time child care leave to reduce their working time until the end of their child's second year of school. Before the reform in 2004, this was only possible for parents of small children (Lehto and Sutela 2008: 32). This reduction is not financially compensated by the employer but the lost wage it is partly compensated by partial home care allowance paid by the public sector (see also Kela 2009). The specific arrangements of the leave must be agreed with the employer.

Either of the parents can stay home and take care of a child (up to 10 years of age) which has fallen ill for a maximum of four days. The employer is not obliged by law to pay salary for these days; in practice, however, some collective labour market agreements secure full salary for the employee even for these sick days (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 12). Of full-time working parents, 80% of the mothers and 68% of the fathers have stayed home with an ill child in 2008 (Lehto and Sutela 2008:146). The gender difference has decreased since the 1980s, when mothers stayed at home twice as much as fathers.

Finnish children have a universal right to day care. A universal right to day care means that the municipality is by law obliged to provide a day care place to a child, either in a municipal or a private day-care institution or through a nanny, whether the parent works or not and also non-dependent upon the parents' wealth or level of income, that is, not on a means-tested basis. The day-care fees depend on the income of the parent(s). Public day care is heavily subsidised in Finland. Of all children, approximately 50% use municipal day care services. Of all children in day care, only 3.5% are in private day care institutions or taken care of by a nanny. Of the children in day care are, almost 80% are in full day care (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 16). Many families use all the alternatives: remain at home on parental leave and for some time on care leave, and then take up a municipal or private sector day-care place for their child(ren). There also is a system of public around-the clock day care for children whose parents work in shifts.

In addition, the responsibility for arranging free-of-charge preschool has existed at the municipality-level from 2001. Since 2004, the morning and afternoon care for first and second graders (approximately 7-8 years of age) is also an obligation for the municipality. The municipalities receive government support for this, but the operative planning and implementation is a municipal responsibility (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 17).

¹⁸ From the Social Insurance Institution of Finland.

For decades, Finland has been a country divided between public day care and the care of small children at home. It is quite justified to talk about opposite camps in debates (see Anttonen 2003; Julkunen 1995:89). This is further discussed in the section on the history of family policies. Finland is a paradoxical country with a high employment rate for women and at the same time a large number of women staying at home taking care of children under the age of three. Even if public/formal child care is extremely important in Finland, as in other Nordic countries, the usage of formal day care is twice as high for pre-school children than for babies and children under pre-school age¹⁹ (Lewis et al. 2008b: 33).

2.4. History of policy development

Family policies have been both built up and heavily cut down in the post-war era in Finland. After World War II, in spite of harsh economic times, Finland invested in developing family policies that would increase the birth rate. In the late 1940s, both universal child benefits and maternity benefits for all mothers were implemented. In 1950, the family benefits totalled 4% of GNP (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:4). After a “baby boom” period in the 1940s, the birth rate has been declining in Finland even though the policies have been developed further. After the 1940s, family policies received less attention until the following reforms in the 1970s, when child allowances were increased. This was done again several times until the beginning of the 1990s. In the 1990s, the real value of child benefits had tripled since the beginning of the 1970s (ibid.). Today, the main support to families is allocated through child allowance and subsidised day-care.

The first law on parental rights for public day care was passed in 1973 (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:5). This was seen as revolutionary and as a big step in the gender equality development and also in equality between children, according to the Nordic social democratic welfare state ideology. The question had already been present from the 1880s and different variations of day care centres (first private and later even public) had already been established then (see for example Anttonen 2003). Workplace nurseries existed in Finland at the time of industrialisation, when factory owners started nurseries in order to get both parents to work. Later on, as a result of the women's movement, public day care was established in Finland. The new law from 1973 was based on gender equality, giving women the possibility to work, and equality between children, diminishing the division between the day care centres for children of families of small means and housekeepers for children of families of greater means, which had been the case still in the 1950s and 60s (see Jallinoja 1994: 185). The law defined day care as a part of social services instead of child protection, as had been the case earlier. In practice, the resources for public day care were totally inadequate, and until the 1980s municipalities could not live up to the requirements of the law. Some municipalities actually paid child home care allowance to families that did not take up a place in public day care. It is still possible for any municipality to pay a municipal bonus to the home allowance, which puts families in different municipalities in unequal positions.

Finnish social policies have since the mid-1970s been more individualising than family-centred (Julkunen 2002). Individual taxation is an example of this. Since the implementation of individual taxation in 1976, a dual-earner model combined with subsidised day care has been more profitable than to have one earner and one care-

¹⁹ Typically six years in Finland.

taking parent. The shift to individual taxation increased the number of married women in the labour force (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 10).

Moreover, the fact that the focus in state family policies has been on the development of the day care system (*ibid.*: 5) illustrates the same trend since the 1970s. Debates have arisen on whether or not Finnish social policies equally serve all Finnish women (Anttonen 2003). Feminists have traditionally been critical towards a family-centred welfare model (*ibid.*). This will be further demonstrated in the concluding discussion and in the concluding framework in Chapter Five.

Most parents of children under school age work full-time, even the mothers of small children (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 5). In spite of this, at the beginning of the 1980s, working mothers of small children were still not fully accepted (Anttalainen 1985). A working mother was not an oddity but the high percentage of the working women with children under school age was a subject of debate. According to Anttalainen (1985), the public discussion placed mothers of small children in a special category, and their right to work outside of the home was questioned. In questions within social and labour policies this group was still easily forgotten, even if women with children made up the majority of the Finnish female labour force in 1980 (*ibid.*). During the 1980s, the public discussion of men and fathers was still relatively moderate.

Even if Finnish women have been working outside of the home relatively early, compared to many other countries, the increase in their employment rate began to decline at the end of the 1980s. Along with the approaching recession, the phenomenon has been explained by the implementation in 1985 of the home care allowance for children under the age of three. The allowance was a result of a debate between those in favour of day care and those in favour of extended parental leaves, in general a debate between the political left and the political right that had occurred already in the 1960s (Tyyskä 1995: 101-116; Julkunen 1994: 197-198). The allowance was a goal of the political right and was already negotiated with the left at the time of the implementation of the universal right to day care in the 1970s. The popularity of the allowance increased rapidly at the beginning of the 1990s but decreased later. The decrease can be explained by two separate reasons. First, the public day care right was expanded and resources were allocated to the public day-care sector which increased its appeal, and secondly, the home care allowance was heavily cut in the mid-1990s during the recession. The home care allowance was cut by approximately 25% of the original level (Bardy, Salmi and Heino 2001: 45). There has been a slight increase in the amount in 2005, approximately ten years after the cut, but the real level of the benefit is still substantially lower than in the 1980s.

The subjective right to day-care has existed since 1990 for all children under the age of three (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006:5). In the early 1990s, Finland faced the most severe recession of the entire 20th century (Nordlund 2003: 83). As a partial result of this, local self-governance, which traditionally has been strong in all Nordic countries, strengthened further, both pushing responsibility to the local level and facilitating it at that level, which also led to mandatory prioritising and cutbacks in the municipal sector (*ibid.*: 77). Further, the increased influence of the non-socialist parties and neo-economic theory created a discourse that identified public sector growth as a problem (*ibid.*: 84). The welfare state survived the early 1990s recession and today faces another challenging period in yet another recession.

According to the Nordic welfare model, social benefits have traditionally been relatively generous and are supported from the national tax revenues. However, the level of the benefits decreased after the recession in the early 1990s. Similarly, in family policies, the frame is the same in all the Nordic countries, even if there are major differences within the five countries; the main idea is that society and all citizens by means of taxes take part of the costs relating to raising a new generation and provide for a number of free services or services subsidised by taxes. These services are provided by municipalities and financed through municipal taxes and government supports of municipality budgets (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 6).

Reforms in family benefits were made in 1994 and 1996 (see, for example, Haataja 2005). In 1994, the main reform was the abolition of tax deductions. This was partly compensated for by an increase in child allowance (see also Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 10). Later, during the recession, child allowance was cut down, and by the beginning of the 21st century the real value of the allowance was lower than at the beginning of the 1990s (*ibid.*). In 1996, the child home care allowance was also heavily cut, yet, on the other hand, the universal right to public day care was broadened. When the subjective day care right was expanded to all children under school age in 1996, it was been considered the peak of the welfare state in Finland (Tuori and Silius 2002). In Finland, social benefits were not raised after the 1990s recession, except for in the very recent years before the latest recession. The rise in 2004 did not yet come close to the real value of the benefits before the cuts. At the beginning of the millennium, Finland was evaluated as being in the lower half of all the (then) EU 15 countries concerning the level of the benefits (Tuori and Silius 2002). The number of families officially defined as living in poverty in Finland doubled (Haataja 2005b).

Since the recession in the mid-1990s, the proportion of women in the Finnish labour market has decreased considerably (Lewis et al. 2008: 24), and the development continued into the 21st century (Haataja 2005c: 88) but the proportion has risen again to some extent during the 21st century (Statistics Finland 2010b). In 2003, 78% of the women without children were in the labour force (Lewis et al. 2008: 24). At the beginning of the millennium, 63.5% of the women with children under the age of seven were working outside of home (Statistics Finland 2003). The corresponding figure in 1989 was 78% (Julkunen 1995: 92). In 2003, of women with children under 12 years, the percentage working outside of the home was 72% (Lewis et al. 2008: 24). These statistics do not, however, include those mothers remaining home with a younger sibling, which might partly explain the high rate even when some of the children have passed the age of three. The levels of female employment remain at well over 70% for women with up to two children under the age of 12, but go down to 56% when the number of under 12-year-old children is three or more (*ibid.*). The development of components of the existing labour force also seems to fit with the rest of Europe, with the slight exception of Denmark (*ibid.*).

The consequences of the 1990s recession for the female-dominated fields and the change in the work culture are some of the possible reasons for this development. In Finland, there have been signs of an increasing number of mothers, and since the recession also fathers (Haataja 2005c: 96, 105), consciously changing their careers in order to have more time with the family. Some researchers also have identified this as a silent rise of more conservative family values and thereby related individual choices in life, opposing the full-time working “norm” in society (Jallinoja 2000). According to some opinions, such as those of the political left, this is a problem both from the labour market perspective and also from a gender-equality perspective as the majority of care-takers are still women.

A change in social policies together with the years of high unemployment rates have led to small steps toward a more family-centred welfare model in Finland (see, for example, Julkunen 2002). Firstly, women have made more family-centred choices in their lives, and secondly, as the public sector cut down its benefits and services for families, families' own responsibility to take care of their members has increased. In the light of this, new career choices may not seem so peculiar.

2.5. Familialism and re-familialism

Familialism is an ideology²⁰ that promotes the family as an institution. This section is not describing the history of the ideology, but focuses on its recent history within the Finnish context. Familialism has also been relevant to the Continental European view on family policy (Esping-Andersen 1995). More generally, in his typology of welfare states, Esping-Andersen identifies familialistic and de-familializing welfare regimes with regard to the role and responsibilities of the state and individual families for their members' welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990). Familialism can also be defined as gendered or de-gendered, according to the family policy system of the specific country; here, Finland could represent a mixed case (Leitner 2003).

The introduction of familialism is important as it to some extent contrasts with the perspective of gender equality, which is discussed later. This would necessarily not be clear if family policy development were discussed without this perspective, as, for example, in some other Nordic countries the gender equality ethos is more strongly integrated in the family policy development. By introducing familialism, the framework discussion in Chapter Five is able to illustrate how the perspectives of familialism in national family policies development and national gender equality strategies interconnect and even clash.

The kind of familialism present in Finland has not been as visible as in the Southern European countries, or countries belonging to the conservative welfare state regime. Rather, it has appeared in some political rhetoric and public opinion exchanges; especially in debates about the most desirable day care alternatives for small children, where familialistic rhetoric and discourses of 'the child's best interest' have emphasised the importance of home (see Takala 2005: 41). This has differed from the Swedish discourse, which has emphasised gender equality and integrity, thus promoting public day care. This is in line with Sweden often being defined as the model country for welfare states with the highest commitment to social and shared responsibility (Tuohela 2000: 491).

The early 1990s recession influenced a change in Finnish society during the end of the 1990s, when the discourse of familialism gained a substantially more political and ideological tone, having a similar development to the women's movement some decades prior, even if these ideologically partly oppose each other (see Jallinoja 2006: 20). But Jallinoja (2006) does make a distinction between the traditional familialism and re-familialism. The phenomenon of the late 1990s was not a return to the past as such; rather the re-familialistic turn developed alongside the gender equal discourse or ideology and offered a choice of returning to the more family-centred model, discussing diverse issues related to work/family reconciliation. The re-familialistic turn of the late

²⁰ According to Jallinoja, familialism should be considered as an ideology, with stay-at-home mothers and good parenting as predominant attributes (2006: 11-15).

1990s in Finland is in line with, or related to, the individual choices of parent employees discussed at the end of the previous sub-chapter (Jallinoja 2006).

2.6. Discussion

Of other European countries, France had a similar policy development to Finland in the early 20th century, with a focus on the child and the mother, whereas the UK and Germany focused their social policies on key breadwinning workers, often males, and treated mothers and children as dependants to these (Thane 2010: 97). As Takala (2005: 27) puts it, the rise of children's rights in Scandinavia was part of the early reduction of patriarchal family structures. Finland was also strongly affected by Alva Myrdal's political activity in the 1930s and the ideology of societal socialising children, regardless of their social background (Galinsky and Swanberg 2000: 60-61). According to Lewis (2006: 387), state policies for reconciling work with family life have been a growth area since the mid-1990s. EU-level development has consisted of parallel developments of social and economic policy, with a clear focus on gender equality since the late 1990s (Lewis 2006b). Further, since the late 1990s, the focus in EU-level work/family reconciliation policies has shifted from trying to provide time for caring towards focusing on formal childcare services (ibid.: 429). This development can be described as proceeding from "re-familialising" to "de-familialising": moving care outside of the family unit towards a public sector care model, as has been the case has been since the 1960s and 1970s in the Nordic countries. Research has also defined the different trends in Finnish care policies as those of "de-familialisation" and "re-familialisation": the extended subjective day care right being an example of the first, and home care allowance being an example of the second (Salmi 2006).

The area of family policies, as well as changes and developments within it, is said to be very much value-driven, and heavily dependent upon the existing institutions and persistent attitudes and behaviours (Lewis et al. 2008b: 3). The purpose of family policies has been to ensure a relatively high birth rate, which seems to have a connection to the financial well-being of families as well as to the subjective feeling of choice in questions of day care alternatives and other work/family reconciliation issues. Research (Lewis et al. 2008: 34) has defined a 'care squeeze' for households with the increasing employment rate for females and the frequent 'long-hours culture' found especially among fathers of small children. This has been the reality in Finland for decades, even if the debate on this is not particularly lively. Still, family policies should take the issue of 'care poverty'²¹, 'care deficit' or 'care squeeze' seriously as it is its own phenomenon with only a partial explanation in economic poverty and a larger connection to the availability of formal care services and the existence of informal networks (Kröger 2005: 229). In Finland, the problem does not lie in the availability of formal day care, but in many cases in the lack of informal networks and distance to relatives. Formal, public sector care has diminished the need to actively build networks and both friends and family may have remained in a different city when moving for work purposes, and full-time working parents have less time to build networks in their local environment (Julkunen 1995:101).

Also at the EU level, the targeted development of moving unpaid care towards day care services and increased female employment is a delicate question, interfering with the intimate area of the family unit and decreasing respect for individual and family unit choices (Lewis et al. 2008: 22). This can be seen as inappropriate. As Lewis et al.

²¹ This is a direct translation of the Finnish concept of 'hoivaköyhyys'.

(2008: 25) suggest, in democratic states policy must respect the citizens' perceived preferences, even if the state may want to modify them.

This chapter has discussed the perspective of national family policies in the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities. The relevance of this to the other parts of the thesis is that this chapter has illustrated one of the three main stakeholder positions, which is directly combined to the second research question:

Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

By then discussing the issues from this chapter in relation to the issues discussed in the two following chapters, gender equality and corporations, a framework is presented in Chapter Five and, at the end of the thesis, an answer to the second research question is provided.

In order to illustrate the structure of the thesis, the perspective and levels discussed in this chapter, the following table is presented. The table is further developed after Chapters Three and Four.

Table 2 Perspectives and levels discussed in this chapter

Perspectives / Levels	Macro level / Society	Meso level / Organisations	Micro level / Individuals
Family policies	Chapter Two, to a large extent	Chapter Two, to a smaller extent	
Gender equality			
Corporate management			

3 GENDER EQUALITY

The aim of the following chapter is to present the second perspective of the three main perspectives that inform and constitute this research, and to illustrate the relevance of gender equality to the question of work/family reconciliation.

The chapter discusses gender equality, the development of formal ways of promoting it, and the outcomes of the more informal ways. After the introduction, the development of formal gender equality, also known as state equality, is presented. After that follows a discussion on men and women in the private and public spheres. Before the concluding discussion, some research and theory with a gender perspective are presented.

3.1. Introduction

Traditionally, the family has often been defined as the woman's domain (Lewis 1996: 4). The target in the EU Lisbon strategy is to have female employment at 60% in all member countries by 2010 (Lewis et al. 2008). Changes in family forms and increasing development towards a one-and-a-half or dual breadwinner model have served to add legitimacy to public sector investments to promote high female employment and, thus, initiatives towards formal day care (Lewis et al. 2008b: 2).

Very often, Nordic countries define gender equality through work life, career opportunities and salaries. Gender equality in Finland has sometimes been regarded as equality between two equal and similar sexes (Hearn et al. 2004). The focus is on gender-neutrality in policies and linguistic gender-neutrality. Furthermore, in the Nordic countries power structures are often disguised by gender-neutralising discourses and practices (Tuori and Silius 2002). By international standards, the Nordic welfare model has been relatively successful in promoting women in higher education, as well as work life in general, and to some career paths comparable to men's.

The Nordic welfare state is strongly based on notions of gender equality and justice (Anttonen 1994: 217). Gender equality has a strong social justification and a long history in Finland. A few years ago, the centenary of female suffrage was celebrated and, in this sense, gender equality has for a long time been a national value. It has had a high priority in the previous and current governments. In the gender-related development index (GDI) by the United Nations, Finland ranked second after Sweden and was followed by two other Nordic countries, Norway and Denmark (UN 2005: 2). It is said that in these countries gender equality and female empowerment are conscious national policies (ibid). Thus, gender equality is an important perspective when discussing reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities in Finland.

Finland is characterised by relatively high gender equality in some formal arenas, such as politics, but inequalities remain in the labour market, especially in the private sector (Hearn and Piekkari 2005: 431-432). Finland is said to present a complex case of social, organisational and societal gender relations, with advancements in some areas and persistent male dominance in others (Hearn et al. 2009: 8). In spite of the seemingly gender equal society, the number of female managers in Finland and the rest of Scandinavia is not significantly higher than in other European countries (Vinnicombe 2000: 11). In addition, other previous research has shown female

managers have been disadvantaged by their gender (Hearn et al. 2009: 54). Men in senior positions are still seen as the self-evident representatives of organisations (Holgersson 2003; Wahl and Holgersson 2001).

3.2. The development of formal gender equality in Finland

Even if the modern welfare state is a post-World War II product, Finnish women's high participation in working life has a long history. Finland remained an agrarian society, with the majority of population working in agriculture until after the World War II (Rantalaiho 1994: 17). In the agrarian society, women worked side by side with men. Women were also already working outside home before World War II (Tuori and Silius 2002). In contrast to women in, for example, the U.S., Finnish women did not leave the labour market after World War II. The transfer of the model of working in agriculture into industrial and post-industrial society has been considered one of the most important factors for women's high participation in paid work (Lehto 1999). Women's employed work was also needed as the country was relatively poor and the war reparations to the Soviet Union were high. It can be said that after this immediate post-war period, there never actually developed a structural or economic space for a male breadwinner model (Julkunen 1999). Additionally, the ideological climate in Finland was encouraging of women's participation in waged work and, from the post-war era to nowadays, Finland has largely relied upon a dual breadwinner model.

The post-World War II social reforms in Finland were based on universal principles of citizen rights, which were not based on family or marital status (Holli 2002). Before the war, the legislation had already defined the position of a woman in a more independent way in relation to men than earlier. In the course of the 20th century, Finnish women gained significant rights as independent citizens in form of the right to own property, vote, and hold public office. In 1864, unmarried women in Finland received authority by law, and in 1929 married women also received authority (Finlands 17 författningssamling). In 1906, universal suffrage was gained. These reforms gave women full citizenship and relative autonomy in relation to men. Further, the early reforms were of great importance to the women's movement. At the same time, in the post-World War II period, society started to take part in the costs of maternity and childcare (Holli 2002: 15).

According to Julkunen (1994: 181), during the latter half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, a new gender contract²² was made. The radical movement of women, together with social democratic politics and labour unions, the extension of welfare state and general nationalisation all played their part in the process. The political left succeeded in monopolising the 'modern', and the waged work of wives and mothers changed from being a social problem to being their right and the basis for their independence and emancipation (Julkunen 1994: 190). In Finland, the development was less systematic than in Sweden, where the welfare state was more systematically used in forming the new gender contract (Rantalaiho 1994: 24). The development also to some extent left out the roles of men, and the care responsibilities of both men and women (ibid.: 24-28). The welfare state reforms continued further, and, in 1976, individual taxation was introduced. Before, a model of family taxation had often made it unprofitable for the family to have two earners. This system, still in use in Finland,

²² Gender contracts and gender orders defining the positions of men and women in a given society will be further discussed later in this chapter.

taxes the subjects individually, using a relatively high progression, according to the Nordic welfare model in a similar way to the other Nordic countries.

The first Finnish Act on Equality was passed in 1987 in order to pay special attention to the rights of the female labour force as well as to influence attitudes in society (Koskinen and Bruun 1986: 17). The Act gives employers and authorities an active duty to promote gender equality. Some amendments have been included later; since 1992, discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and family care responsibilities is prohibited; since 1995, employers with 30 or more employees are obliged to have a gender equality plan; since 1995 official councils and committees have a gender quota ensuring the proportion of both genders is at a minimum of 40% (Law on Gender Equality, Finlex). The law has been revised and strengthened most recently in 2005 (ibid.). Also, the gender, or equality, contract that was made in the 1960s and 1970s has, however, been weakened by the 1990s recession and the political power of neo-liberalism²³.

3.3. Women and men in the public and private domains

In Finland, women make up a slight majority (50.6%) of the total labour force (Lehto and Sutela 2008). The share has been growing since the late 1960s. Between the 1960s and the 1980s the public sector expanded heavily and 83% of the growth in the workforce was by women (Julkunen 1999, cited in Tuori and Silius 2002). In the middle of the 1980s, the share of women of the total labour force was 48% (Anttalainen 1985). As we can see, the share is slightly lower than today. The deep recession of the 1990s led to severe cuts in services and benefits and growing unemployment. The retrenchments of the public sector especially affected the (un)employment of women. Currently, as the country is trying to recover from yet another recession, the total unemployment rate in Finland is approximately 9.5% (Statistics Finland 2010c).

After the 1990s recession, the unemployment rate has decreased more slowly among women than among men (Tuori and Silius 2002). It seems that the female-dominated economic fields recovered more slowly after the 1990s recession. This led to, or was strengthened by, increased indirect discrimination against women of fertile age in the labour market, as well as a for a long time thereafter an increasing trend for insecure and fixed-time working contracts (Lehto and Sutela 2008: 33-39). Discrimination may take place both in the recruitment process, giving an advantage to a male applicant, who still relatively seldom in the present situation in the Finnish society causes additional 'inconvenience' and employer costs in form of costs related to parental leave²⁴. Additionally, by preferring fixed-time working contracts, employers – in the female-dominated fields, paradoxically most often the public sector – often in practice mean the employer can avoid costs related, for example, to parental leave.

²³ This generalisation arises from Duncan's (2000: 13) comments on the situation in Sweden, given that the recession was even deeper in Finland and that the cutbacks in the public sector had heavy consequences for female employment, the recovery of which took most of the 2000s, and given also the rise of the political centre-right, both in Sweden and in Finland.

²⁴ These costs consist of vacation compensation to the employee on leave, the recruitment costs of a possible substitute as well as in many cases a one to three month salary for the employee on leave, which is stipulated in the labour market agreements and cannot be claimed from the Social Insurance Institution, the instance through which the maternity – and parental leave benefits are paid from the national tax revenues. (See, for example, Johansson et al. 2007:48).

Much can be said about the wage gap between men and women. According to Acker (2009: 448), an unjustified gender wage gap is partly a result of the unjustified categorisation and classification of jobs and tasks. Also, the Finnish labour market is heavily segregated (Lehto and Sutela 2008: 10-17; Hearn et al. 2009: 5). These lead to gendered career prospects. Indeed, the career prospects of potential or actual mothers seem to be worse than those of fathers. The relative level of wages is the highest among young fathers – being even a bit higher than the male median wage – and the lowest among mothers (Johansson et al. 2007: 47). Women without children have a lower median wage than males with and without children, but higher than the women with children. The wage level development for the childless women was positive, but it was negative for the women with children (ibid.). Having been on family leave has a negative effect on the mothers', but not on the fathers' wage development (Johansson et al. 2007: 59-60).

A small part of the explanation for the negative effect on the mothers' wage development seems to be that mothers tend to work shorter hours; and on fathers' part that the family leaves they take are still very short (ibid.). Another small part of the explanation of women's lower wages is that women take up more sick-days than men, based both on their own illness and that of their children (ibid.: 67). Further, other research confirms that the use of temporary care leave is felt to be more difficult to fit into the everyday routines at the workplaces than family leaves (Kupiainen et al. 2007: 110), which also affects mothers' workplaces more as long as mothers are the primary carers. This seems to be changing regarding temporary care leaves, as fathers increasingly stay home with their children who have fallen ill (ibid.: 111). But to sum up, the long parental leaves used by mothers remain one of reasons for the wage gap between male and female employees (Kupiainen et al. 2007: 69; Lilja et al. 2007: 120).

The paradox of women's two roles is twofold. First, parallel discourses define a working mother as 'normal' and 'something respected'; she is also responsible for the social problems of her children; and the stay-at-home mother is defined as 'unselfish' but 'nothing especially respected' (Julkunen 1995:89-90). So, the expectations on women are multiple, contrasting and competing. Second, and on the other hand, those in favour of formalised solutions see women's engagement in working life as being crucially influenced by the way in which the welfare state conceptualises care work in paid or unpaid, public or private (León 2005: 217). This clearly shows in comparisons between countries in different welfare state regimes and with different kinds of gender contracts and orders.

In Finland, the dual breadwinner- and dual carer-model are widely practiced and supported by both men and women (Lammi-Taskula 2007: 50). The dual carer-model was innovatively introduced as early as in the 1960s (Julkunen 1994: 192). In practice, women have still remained the primary carers: while experiencing inequalities in working life, women still seem to hold the hegemonic power of motherhood in households (Lammi-Taskula 2007: 158). This means that as women still are seen as primary carers they also take most of the family leaves.

The concept of care was briefly discussed in the introductory chapter of the thesis. In striving towards gender equality, the question of care has remained difficult to resolve, as Western individual citizen rights, freedom and autonomy do not recognise care as a dependency that the society needs to address (Anttonen 1994: 217). A child has, according to United Nation's *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the right to receive care. Adults lack this formal right. Still, care takes place both in private and public spheres, ranging from formal care to informal peer support or other ways of showing

empathy (Bowlby et al. 2010). Helping behaviours with a concern for the welfare of others are often combined with female gender roles (Kark and Waismel-Manor 2005: 898). Thus, women are seen as primary carers, both within and outside organisations (Bowlby et al. 2010: 4-8). To reconcile or balance between work and family is still a more relevant question for women than for men (Salmi 2004: 5).

3.4. Feminist theories and epistemologies

This section moves from explaining societal gender equality development to the more general epistemological positioning of feminist theories, and how such theories figure within organisation studies. This is necessary both as a review of previous research, and in order to understand how a perspective of gender equality and feminist epistemologies interconnect and affect society and the organisational field in theory and practice.

There is a very wide variety of feminist theories ranging from liberal feminist and Marxist feminist to post structural and post-modern feminists (Calás and Smircich 2006). Feminist theories have been used in organisation studies to highlight problems in corporations in both theory and practice (Kanter 1977; Hearn and Parkin 1983). These gendered forms of analysis are also crucial at the level of organisational and corporate policy and practice. Today, the problems are brought up from a point of view of, not just women, but those representing “the other(s)” in organisations (Calás and Smircich 2006:213). ‘Otherness’ can, besides gender, be experienced based on for example ethnicity. Feminist theories are several, and they differ from each other and often overlap in some areas (see, for example, Hearn and Parkin 2003: 128). The basic assumption of male dominance in social arrangements and a will to change this is, however, shared. Feminist theoretical perspectives are almost always critical discourses and also always have a political aspect (ibid.), *even if the form and character of critique varies according to different strands and positions* (Hearn and Parkin 2003: 131). The focus in this work is on Nordic and European analysis of relations, with some comparison to the Anglophone world, as there are some recurring issues in gender analysis of organisations, as well as also substantial differences in, for example, gender contracts between different countries and parts of the world.

Gender contracts and orders have already been mentioned in several parts of this chapter. These discussions draw upon the ideas of Hirdman (1988) who conceptualised the notion of gender system (‘genussystemet’) in terms of two overarching rules that resembles theorising on patriarchy. Firstly, almost all areas of life are gendered, divided into male and female regimes; and secondly, in this division lies a hierarchy, where male is the norm and female is subordinated to that. The ‘gender contract’ is said to operationalise the gender system in specific situations and in specific contexts; also it is said to be equally important to societal development as the contract between capital and labour and the power divisions within them, as well as actually being connected to them (Duncan 2000: 12, 15).

According to Duncan (2000: 12), development of the ‘gender contract’ requires an expressed commitment to gender equality by the welfare state. Further, he states (2000: 15) that welfare state systems reflect pre-existing gender cultures, using Finland with its gender culture and the development of day-care as an example. He concludes, drawing upon a critical realist framework, that the position of women in welfare states is the outcome of both the welfare state regime and the gender contract (ibid.: 15). On the other hand, he states that women’s roles are not only defined by spatial divisions of

labour, but by people's own gendered expectations, demands and negotiations, informed by the labour markets as well as people's own networks and social relations (ibid.: 20). Almost two decades ago, Lewis (1992) had already called for a 'universal caregiver' model, where men would take on more responsibility of the informal care work, which would dismantle the opposition between breadwinning and care giving. However, in many countries, women still play a crucial role in building and maintaining social networks and conducting informal care work (see, for example, Bracke et al. 2008). This was also illustrated for the part of the Finnish context discussed in the previous sections.

Duncan (2000: 2) discusses inequality as spatial processes with different outcomes depending on the context, but he also rejects 'spatial determinism', in which the social processes are almost solely dominated by the context (ibid.: 3). He draws from critical realist views, saying that spatial differences are socially constituted and also constituted by processes in the 'natural' world, but that there is no pre-given natural or absolute space which structures society (ibid.: 3). Further, he states that the poststructuralist critique is correct in its critique of structuralism and its notion of a socially constructed 'truth' without acknowledging the subjectivity in interpreting that 'truth', but incorrect in downplaying the effect of socio-spatial structures.

According to Kark and Waismel-Manor's definition (2005:892), '*gender is a complex set of social and power relations enacted across an array of social practices ranging from formal policies and procedures to informal patterns of everyday social interaction within organisations.*' Further, differences between men and women are socially constructed, reconstructed and sustained through social processes and systems of power relations, which exist in the gendered substructure of organisations and gender subtext within them (Acker 1990; Benschop and Doorenwaard 1998; Calás and Smircich 2006; Lämsä et al. 2007).

Gender structures in and of organisations are often presented as gender-neutral while they are, in fact, gendered and in themselves forms of gendering (Hearn et al. 2009: 66). Acker (2006: 443) has defined inequality regimes, which are the loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in continuing inequalities within work organisations. Further, she defines inequality in organisations as systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes. It can also be argued that organisations are doubly gendered (Hearn and Parkin 2003: 128-129). Firstly, public domains and organisations, and activities therein, are dominantly valued more highly than private domains. Secondly, within organisations there are gendered structures, processes and practices; internally organisations are gendered as in distribution of male and female members and the division and distribution of gendered practices.

Organisational structures are often discriminatory (see, for example, Kanter 1977; Acker 1990, 2006; Hearn 1996, 2005, 2009; Lewis 1996; Husu 2001; Collinson and Hearn 2005). The dominant group (representing white, non-disabled, heterosexual males) often from a recognised or unrecognised fear of the own position in the dominant group to be disadvantaged, opposes to activities including members of the subordinated groups (Hearn 1996: 612). In addition, the mobilized interests of the dominant class often outweigh the interests of those oppressed and are maintained through organisational patterns and processes (Acker 2006: 455). Previous research has shown that these complicated motives on the part of (in particular) white men can hinder organisational change, even when top management is supporting such change (ibid.). The whole question of subordination and dominance has remained a strongly

political area, though, according to Mills (2003: 331), focusing on discrimination of women might actually reinforce the notion of women as 'others'; additionally, the deconstruction of women (and men) may undermine the political agenda of addressing gender discrimination in organisations, which could require more specific focusing. So, this is a delicate area requiring a balance of identification and focusing, yet reinforcing the positive structures and practices.

Gender is 'done' or enacted in organisations by producing and reproducing socially constructed and gendered patterns. At the same time, power is 'done' by producing and reproducing the patterns of dominance and subordination (Lorber 2005: 242). 'Doing gender' also affects gendered self-identity and gendered social structures (ibid: 243). The 'doing of gender' is visible in everyday practices and activities at workplaces, showing how gendered assumptions steer our behaviour.

Combining care responsibilities together with the image of the 'ideal worker' is often problematic (Acker 1990). According to Acker, the 'ideal employee' does not have any obligations outside the organisation; the norm of the 'ideal employee' follows the image of a person totally dedicated to the work, who puts in long hours and has no responsibilities for children or family demands other than breadwinning (Acker 2006: 448). This norm may be presented in organisational contexts as abstract and neutral (Benschop and Dooreward 1998: 6), but traditionally, this norm is very masculine; and because women still have more obligations outside of work than men do, the gendered organization of work maintains gender inequality in organizations (Acker 2006: 448.). Somewhat similarly, Williams (2000: 113) also criticises the design of work as discriminating towards women and supportive towards the male 'ideal worker' norm, free from domestic obligations, thus requiring the elimination of the 'ideal-worker norm' in family entitlements (ibid: 5). One of her solutions would be a move to a combination of paid work and care-giving in mutual respect and a shared economy within a parent couple (as indeed sought in Nordic contexts). Further, she sees gender as 'unbending' as it intertwines gender roles with attractive ideals (ibid: 246). As a still dominant ideal in the US- context, she presents "domesticity", the (US) gender system since the 1980s, which comprise both market work and family work, but based on the 'ideal worker' norm, and, thus, seeing paid (white- or blue collar) work as the man's domain and care work at home as the woman's domain (ibid: 1) This marginalises women to a life without substantial roles of public responsibility and authority (ibid.).

Even if de-gendering terms are used in relation to work-life balance issues, the assumption of most managers and employees still seem to be that these issues are linked to female employees with families (Smithson and Stokoe 2005: 164). Inequality is supported by beliefs and identities present in all organisations (Acker 2006: 444). They are not necessarily visible; also non-events create discrimination and inequality by exclusion (Husu 2001). 'Macho motherhood' is widely performed in order for the mother employee to be accepted in the core of the organisation and in order to avoid the 'mummy track' and backlash (Smithson and Stokoe 2005:164). After all, 'mummy tracks' and perpetuated gender inequalities can easily be created if organisations offer part-time work and career breaks without simultaneous and substantial work on the organisation culture and questioning of existing systems, structures and male biases in them (Lewis 1996: 7).

In social constructionist feminism, as well as various other feminist perspectives, the family and the notion of a 'good woman' who physically and emotionally cares for family members are, alongside work organisations, major structures maintaining gender differences (Lorber 2005: 251). For example, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1989,

2000) has in her studies observed dual-earner couples' use of time in and outside of organisations, and has concluded that the women studied in the U.S. put substantially more time into housework and childcare than men. Similar results have also been concluded by many others, also in Finland (Lehto and Sutela 2008: 152).

Hochschild (2000) also discusses the culture of long hours, which women are less able than men to commit to, as long as they also manage the 'home-shift' (see also Kark and Waismel-Manor 2005: 907). On the other hand, according to Duncan (2000:19), the renegotiation of gender roles within households seems to have little to do with the female partner entering the labour market, but follows more the cultural redefinitions of, for example, parenthood. But Kark and Waismel-Manor (2005) conclude that the 'long hours' culture can be also questioned in terms of productivity. Depending on the kind of work that people do, they may invest long hours but accomplish little during these hours, whereas others might stay shorter hours but work more intensely during that time (p. 907). Still, during these hours, networks are established. Women who are not able to stay for the long hours may have limited access to these networks, which may in turn limit their abilities to take part in the political activities of the organisation, or taking advantage of the more informal opportunities (ibid.: 907). Recruitment through social networks further maintains gender (as well as other) inequalities in organisations (Acker 2006: 450). Interestingly, the EU has a directive for working hours, giving a maximum not to be exceeded, but this seems to remain very distant from organisational praxis and culture.

From a post-structuralist position, Weedon (1987) refers to the 'patriarchal structures' of society and suggests that they exist in institutions and social practices (pp. 2-3). By 'patriarchal structures' is meant that women's interests are subordinated the interests of men, and also that the social roles of men and women are different and defined in relation to the male 'norm'. Women are subjected to social relations and processes in different ways than men are (ibid.: 8). This can be seen in the division of labour both inside and outside of the organisation, even to some extent in social and political improvements made over the last decades, as they have originally been instituted to serve male interests. Hence, unveiling the policies and social practices as well as showing competing perceptions of 'realities' combined with the social interests behind them are important in promoting gender equality in organisations.

Organisations also face gendered dynamics that evolve into power relations and contribute to structuring and re-structuring inequality between the men and the women in organisations, not least through the competing 'realities' and social interests. These dynamics interact with, and support, each other (Kark and Waismel-Manor 2005: 908). Even if men still are overwhelmingly dominant in management (Acker 1990; Hearn and Parkin 2003; Hearn and Piekkari 2005: 434), it is also up to women themselves to step up and take responsible agency for 'gender change' (ibid.: 449).

3.5. Discussion

Some but not all of the previous research on work/family reconciliation has had a strong feminist agenda. Some such research has been conducted within gender studies and drawing on feminist theories and epistemologies. This is of course unsurprising as the questions within the area of work/family reconciliation have been viewed as questions that women have had to deal with in practice. Analyses of such questions should therefore involve gender awareness. Further, during the last thirty years, feminist movements and some feminist theories have had a noticeable impact on

contemporary cultural analyses and organisation studies (see, for example, Calás and Smircich 2006: 212). However, surprisingly, relatively few researchers have striven to add a critical, feminist analysis of the institutional frames, such as gender equality and family policies, and their relations to each other to prevailing 'mainstream' research approaches.

How the questions of work-family reconciliation are addressed varies, even within gendered perspectives. Research has, for example, looked at different types of welfare states and 'gender contracts' and their connections to the perceived entitlements to support for work and family life (Lewis and Smithson 2001). Others (Lyness and Kropf 2005) have developed a model suggesting that the degree of national gender equality is an important contextual variable positively related to organisational work-family support. Research has also shown that in welfare state regimes with more egalitarian gender contracts and, thus, a more extensive statutory basis for work-family leaves, there are fewer organisation-level initiatives for work-family support (den Dulk 2001: 190-192). An egalitarian gender contract, thus, has effects both on the macro level, creating a beneficial climate for developing the statutory basis for family leave, and on the individual level, by enforcing the sense of entitlement to take up leave. The connection to the organisational level is less clear. However, it seems that in a context with an egalitarian gender contract, the state-level policy frame is relatively strong, leaving thus more space for organisations to remain passive. Thus, the level of the national gender equality and gender contracts does also play a central role at a very practical level and in the everyday life of people, both men and women.

The development of welfare states and gender contracts have had their specific features, yet in some respect they have shared patterns among different 'regimes'. The combination of a relatively egalitarian gender contract and a 'strong' socialist or social democratic welfare state model is found by many researchers (see Chapters Two and Three). Capitalism and neo-liberalism are seen as threats to gender equality (see, for example, Duncan 2000). This division is in many ways also connected to the discussion around 'public' and 'private' sectors and domains. This is both in the sense of public sector and political top-down initiatives to rule for increased gender equality with help of quotas in political decision-making bodies and boards of state-owned companies; and, on the other hand, the private sector where careers and structures still remain stubbornly gendered (see for example Hearn et al. 2009: 4-5; Hearn and Piekkari 2005: 431-432). The private and public sector initiatives, or lack of them, also have an effect on both the public and the private domains in people's lives at the same time.

Discussions around the threats to gender equality remain divided between the top-down public sector steered and more (actualised) gender equal; and, the market liberal, non-state-regulated and more (actualised) gender unequal. Thus, the question of gender equality is highly political. Furthermore, the division and connection is also relevant to the discussion of people's public and private domains and whether or not individuals are steered by directives, legislation, strong recommendations and ideologies in questions that affect the family unit, such as in questions concerning care of children. The Lisbon strategy (Lisbon strategy 2000; Lewis et al. 2008) is a powerful measure to steer the whole of the European Union towards a system more similar to the Nordic welfare state model with a strong social-democratic ideology of working women and a tradition of formalised care.

Questions and measures of gender equality are politically sensitive. Moreover, even if the overarching goals are agreed, there might be different routes to achieve them. In addition, it can be a generational issue, as the same rules that applied in the golden

days of women's movement in the 1960s do not seem to apply anymore. There has been a change of mental positions during the past 40 years and many young women think differently than their mothers or grandmothers did; they feel individually capable, do not feel discriminated against and do not regard state-led feminism as central to their perceived equality (Tarkki and Petäjaniemi 1998: 72). On the other hand, given what has been said earlier in this chapter, this development might also be connected to the rise of neo-liberal values and individualism, and function as a critique directed towards the mission of the Nordic welfare state after the recession of the 1990s and during the ongoing new recession.

This chapter has explained how gender equality is implemented in the Finnish context as well as in international research. The development of formal ways of promoting gender equality in Finland has been described, and the outcomes of the more informal ways have been discussed. A section has analysed men and women in the private and public domains and sectors and the relation that state equality has with these representations. Before the concluding discussion, the central research on gender and organisations was presented. This chapter illustrates the second of the so-called 'institutional stakeholders' of this research. The relevance of the chapter to the other parts of the thesis is that this chapter has illustrated one of the three main stakeholder positions, which is directly combined with the second research question²⁵. By then discussing the issues from this chapter in relation the issues discussed in the previous chapter and the following chapter, family policies and corporations, a framework is presented in Chapter Five and, at the end of the thesis, an answer to the second research question is provided.

A table illustrating the structure of the thesis, the perspective and levels discussed in this chapter and the previous one, is presented here and then further developed after Chapter Four.

Table 3 Perspectives and levels discussed in this chapter and the previous chapter

Perspectives / Levels	Macro-level / Society	Meso-level / Organisations	Micro-level / Individuals
Family policies	Chapter Two, to a large extent	Chapter Two, to a smaller extent	
Gender equality	Chapter Three, to a large extent	Chapter Three, to a large extent	Chapter Three, to a small extent
Corporate management			

²⁵ Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

4 WORKING LIFE AND BUSINESS CORPORATIONS

This chapter introduces the third and final main perspective adopted in this research. The aim of the chapter is to illustrate some of the relevant questions concerning working life and reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities. This chapter does not specifically focus on state-level statutory family policies, but rather on the corporate-level policies on work/family reconciliation and what explains their development in different contexts. This perspective is informed by institutional theory, which is also discussed in the end of this chapter. The chapter begins with a short introduction; then some national and contextual differences are illustrated. The chapter then continues by raising some topical issues on changes in the working culture and structures, then moves on to examine changing values towards work, and, further, considers issues related to management. After separately discussing how these issues are relevant to work/family reconciliation, the focus is shifted to theory, reflecting on the ways in which institutional theory can be of assistance in analysing questions of work/family reconciliation policies.

4.1. Introduction

Work-family balance is said to be at the core of issues central to human resource development (Grzywacz and Carlson 2007: 456). As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the discourse of work-life balance is often based on a neo-liberal assumption of individual's free choice. Thus, it is important to shift the focus from a psychological level to a level of social and societal constructs in order to decrease the risk of reducing the issue of work-family balance to an individual problem resulting from individual's unsuccessful choices (ibid.: 466).

Even if managing work/life balance is often seen as an individual question, for the corporate management it is both an operational and a strategic question to deal with. The work/life-balance-arrangements of employees can involve costs and investments of both a direct and indirect kind but they also are an important part of human resource management. Additionally, it is a general management question of offering flexibility at work, holding on to HR assets and motivating employees.

In strategic human resource management, work-family policies have been noticeably excluded (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000: 1107). Still, the effect of having 'bundles' of policies to help employees reconcile their work and care responsibilities has proved to have a positive effect on corporate-level performance (see, for example, ibid.: 1114). Furthermore, 'bundles' of policies and practices have in other research also been defined as 'packages' or combinations of facilities (den Dulk 2001: 12). Benefits or policies that are not yet institutionalised across organisations can make the employees – both present and potential – feel privileged and affect the way they view the organisation (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000: 1108). The existence of sets of work-family policies (or 'bundles' of work/family policies) can create value for the firms, but they may also be a source of sustained competitive advantage (ibid: 1108), as the bundles can include social factors which can be company-specific and, thus, be hard to imitate.

Many employers use family-friendly policies as an important attraction and retention strategy (Batt and Valcour 2003). The development of corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities can also be seen as "practical responses" to recruiting and retaining the workforce (Poelmans et al. 2003). Additionally, previous studies

conducted in Anglophone countries suggest that companies might be using so-called family-friendly policies for their symbolic value (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002; Bardoel and Waters 2006). Studies have concluded a positive correlation between flexibility increasing policies and employee or organisational performance (Dex, Smith and Winter 2001; Eaton 2003). However, in countries such as Finland with a relatively wide legislative frame on work/family reconciliation companies have been able to remain relatively passive and only adjust to state-level policies.

4.2. National and contextual differences arranging and developing work-family reconciliation in working life

Previous research has established that US corporations have maintained their management practices in their European subsidiaries but have locally adapted there to more employee-friendly human resource policies (Bloom, Kretschmer and Van Reenen 2006). In research on the transferability of human resource policies, the strategies for reconciling work and childcare responsibilities have gained little attention (Ayca 2005). A challenge for multinational corporations is seen in developing corporate human resource policies with sufficient room for local differences (Bardoel and de Cieri 2006).

Even so, the development of and the motives for corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities in the Nordic welfare state context have been quite different when compared to the Anglophone world (see for example Lewis and Lewis 1996). According to Scheibl and Dex (1998), one of the strongest motivations to develop family-friendly policies in the Anglophone countries has been concerns regarding skill shortage. Corporate involvement in family-friendly provision in, for example, UK and Australia in the 1990s is noteworthy, as it represents a change in values for the corporate world towards a direction that is, in this respect, less market-centred than before (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the major streams of explanations for corporate level development of family-friendly policies are often more or less connected to company productivity, directly or through, for example, societal legitimacy and employee commitment (Cook 2004). According to Davis and Kalleberg (2006), companies with less company-specific skills are less likely to develop 'family-friendly' practices, as companies minimise costs and employees are more easily replaceable, whereas companies that are dependent of specifically skilled workforce might develop 'family-friendly' policies and practices in order to recruit and retain these people.

In the Anglophone world the development of so-called family-friendly policies has generally been corporate-led (Scheibl and Dex 1998), whereas in the Nordic countries the development has been state-led, dating back to the post-World War II period. Even if these corporate policies were originally developed to enable women with children to enter the labour-market, the rationale has gradually changed from focusing solely on women to even meeting the needs of male employees and a wider range of responsibilities (*ibid.*). It has also been concluded that the adoption of corporate work-life policies in the US and other Anglophone countries often results from governmental coercion (Cook 2004).

In the Anglophone world, the gender division of the employees often indicates the level of company policies for reconciling work with family (Davis and Kalleberg 2008). Even if some previous research has found no gender differences in perceived conflict between the obligations at work and care responsibilities at home it has, however, been concluded that women working in organisations that value results, accomplishment of

assignments and performance improvement prefer non-financial means of reward²⁶ such as flexibility in organising ones work (Nikadrou et al. 2008). We also know that previous research has acknowledged connections between different welfare state models, gender-contracts and expectations of policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities (Lewis and Smithson 2001) or between the existence of the policies and observed differences depending on socio-political contexts between countries (Lyness and Kropf 2005; den Dulk 2001).

The main reasons for developing state and corporate level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children concern the national legal and cultural context and the level of the state influence in the family sphere; female employment and the social division of care (see Esping- Andersen 1990; den Dulk 2001; Lewis and Smithson 2001; Lyness and Kropf 2005). Companies operating in these different national contexts are partly products of their own organisational culture, and partly they respond to their local national and corporate environments (Aycan 2005; de Cieri and Bardoel 2006; Bloom, Kretschmer and Van Reenen 2006). Consequently, while there are substantial differences between the companies in different countries, they are also to be found within the same country.

As already mentioned, in some other Western countries, with a different welfare state regime and less state-level policies on reconciliation of work and care responsibilities, the responsibility for arranging employee reconciliation of work and care responsibilities relies on the individual or the company. For example, according to Davis and Kalleberg (2006), most U.S. employees lack access to any family-friendly benefits. There are also differences on the European level: flexible working practices are more common in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands and job sharing is more common in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands than elsewhere (Harker 1997: 49). The differences can also be summarised in a comparison of different welfare regimes: large Swedish employers offer more flexible work arrangements than representatives of non-Social Democratic welfare regimes; Dutch employers offer more childcare than do representatives of different welfare regimes and representatives of both traditionally liberal and traditionally conservative regimes focus mainly on leave arrangements (den Dulk 2001: 192). In spite of contextual differences, three consistent and global barriers to the reconciliation of work and personal lives have been identified: lack of flexible work policies and practices, the availability and affordability of dependent care, and the negative impact of work overload and long working hours (De Cieri and Bardoel 2006).

From all this, we can draw the conclusion that there are several different possible reasons for companies to adopt policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children. Some of the explanations suggest that policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children enable a competitive advantage in recruitment and retention of staff. However, all these studies are looking at very specific settings and cannot directly be translated into the Nordic welfare state setting, for example in Finland.

²⁶The organisational division in this study was based on three cultural dimensions in a project (GLOBE) measuring organisational culture (House et al. 2004) in its part based on Javidan's (2004) levels of performance orientation in an organisation.

4.2.1. *The context for companies in Finland*

In Finland, work-family reconciliation issues are in some cases a part of labour policy negotiations. Finland with its strong steering of social and labour law, as well as strong labour union and other lobbying representations (Nousiainen 1989: 97), the Finnish state creates a range of policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children in form of available and affordable care. The pluralistic corporatism represented by trade unions and other lobby organisations has traditionally taken form in close, even institutionalised relations between the organisations and governmental institutions (ibid: 115). Tripartite income political negotiations between the state, the employer organisations and the employee trade unions have been very important in the Finnish context since the late 1960s (ibid: 117), including issues related to the welfare state, such as economy, employment, retirement, taxation and social policy, until very recent years. In line with the neo-liberalist ethos, the agreements are lately advocated at the more local and sector-bound union level, and even organisational level. Still, collective labour market agreements remain strong and some of the flexibility is negotiated through collective labour market parties.

The overall development in Finnish union activity has been relatively stable since the post-World War II period; in international comparison Finland traditionally scores relatively high in both union coverage rate and density rate (Golden, Wallerstein and Lange 2008: 182). There has in later decades been an expansion of white-collar workers in unions, and they have seemed to prefer their own white-collar organisations to the traditional blue-collar unions (ibid: 193)

For individual companies, money and short term economic revenues most often are the most dominant in business planning. This also relates, for example, to questions of work-family reconciliation and costs for employee parental leave. Even if the Social Insurance Institution of Finland compensates the employer for costs due to employee parental leave, the question of employer cost is a difficult one to take up in the income policy negotiations. The costs referred to by employers include costs for training and retraining, the cost of recruitment, costs of replacement, and costs of maintaining benefits. Naturally, the question is of interest for the different employer fields and also to a great extent a political question. In the current situation the employers of the female employees on maternity leave and, thus, female-dominated fields are paying the bill. However, the male-dominated fields can have special insurance costs for physical labour and are therefore not keen on receiving further cost (see, for example, Statistics Finland 2007). Further costs and implications related to employee family issues are not only absence from work due to illness and family problems, but also conflicting regimes of work and family on the individual level affecting each other and thereby also the whole work environment (or the individual's family unit) in a positive or a negative way.

The economic aspects are crucial to understand in managing employee work-family reconciliation at the corporate level. As many of the regulations come to the companies as a directive from 'above' they do not need to be more active than they choose to be. Reconciliation of work and family as a corporate-level issue is still relatively new in Finland, and corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities remain relatively underdeveloped in Finnish companies (Kivimäki and Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta 2003, Piensoho 2006).

The following sections present relatively recent changes in working culture. These are shared by many Western nations, and the ones included in this thesis are considered to be of key importance for both the research topic and the present context. The following sections discuss issues both in a European context, and at times also more specifically from a Finnish perspective.

4.3. Changes in working culture

Work overload and long working hours seem to be a global problem without an easy solution. In Europe, especially Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, the UK, Ireland and Spain have established a long-hours working culture, especially for fathers (Lewis 2008: 27). In the Nordic countries, too, a quarter of employee fathers belong to the group of long-hours workers (*ibid.*). All and all, according to previous research, fathers of small children in UK contribute to most of the overtime-hours (Dermott 2006).

In addition, a difference between childless workers and those with children can be distinguished; employees without children are seen as more flexible workers who can devote themselves to job demands with long hours and their personal career aspirations and prospects in a way that parent employees are not able to do (Schultze and Tyrell 2002: 80). Given the societal development of increased childlessness (see Chapter Two on Family policies), the continuation of this thinking increases the division of the workforce into two different categories, not men and women, but the childless and those with children.

4.3.1. Dual-breadwinners

Across the EU, approximately 30% of the households with children under 15 are dual full-time working households (Lewis 2008: 27). Further, according to other research, the dual breadwinner model is dominant in many European countries: almost 70% of all couple households in Sweden and between 40-50% in most EU countries (Esping-Andersen 2009). Comparing Finland and Sweden, there is a clear difference between working mothers of small children: in Sweden 75% of mothers of under-7-year-olds were working in 2003, whereas the corresponding figure in Finland was 65% (Haataja 2006: 70). For mothers of children over 7-years-old, the figure is approximately 85% in both countries. These figures include both part-time and full-time working, which explains some of the difference: Swedish mothers work more part-time than Finnish mothers, who return from their longer leave back to full-time employment. According to other comparisons, Finland has the most full-time dual-earner families with children under 15 in Europe, with a share of approximately 60% (Lewis 2008:28). Finland is followed by Denmark, Sweden and Portugal. The top position of Finland in this respect is based on the fact that Finland has a long tradition of full-time employment of women and the so-called dual-breadwinner model. The amount of part-time work in Finland is very small, smaller than in the other Nordic countries (Kivimäki et al. 2003). This partly explains the differences in the numbers of working women; even if Finnish mothers tend to stay home longer with the children, they then return to full-time employment. The dual-breadwinner model has recently become more common in much of the rest of the Western world, but in many countries the one-and-a-half breadwinner model is the dominant direction of development (Wall 2008; Lewis 1996).

Full-time work is the norm among working Finns, both men and women. Finland lacks a part-time work culture and, according to some opinions, the question has been

sensitive for Finnish women (Tarkki and Petäjaniemi 1998: 28). In Finland, part-time work has not been seen as an attractive choice because of the lower salary and lower pension. Maintaining full-time contact with working life has been emphasised as well as the risk of a part-time working woman ending up with all the domestic work (Kivimäki 1997). Part-time work – especially among women – is very important in the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Austria and Italy. Some of these countries, such as, for example, the Netherlands, have had a large number of part-time working women, a level of approximately 60% in 2003. Other countries, such as Italy and Spain, have an increasing amount of part-time working women. In some other countries, such as Sweden, the number of part-time workers is decreasing. (Lewis et al. 2008: 22-24).

According to previous research, equality between the spouses depends mainly on the work history of the wife as well as on the length of her workday and the level of her education and income (Esping-Andersen 2009; Cunningham 2007; also Lewis and Taylor 1996: 116). Research also shows that even if the employee were formally allowed to regulate the hours of work, the informal workplace culture does not necessarily tolerate flexibility (Dermott 2005). According to Lammi-Taskula (2006: 50), Finnish society and the parental leave system expect fathers to take part of childcare in short periods (paternal leave) but still to leave the main responsibility for care and the longer breaks from work to the mothers.

To sum up, Finnish society is largely based on public provision of care enabling the reconciliation of work and employee care responsibilities, and relies on a dual breadwinner model. It is in this context that there is a recent development of increased corporate ‘family friendliness’. From the state level, there have been initiatives to increase the attention given gender equality also on corporate-policy level both via direct policy-making²⁷ and also via attention-shaping state-led campaigning, for example to promote fatherhood²⁸.

4.3.2. Changes in values towards work

After the early-1990s recession, the priorities of Finns seem to have changed from work towards leisure-time and family (Liikkanen 2004: 5). Several studies show a similar trend, even if these observe a decline in the perceived importance of work dating back as far as the 1980s, with a temporary upswing during the 1990s recession (Lehto and Sutela 2005).

One interesting detail in the first study is that the highest increase in the importance of leisure and family was found among the youngest group of respondents, 15-24-year-olds, and the smallest difference amongst those born in 1950s, among whom the shift had already taken place earlier (Liikkanen 2004). Further, in valuing the importance of spending time with family, the attitudes shift even more. Among the entire population, the number of people stating that time with the family is very important had risen by 26% during the period from mid 1990s to 2004. The rise was visible in all age categories but the highest was for the youngest; amongst those born in the 1970s, the

²⁷ Companies employing more than 30 are since 1995 by law obligated to have a corporate gender equality plan (Law on gender equality, Finlex). For more on this, see Hearn et al. (2005).

²⁸ In 2003, Fathers received two extra weeks of fatherhood leave and the campaigning to promote fathers' engagement has already led to increased amounts of fathers using their full right (Lammi-Taskula 2007); now, further discussions have developed on extending parental leave to include a quota for fathers only.

rise was up to 50%. Amongst those born in the 1960s, the rise in valuing leisure the highest had already appeared in 1991 and remained relatively high regardless of ageing and changes in life situation.

In a recent study (Haavisto 2010: 26-27), there is a clear difference in the relation towards the importance to work between those under 36 years of age and those older. Of the 56-65-year-olds, two thirds consider work the most central ingredient in life, whereas of the under 36-year-olds, almost two thirds are of the opposite opinion. The figures are especially steep among the 26-35-year-olds (ibid.: 26). The research concludes that it is yet too early to say whether what can be seen is a product of age-cohorts or is instead based on personal life-cycles (ibid.: 27). These results would, however, indicate that the preferences of the so-called Generation X²⁹ and especially Generation Y³⁰ differ somewhat from those of the previous generations. These results also seem to have a great impact on working life in Finland.

4.4. Managing the workforce and work-family issues in Europe and in Finland

With all the recent social and economic changes throughout the Western world and in Finnish society, the situation is also changing for corporate management. The increasing importance of leisure and family, and a rising awareness of and increasing demand for corporate family friendliness seem to be creating new demands on employers. An important challenge is to understand how this awareness might affect corporate management and corporate policies. Questions of work-family reconciliation and work-life balance have become increasingly central during recent years. These questions are also topical on the EU agenda.

There is both the question of management practice and the need for corporate policies for reconciling work and childcare responsibilities with the help of different kinds of flexible arrangements and the question of the work/life balance of female and male managers themselves. This still remains very different for women and men at the present time (Hearn and Niemistö f.c.; Hearn et al. 2008).

Moving on to discussing challenges for the corporate management, the focus is on managing parent employees. With a relatively high unemployment rate, one could argue that the changing trends of shifting from work-centredness towards family-centredness and making individual choices and perhaps showing less loyalty towards employers do not have to become a problem within companies. Still, this can mean increasing costs in recruitment and training and, even worse, loss of key personnel with knowledge and abilities hard to replace.

In international research, it has been concluded that parent employees changing careers occur across all socio-economic groups (Hamilton and Mail 2003: 16-17). Even if this topic is frequently discussed in public in connection with the value of work to the individual and the loyalty an individual shows towards the organisation, a Finnish study shows contrasting results. On the whole, approximately half of the working Finns seem reluctant to change jobs (Lehto and Sutela 2008: 206-207). Amongst those

²⁹ The X generation is according to different typologies born between the years 1961-1981 (Howe & Strauss 1991; 2007) or 1965-1980 (Eisner 2005).

³⁰ The Y generation is according to different typologies from the year 1982 onwards (Howe & Strauss 1991; 2007) or after 1980 (Eisner 2005).

interested in changing jobs, a change to another field of work interests more than half of the respondents. Here, a slight increase has occurred during the past five years. This increase is in line with the slight increase in willingness to change jobs. Further, younger respondents were more interested in changing jobs and changing to another field of work. On the other hand, in the long run, commitment to one's work has increased the most among young people (ibid.). Additionally, some of the key elements steering the commitment in work were support from the manager and the ability to affect one's work pace (ibid.).

In Finland, parents already have a wide range of choices facilitating the balance of work and family based on the national legal framework and collective labour market agreements. Besides the right to parental leave and the child home care allowance periods, there is a range of legal rights to follow. Until the youngest child is in the second grade, a parent (or both parents part-time) can work either a shorter day or a shorter week. Additionally, a parent of a child up to ten years of age has the right to stay at home with the child in case of illness³¹. In some companies, policies for reconciling work and childcare responsibilities include a nurse sent home to take care of an ill child, so that the parent is able to come to work even during the child's period of illness. Not all parents have welcomed this service, though; some have preferred to stay at home themselves.

Voluntary corporate policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities might include flexible working hours, the possibility for the individual employee or team to influence their shifts and vacations, the possibility to telework or other ways to influence and manage one's workload, working times and hours. Comparative international research has concluded that employers are not required to offer duplicate services in countries where statutory social policies are advanced (Harker 1996: 54; den Dulk 2001: 191-192).

4.4.1. Discussion

In Finland, corporate debate about family friendly policies is still not very lively. One reason might be that the frame the legislation gives is broad. Naturally, however, there is a difference between the rights an employee has, protected by law and collective labour agreements, and a company 'family-friendly policy'. The purpose of the legal framework has very much been to promote women's opportunities to work, pursue a career and combine childcare responsibilities with working life. Work-family programmes and policies based on gender equality seem to have greater potential to benefit companies than those discriminating against mothers of young children (Haas, Hwang and Russell 2000: 3). The purpose of a company's 'family-friendly policy' might, however, gradually be losing its traditionally gendered nature. With governmental efforts to promote fatherhood and move the focus towards the dual earner/dual carer-model (Lammi-Taskula 2007: 50) in Finland, policies no longer necessarily support only women but are growing to fill, among other corporate aspects, the purpose of creating a competitive advantage as an employer – enabling the employer to become an "Employer of Choice" – and have more generally a broader human resource management function.

As this research is about work/family reconciliation in both the national and the organisational institutional contexts, in the following section institutional theory is

³¹ 2-4 days, depending on the collective labour agreement.

introduced. The theory helps to clarify what kind of reasons there can be behind the need and the (strategic) choice to develop corporate-level work/family policies to supplement the national level statutory work/family policies.

4.4.2. Institutional theory

Institutional theory can be widely used to explain phenomena on both the societal and organisational level. It regards organisations as social and cultural systems based on socially-constructed values, beliefs, norms and rules. Three levels of analysis (Scott 1995; see also Powell and DiMaggio 1991:2-3) may be identified: At the top, there are the societal institutions formally proposing models of legitimacy. The next level consists of organisations and organisational fields, and then there is the third level consisting of actors, whether they are individuals or groups. This study uses elements of this theory as a tool to better understand the studied phenomenon and the organisational processes within this framework.

Different perspectives within institutional theory emphasise, for example, issues of power, rationality and actorship (Powell and DiMaggio 1991:3). In spite of in other ways embracing much of what has been imported to neo-institutionalism, the basic assumption in this study maintains the ideas about conflicting interests between and within institutions, the idea which was brought about by early institutionalists (Powell and DiMaggio 1991:12). The present research adapts the encompassing sociological view of institutional theory and especially focuses on political regimes as durable institutions that shape and constrain the relations to each other, but also on the homogeneity of practices and arrangements found in the labour markets and corporations (see also *ibid.*: 7-9). Institutional processes are seen as both generative and reproductive (Zucker 1987: 445-447). Even if the focus of this study is not on the micro-level, one of the underlying questions is, in line with sociological institutionalism, whether or not individual choices and preferences are applicable outside of the cultural and historical context in which they are embedded (Powell and DiMaggio 1991: 10).

According to Cook (2004), institutional theory is one of the three main explanatory approaches to the increasing adoption of work/life or work/family initiatives in organisations in the Anglophone context (see also Lyness and Kropf 2005). Also in the Finnish context institutional theory can be of assistance in explaining the phenomenon of increasing activity within work-family reconciliation in (Finnish) society and corporations.

The central perspective in an institutional theory approach is that institutions as social elements play a fundamental role in our thoughts, feelings and behaviours as individuals and as parts of groups, organisations and societies (see Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). Institutional theory has broadly been used to examine the way different institutions interact as well as the effects of institutions on the society. The differences between countries, industries, corporations and divisions are distinguished. Further, it has been acknowledged that organisations are not rational operators but rather instruments for advancing values, cultures, structures and routines, even those hidden or political. These instruments can also be divided into cognitive, normative and regulative systems with an additional symbolic level, which all contribute to the shaping of social behaviour (see, for example, Scott 1995: 19, 33). Social expectations related to workforce changes also add pressure to employers to develop arrangements to reconcile work with care responsibilities (den Dulk 2001: 67).

But what is actually the level of activity for corporate actors in relation to state players? According to institutional theorists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organisations remain relatively passive as societal actors (Zucker 1987: 444-445, 450). Theorists such as Zucker (1987, 1996), however, have given organisations a more active status (see also den Dulk 2001: 64-67).

One of the cornerstones of institutional theory is that as organisations grow in size, their HR practices become more standardized and structured (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This result has subsequently been affirmed by others (see, for example, Cook 2005; Aycan 2005; Bardoel 2003; den Dulk 2001). However, the processes of standardisation and bureaucratisation that make organisations more alike are no longer necessarily making the organisations more efficient (Powell and DiMaggio 1991: 64). Thus, the reasons for the standardisations lay elsewhere. Other kinds of results have also been obtained; according to Bardoel (2003), smaller organisations were associated with being more accommodating work-family workplaces (p. 16). Further organisational and contextual characteristics, such as type of industry, labour force composition, and gender divisions of the labour force, have also been identified as making firms more susceptible to pressures from external institutional forces (Cook 2005; Arthur 2003).

Previous research has showed that 'family-friendly' policies on the corporate level are developed for several reasons: some indicate normative, coercive and mimetic pressures in line with institutional theory (for example, DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991), with normative pressures emerging either from the law or the need to increase legitimacy and decrease insecurity, or further, the need to imitate successful competitors (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Zucker 1987; Davis and Kalleberg 2006). Normative pressures can arise from the national legislation of the country where a company operates. A non-Nordic company entering the Nordic welfare regime will most probably make substantial supplements to the range of, for example, parental leave it offers to its local employees. The company has to adjust its human resource policies to the existing statutory policies of the host country. Coercive pressures may also occur, if the cultural context of the host country is very different from the country from which the company originates. An example is the way the Nordic countries are committed to promoting gender equality, which might put pressure on the company to adjust its policies and practices. According to Davis and Kalleberg (2006), organisations are more likely to adopt 'family-friendly' practices in order to imitate a successful organisation in their field rather than based on economic calculations; this might include adopting practices that seem to give others a competitive advantage. Nonetheless, these policies occur in organisations that face greater economic and institutional pressures to have the policies. Further, organisations may provide different kinds of work-family policies and benefits depending on different economic and institutional pressures: for example employees in large organisations have access to more policies, not only based on economic factors but also the fact that larger organisations are objects of greater regulation and larger public interest. Imitating successful organisations is more likely to take place among companies operating in the same social and mental environment, for example the same industry or the same home country (Björkman 2006). Formalised organisations are more likely to be under coercive pressures, as their processes often are legitimacy-seeking ones in themselves, wanting to appear open and fair (Davis and Kalleberg 2006).

Aycan (2005) discusses the implications of societal and organisational culture on HR policies in organisations. These link back to the adjustments, discussed in the section above, that a company must make in its HR policies and practices when entering a new

market. The frame given by the cultural context or the welfare regime defines the direction of the development. Aycan refers to Huo and von Glinow (1995), who found a strong positive correlation between collectivism and flexible benefit plans, workplace child-care practices, maternity leave programmes and career break schemes. Further, she concludes that services such as child-care support and maternity leave largely are based on local labour laws (Aycan 2005). This conclusion is supported by the overview by Bardoel and DeCieri (2006), which further states that much of the research dealing with MNCs' transferability of HR practices across national borders (see, for example, Björkman 2006 for further studies) has not specifically included work/family or work/life strategies.

As presented earlier in this chapter, Perry-Smith and Blum (2000: 1108) state that companies can achieve a competitive advantage by introducing benefits that are not yet institutionalised across the organisations in the field, as employees feel privileged to enjoy benefits that others do not have. However, as social factors, these may be hard to imitate and reproduce. Companies with larger institutional pressures or a more complex institutional environment should benefit more from introducing different 'bundles' of work-family policies (*ibid.*), especially if this is done at the forefront of companies (*ibid.*: 1109).

4.4.3. Discussion

My argument in relation to these institutional questions is that traditionally Finnish companies, with their roots and headquarters in this specific institutional societal setting have, due to the strong legislative frame, for long been able to remain reactive in their relation towards employee reconciliation of work and care responsibilities. At the same time, some proactive MNC's with institutionalised corporate-level policies and practices within this area might lead the way in creating a competitive advantage for themselves by having these policies to offer both present and future employees.

Bretherton (2008) indeed very accurately poses the question of how the success of work-family policies and programmes should be measured – through maximum flexibility, maximum retention rate or maximum scope of reach of the policy or programme. The problem seems to be a lack of a theoretical frame to explain the heterogeneity of organisations in the formation of policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities (Bretherton 2008; Davis and Kalleberg 2006). Even steady contributions to conceptualise and theorise work-family balance in order to help organisations monitor and strategise practices approach the issue through individual perceptions of balance and different roles (Grzywacz and Carlson 2007). Kelly et al. (2008) have distinctively reviewed previous research within the work-family balance area in terms of different levels, which actually shows that most organisational outcomes in this area are measured through research into individual employee perceptions of work-family conflict or work-family facilitation. According to their work (*ibid.*), as there only are a few business cases available, it seems that there is a gap in research solely on an organisational (meso) or both organisational and societal (macro) level. The reason for this is said to be in the difficulty of measuring more indirect organisational costs and benefits, such as the costs of communication difficulties and loss of managerial oversight or, on the other hand, increased commitment, loyalty and improved group co-operation (Glass and Finley 2002).

When it comes to the transferability of HR policies and the values behind them to other cultural and historical contexts, and whether or not individual choices and preferences

are applicable outside of the contexts where they are embedded, we know from previous research that in questions concerning work-family issues the level of adaptation to local legal frameworks and conditions is high. Partly, this can be explained by legislative issues, but there is also a need to understand the strength of the political regimes behind legislation.

Some previous research supports the notion of the importance of the relative strength of the legislation in the given context. In some cases, direct parallels are drawn between the level of national gender equality in a given country and perceived organisational work-family culture, which in its turn is seen to mediate more flexible work arrangements and work-family balance (Lyness and Kropf 2005), or the level of legislative frameworks for reconciling paid work with childcare, which correlates with the organisational work-family arrangements in organisations in a given context (den Dulk 2001). It can be concluded that cultural and historical values of family and thereby related issues seem strong enough to make the questions context-bound, if not solely to individual countries, then to state regimes that have a similar background, present, value-base and political system.

As regards the reasons behind developing policies for the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities, there are many different alternatives. Institutional pressures might be the one foremost reason, but with distinctions in normative, coercive and mimetic pressures indicating the levels of developed policies: normative and coercive pressures from national legislation, collective labour market agreements, governmental strategies and programmes, and mimetic pressures or competition among companies within the same field of business.

This chapter illustrated the third of the so-called institutional stakeholders of this research. The relevance of this to the other parts of the thesis is that this chapter has illustrated the last of the three main stakeholder positions, which is directly combined with the second research question.³² Further, it has set the stage for the context of the data collection and, thus, helps to understand the first of the research questions.³³

The issues in this chapter are then discussed in relation to the issues discussed in the previous chapters, family policies and gender equality. A framework is presented in Chapter Five.

The table earlier presented in the end of Chapter Two and Chapter Three is again further developed and presented in order to help understand the levels and perspectives discussed in the first part of the thesis. The table illustrates that the levels and perspectives to be considered in connection with work/family reconciliation, and which are in relevant for this research, are multiple.

³² Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

³³ To what extent are there written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland, which are these policies and what is their availability and use in organisations?

Table 4 Perspectives and levels discussed in this and the previous chapters

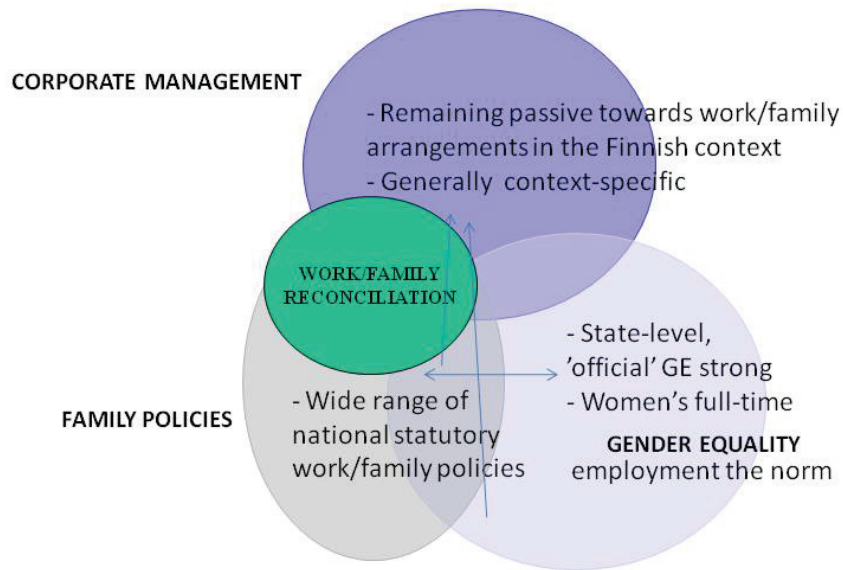
Perspectives / Levels	Macro level / Society	Meso level / Organisations	Micro level / Individuals
Family policies	Chapter Two, to a large extent	Chapter Two, to a smaller extent	
Gender equality	Chapter Three, to a large extent	Chapter Three, to a large extent	Chapter Three, only to a small extent
Corporate management	Chapter Four, to a large extent	Chapter Four, to a large extent	Chapter Four, only to a small extent

5 DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF THE TRIPARTITE FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this concluding chapter of the first part of the thesis is to discuss the framework that has been presented in the previous chapters and to discuss the interconnections of what are here defined as the main institutional stakeholders in discussing the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities. Thus, this chapter aims to highlight some of the underlying different stakeholder interests, actions and agendas in the reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities and to examine the interconnections of gender equality, family policies and corporate management. I suggest that there are tensions or even clashes between gender equality policies and family policies in Finland, when studying them both from a historical perspective and in their present state. Further, the chapter aims to initiate a discussion of questions about whose responsibility it should be to enable individuals' reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children, from whose perspective the success of the reconciliation should be measured, and what kind of implications there are on a national and a European level when different political agendas gain more power than others in relation to work/family issues.

The picture below represents one way of depicting how the different stakeholders are connected. The purpose of the picture is to aid the reader in following the discussions on interconnections in this chapter. A more detailed table illustrating the different epistemologies, theories, levels of units and agents is presented in the first and introductory chapter.

Figure 1 The framework of the different institutional stakeholders in the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities discussed in this thesis.



The areas of family policies and gender equality are pictured as separate areas with a fairly large overlapping area in between. It could be argued that family policies should be pictured as an integrated area within gender equality when talking about the Finnish context, as the discourse of gender equality in all things connected to families is so strong. However, as the underlying agendas for these two areas are somewhat separate, especially when introducing the familialistic or re-familialistic perspectives, they are depicted as separate in this presentation. The area symbolising gender equality is somewhat larger, as gender equality is stated as a conscious national policy (UN 2005: 2). Gender equality is also overlapping with corporate management more substantially, on areas where neither work/family reconciliation nor family policies are present, even if these are not the focus of this research. Corporate management is depicted as having interconnections with both political areas and, furthermore, with work/family reconciliation as such and could be expanding in other directions fairly substantially. Therefore, this diagram is not a rigorous depiction, but an attempt to enable the reader to follow the discussion about the tensions and interconnections. The major interconnections relevant for this research are illustrated by arrows.

5.1. Tensions and interconnections

The general discussion about combining work with family, or specifically with care responsibilities for children, has changed towards the more neo-liberal and individualist discussions about combining work with the rest of life. In this research, the focus remains on the reconciliation of work with childcare responsibilities as

Finland has traditionally been seen as a society with a wide range of choices facilitating the reconciliation of work and family, and as the changes in the society along with the changing working culture are in constant interaction with existing legal frames of family policies and labour policies.

Key interesting questions range from the individual level to the societal level. An example at the societal level is how corporate demands affect the national policy framework. Future research might engage in questions such as the direction of development of a society like the Finnish in the light of existing and forthcoming multinational corporate demands. It will be interesting to see whether traditionally Finnish corporations with their existing traditions and corporate cultures with a clear division of public and private sector responsibilities are able to manage the competition of labour force in the coming times of labour shortage. Until the very recent years, specific policies for the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities have not been created at the company level, but rather there have been national governmental policies that affect all employers and employees nationwide (Kivijärvi and Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta 2003; Piensoho 2006).

Traditionally Finnish companies, with their roots and headquarters in Finnish institutional societal setting have, due to the strong national legislative context, for long been able to remain reactive in their relation towards employee reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children. However, the internationalisation of business corporations affects Finnish companies, too, and the present study shows some interesting combinations of state and corporate-level policy developments. And why would they not show signs of corporate-level policy developments, when research has shown that the effect of bundles of 'family-friendly policies' on firm-level performance has been positive (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000: 1114)? There are still many different alternative reasons for developing the corporate-level work/family policies. Institutional pressures might be the one of the most important reasons (Lyness and Kropf 2005; Cook 2004), with its distinctions in normative, coercive and mimetic pressures. These pressures can also indicate the levels for developed policies. Normative or coercive pressures from the macro-level towards companies can consist of compelling regulations, whereas mimetic pressures are often organisational and usually consist of competition among companies within the same field of business (Björkman 2006: 464).

Corporate management is influenced by the national framework but can also place demands on the society and put pressure on legislators. If a corporation is powerful, such as, for example, Nokia in the Finnish context, the hopes and demands of its leaders are often used in the rhetoric of Finnish politicians, especially when discussing issues such as corporate taxation.

As EU policy is now to harmonise the work/family reconciliation issues across EU, there are the goals of the Lisbon strategy and, further, the Barcelona council to have 90% of over three-year-old children in public day care and even 30% of the under-three-year-olds, as discussed previously in Chapter Two (see also Lewis 2006: 430). If these goals are achieved, this will also drastically change the labour supply of females in particular within the EU. This has of course been one of the central drivers for developing the strategy. It is seen as a primary measure to increase the gender equality within the EU countries, consistent with the Nordic example. If actualised, the strategy will also have an enormous pressure on the social policy sectors in many of the EU countries, which have not at present developed public day care. The recent financial crisis has affected the resources for these kinds of developments in many EU countries.

The social policy sectors in different countries might not be very quick to change, and when EU level decisions are ratified on a national level, there might be a need for substantial development and adjustment of the national legal frame. Further, there still remains the need to implement the new national policies, for example, to build up public day-care systems, institutions and education, and to allocate the means for all this. Thus, there might also be a pressure towards the corporate sector to enable this development within the stated period through introducing flexible arrangements and even childcare facilities in order for both parents to be able to work. On the one hand, powerful corporations might exert pressure towards the development of national social policies as it partially benefits them by also bringing mothers into the workforce. On the other hand, not all developments within the work/family-area are directly beneficial for the employers and might gain little support from powerful corporations.

To give a few examples, Finland has stipulated in the labour law that a parent employee is allowed to stay home with his or her child (up to ten years of age) if it has fallen ill in order to arrange for its care; a parent of a child up to three years is allowed leave from work with the requirement of keeping the job for the parent employee until he or she returns; and a parent employee is allowed a shortened work-day or week until the child finishes second grade at school. These forms of leave or 'family-friendly policies', secured by the law, do in fact create some extra organising for the employer. So, it is fair to assume that in countries with a less developed national policy level concerning the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities, powerful corporations might oppose reforms going beyond public day-care, as these create both costs and inconveniences to the employer corporations and do not benefit them, at least directly. The benefit of having happier and possibly more motivated employees by introducing 'family-friendly policies' might be harder to track down and, thus, not be the first priority of the corporation at a stage where state policies are implemented. Originally, enabling the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities was aimed at women as working mothers so that they could enter the labour force, but later on even the needs of male employees, working fathers, have been considered (Scheibl and Dex 1998). In Finland, the focus is often on 'gender-neutrality' in policies as well as on linguistic gender-neutrality when addressing policies, for example to reconcile work and care responsibilities of children (Hearn et al. 2004). This 'neutrality' is traditionally involved with the history of the Finnish state as a strong actor.

Moreover, the tensions are hidden in seemingly gender-neutral linguistics. The relations between national gender equality and family policies can be ambiguous. In the case of the EU's Lisbon strategy, discussions about preferred care regimes for small children are not very visible. Nonetheless, the ideology around that question is very different across Europe and also within any given country across the political spectrum. So on this specific question, the agenda of gender equality promotion is clearly more visible and present and the agenda of family policies are more integrated into the gender equality discourse³⁴, adapting to the Nordic, especially Swedish, discourse where public day-care is seen as a central educator of children and bringing in equality both between the genders and among children of different classes.³⁵ Even more in general, different competing and conflicting political ideologies and strategies steer the development of both these areas. I suggest that clashes cannot fully be avoided.

Let me illustrate this with the help of two specific examples. First, a clash of gender equality policies and family policies culminates in the previous statement in Chapter

³⁴ Again, the concept of discourse is used loosely, rather than referring to any form of discourse analysis.

³⁵ This discourse has been present in Sweden since the Swedish pioneer Alma Myrdal's days in the 1930s and 1940s.

Two that the peak of the welfare state in Finland was reached in 1996, when the universal right to day-care was extended to all children under school age. As the welfare state, previously described as ‘woman friendly’, and the day-care system, motivated by gender equality, has been built up and defended, the statement above is true. But seen from the family policies perspective it is important to understand that the resources for the expanded day-care system in 1996 were allocated from cutbacks of family benefits and family services others than the public day-care. This benefited families using public day-care and had a negative impact on the economic situation of families using child home care allowance. When viewed from the familialistic perspective, this could be said to be a deterioration of the resource situation.

The substantial share of home care allowance in the national budget for family policies benefits has decreased to one third as a result of the cutbacks made in the 1990s (Haataja 2005). This directs families to use public day-care and diminishes the actual right to choose between the different day-care alternatives and thereby, at least symbolically, reduced the importance of family policies, especially from a familialistic perspective, in relation to gender equality. In the debates, gender equality has been frequently used as an argument for public day-care, even if the question is only amongst different day-care alternatives, and therefore even include a familialistic perspective. This shows how gender equality and family policies interact, and not always on the best of terms. As it is a question of politics, different preferences and underlying strategies are communicated in dominating discourses, and the old ideological tensions from the 1960s still remain.

As previously discussed in Chapter Two (Family policies), research has defined the different trends in Finnish care policies as those of “de-familisation” and “re-familisation”; the extended universal day-care right being an example of the former, and home care allowance being an example of the latter (Salmi 2004). Gender equality policies motivate the trend of de-familisation, both ideologically and more concretely, in the form of resource allocation to public day care in order to enable the maximum employment and career opportunities of women (see for example den Dulk 2001: 29-30).

Moreover, the Nordic countries represent the purest forms of de-familialistic societies, whereas the Southern European countries with substantially fewer social policies for the reconciliation of work and care represent a familialistic model where care is a private matter, dealt with within the family (ibid.: 30). Even if women have entered the labour market and fathers’ roles towards shared caring are promoted, traditional gender roles towards care seem to persist (McKie et al. 2002: 897). Some significant efforts have been made in Finland to encourage fathers to carry a bigger load of responsibility in childcare. This might also soon show in a more even division of breadwinner/carer-roles among men and women. Managements, meaning in practice often men in management, are considered to be the key persons for change in this area.

A second example of conflict between, or even the clashing of, gender equality and family policy agendas is the abolition of tax deductions in 1994. This was carried out after a previous reform in 1989. At that point, the previous rules regulating who in the family were entitled to child deductions were deleted (see, for example, Haataja 2000). This was more profitable for the spouse with the higher income, in most cases the husband. When tax deductions were abolished and modestly compensated with an increase in child allowances, the increase often benefited the mother, as the child allowances are primarily paid to mothers. This can certainly be seen as a gender equality strategy in decision-making. On the other hand, the net effect most often was a

decrease in economic benefit within the family. Therefore, even if the position between spouses changed towards greater equality, the total situation of the family often deteriorated.

As poverty among families significantly grew during the ten-year period after the 1990s recession, the question remains how steep this development would have been without the cuts in family benefits during the recession, as a part of the explanation seems to be the change in behaviour and preferences of parents of small children (Haataja 2005c: 89-91, 105). In this situation the family seems to have been prioritised above employment, even with risk of (increased) poverty during the chosen career-break.

One could argue that reforms made within the agenda and strategy to increase gender equality for women has in some cases meant deterioration in direct or indirect economic terms for the family unit. It has also steered women to working life outside of home. The family policies agenda has, on the other hand, sought to ensure a relatively high birth rate, which seems to have a connection to the financial well-being of families as well as to the subjective feeling of choice in questions of day-care alternatives and other work/childcare reconciliation issues. This is very interesting with regard to the coexistent growing trend of changing careers and increasing devotion to the family. That said, this trend includes both women and men.

At the individual level, a well-functioning balance between work and family is likely to be a crucial factor in an individual's subjective well-being. Also in relation to work-life on a macro-level, this is an important issue, as the family contributes to working life by reproducing the labour force, both on a daily basis and over the generations (Haavio-Mannila 1992). In this research, the small amount of individual level discussions and analyses are present mostly in order to illustrate the relevance and connections of individual work/life balance to both macro- and meso-levels in different contexts.

The development of the EU in the 1990s, viewing gender balance and traditional family policies as non-compatible, initiated a move from 'familialism' towards a greater focus on gender equality (Lewis 2006b). To sum up, the levels and perspectives present in the work/family reconciliation discussion and debate, research, policymaking and development are multiple. There are possibly conflicting interests on macro-, meso- and micro-levels, and, especially when including all the three previously presented perspectives, conflicting ideologies or discourses. As a policy-maker, one has to adopt a relatively de-familising or a relatively re-familising position, and individuals can in general only make their decisions within the partly ideological normative frame. Between these levels is the meso- level with companies balancing between different normative, coercive and mimetic pressures, depending on the national and business contexts they operate in. The reality is diverse and context-bound, ideologically coloured and complex. That is why work/family reconciliation issues should always be discussed in relation to a specific context. Moreover, ideological agendas and political strategies are always present when developing national policy frames. According to institutional theory, individual forces shape individual interests and desires, framing the possibilities for action and influencing whether behaviours result in resistance or change (Powell and Colyvas 2008: 277).

This framework chapter has illustrated, analysed and discussed some conflicting interconnections of the various institutional stakeholders, actors and activities within the areas of family policies, gender equality and the corporate world. The purpose of the previous chapters has been to explain the main societal and institutional factors affecting the macro- and meso contexts of companies operating in Finland. These

chapters, together with the second part of the thesis will, then. In the last chapter, Chapter 12, address the second research question:

Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

In the following chapters in Part II, the organisational level and the underlying reasons for corporate-level work/family reconciliation policy development are studied. This is done by analyses of both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data. In order to do this, the following hypotheses are derived from the presented and discussed issues in the first part of the thesis:

H1: The proportion of female employees positively correlates with the existence of written policies for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities within an organisation that go beyond the national legislation.

H2: The proportion of employees at the age of 40 or younger positively correlates with the existence of written policies for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities within an organisation that go beyond the national legislation.

H3: Companies with a more personnel will be more likely to have written policies for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities that go beyond the national legislation.

H4: Companies with their headquarters outside of Finland will not be more likely to have written policies specifically for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities than the ones with their headquarters in Finland, as they typically adjust to the host country legislation in HR questions.

H5: As Finland has the broad legislation for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities, companies that have their roots³⁶ in Finland do not have specific corporate-level written policies for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities.

H6: Corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children are implemented in order to enable a competitive advantage in recruitment and retaining of staff.

These hypotheses will be tested in part II of the thesis.

³⁶ This refers specifically to organisational roots, and including both administrative and cultural aspects.

6 INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Having presented and discussed the institutional stakeholders, actors and activities and theoretical perspectives, and analysed some interconnections and clashes between them, it is now time to move on to the organisational level and the quantitative and qualitative data collected from companies. By doing so, the two research questions can be addressed.

- 1) To what extent are there written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland, which are these policies and what is their availability and use in organisations?
- 2) Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

The first research question is specifically addressed by the second part of the thesis. The second question is partly answered by the first part of the thesis, but will finally be answered in Chapter 12 after introducing and analysing the quantitative and qualitative data.

The purpose of this introductory section is to elaborate further on the methodology of this thesis (see Chapter One).

6.1. Methodology

As earlier discussed (see especially the discussions in Chapter One), the methodology of the study is plural, including varying epistemological emphases and using both quantitative and qualitative methods. There are epistemological assumptions to all approaches and these should always be articulated. Various approaches vary in the extent to which these epistemological assumptions are explicitly made. Discussions around epistemologies are often more explicit within post-positivist and critical realist research (Johnson and Duberley 2000). In the institutional tradition, epistemologies are less often explicitly discussed and institutional theory often relies relatively strongly on positivism and (non-critical) realism. Positivist positions and institutional theory have steered the quantitative data collection process in this research; however, reflexivity in relation to the multiple positions of the research enhances even the quantitative data viewed from multiple perspectives. Moreover, epistemological questions are often more explicit in the qualitative data collection process that follows the quantitative one (see, for example, Prasad 2005). Hence, epistemological and ontological positions in this work are multiple. Epistemologically, this means moving from a more positivist position with a more taken-for-granted mainstream epistemology and ontology towards a post-positivist position, where epistemological positions and ontological discussions are more articulated and even problematised. In having different positions, we abandon the objective of finding one, static 'truth' (Alvesson and Deetz 1996; Grosz 1987; Burrell and Morgan 1979). These issues have already been discussed in the first pages of this thesis.

Several research methods are used in this research. As a background, policy documents and research on policy development were studied and analysed. The contents of these

studies are included in chapters discussing family policies, gender equality and their interconnections. Furthermore the data section in Part Two, after this short introductory chapter, begins with a presentation of the quantitative data and results. Even if the survey method was chosen as the primary source for data collection, the perspective of the data section combines elements from both the positivist and post-positivist positions. When designing the project, the original purpose of the survey was to provide background information to the interviews conducted later. However, the survey developed into a rich source of information and as a result gained greater importance in the course of the project.

The second phase of the data collection, the interviews with HR managers and corresponding experts on work/family policies, was based on the quantitative results. The epistemological positioning somewhat shifted at this point, as the interviews were carried out in order to understand the results of the survey and what gave rise to these results. So, at this point it was important to try to see behind the data and pose some relevant questions in order to deepen and broaden the understanding of the phenomenon in focus, namely corporate-level initiatives for reconciling work and care responsibilities in the family.

The first step in the phase of more critical analyses was to include a gendered analysis of some of the statistical data. This was done in order to identify whether there were gender differences in the perceptions of work/family conflict and, moreover, in general in the way this kind of data was reported. The purpose was to test whether there was a gender difference in the perceptions and ways of describing the social phenomenon in focus in this research.

The next step was to return to some of the companies and discuss the more focused areas that had evolved in interest based on the survey results. The interviews conducted were semi-structured, covering specific areas but giving the respondent the freedom to elaborate on the issues in a more open way and giving me as an interviewer the possibility to steer the discussion and ask additional questions to obtain more specific information. In line with Saunders et al. (2000: 242-246), the interview is here regarded as an interaction process performed in order to gather valid and reliable data, answer the research questions, and be consistent with the aim and purpose of the research, as well as the research strategy and design.

The following data chapters illustrate that this research was conducted using different methods to gather more information about the issues of research interest, develop deeper understandings thereof, and, finally, find answers to the research questions. This was done while continuously keeping in mind that the perspective one derives from and how one treats the gathered data makes a substantial difference (Silverman 2005: 44-49). Nonetheless, quantitative and qualitative methods should not be seen as products of competing paradigms, but rather valued as complementary and enriching when used together (Brannen 1992, 2005; Bryman 2006, 2008).

The central phases of different methods used policy analysis from two different sectors in the first part of the thesis, and this was followed by a survey answered by 113 HR-managers, analysed by cross-tabulations and regression analyses, and then, selecting from the quantitative analyses, interviews were conducted in four chosen case companies. The methods are presented in more detail within the chapters on data collection; Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine for the quantitative data and Chapters 10 and 11 for the qualitative data.

6.2. Levels of analysis

This doctoral thesis is about the reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children. The research questions address two aspects: Firstly, whether there are written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and family, including questions about what the policies are, who has access to them and how they are used. Secondly, how and why these policies are developed within corporations.

Ultimately, the level of analysis is fourfold:

- The macro/societal level, the national context, also being a product of a welfare state system, a country affected by EU-regulations in a globalised world, including the legal framework for the reconciliation of work and family.
- The meso/corporate level, including the corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and family in a set of companies with differences and similarities operating in the same geographical environment.
- The level looking at specific organisations with their specific bundles of policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children as well as their own or sector-specific reasons for developing the policies.
- The micro/individual level where some aspects of each HR manager are studied, including perceptions of the state of matters of the corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and family and concrete feelings of work/family conflict within their own organisation.

At the meso-level there are both general questions for analysis and questions in relation to specific organisations. In addition, the micro-level is, besides the individual level analysing and describing individual HR managers' perceptions and feelings, a representation of meso- and macro-levels as interpreted by individuals. In the following chapters, the data collection processes and the results are presented and discussed. At the end of the second part of the thesis is the concluding chapter for the entire thesis, discussing both the findings and contributions, and also the restrictions and recommendations for future research.

7 SURVEY DATA

7.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the quantitative data was collected. After this chapter follow the quantitative results, and then a further chapter on the gendered analysis of some of the survey data. The project also includes qualitative data, and that is reported in Chapters Nine and 10. First, the background of the decision to undertake a survey is discussed. After that, the focus turns to *what* has been asked, *how* and *why*.

7.2. Method

The quantitative data was collected through a web-based³⁷ survey targeted at HR managers of fairly large private-sector companies. The aim of the survey was to fully or at least partly provide answers to two research questions. The first question “1) *To what extent are there written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland, which are these policies and what is their availability and use in organisations?*” would come to be answered by the survey, at least for the present sample.

The second question “2) *Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?*” would come to be answered partly and the answers would preferably give indications concerning the directions for interviewing.

The quantitative survey data was gathered for several purposes:

- Firstly, in order to examine if there are written corporate-level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children in companies operating in Finland.
- Secondly, in order to examine what kind of corporate-level written policies there are for reconciling work with care responsibilities and what initiates the development of them in a welfare state with a relatively long tradition of widely extended public sector childcare.
- Thirdly, in order to examine what kind of national and corporate level policies are most frequently used in the sample companies.
- Fourthly, in order to see what kind of gendered perceptions there might be in organisations regarding questions around the policies combining work with care responsibilities for children.

The initial set of questions dates from October 2006. The questions were presented to and discussed with my supervisor Jeff Hearn. In addition, my other supervisor, Linda McKie, was involved in discussing the questions during October and November 2006. The questions were developed by studying existing questionnaires (for example, the

³⁷ An Internet-based program called Webropol, for more information, see <http://w3.webropol.com/>

Stakes³⁸ research on family friendly policies in the public sector, and small companies in the private sector) and developing new questions with, however, established scales of measurement (Bryman 2004; Tharenou, Donohue and Cooper 2007; Pallant 2007). In designing the questionnaire, the following questions steered the process:

- 1) Which questions do I want to obtain answers to?
- 2) What kinds of analyses are appropriate?
- 3) What kind of questions should there be, for example open or closed – if closed, should I have lists, categories, rankings, ratings or scales etc.?
- 4) Who will I send the survey to?
- 5) Whom will I ask the questions of?
- 6) How will I send out the questions?
- 7) How will I manage language translations?

The survey consisted of closed questions in order to make the survey feasible for the respondent in its current length (five pages). Additionally, closed questions would facilitate the analysis (Pallant 2007). Here, the challenge was to do a thorough job, covering all suitable and possible alternatives and making the difference between national and corporate policies as visible as possible for the respondent.

In January 2007, the survey questions were piloted with four HR practitioners. Additionally, a meeting was arranged with one of the HR practitioners to discuss in-depth their perceptions of the questionnaire in relation to the issues on which the survey was about to be conducted.

During the piloting phase some changes were made to the questions. It became clear that even for HR experts, the division between statutory policies derived from national law or collective labour agreements, and the corporate level policies is not always clear. So these needed to be grouped more clearly. Also, a question was added in the survey about the respondent's family status, as one of the pilot respondents found this a potentially important factor in relation to the importance and priority of the work-family policies for the managers. The piloting phase of the questions was completed in February 2007.

7.2.1. Sample and data collection

The initial plan was to create a database and send the survey to the companies on *Talouselämä*-magazine's³⁹ listing of the 500 largest companies in Finland, according to turnover. However, some problems occurred when I started to look more closely at the company information. Some of the companies were ICT companies, relatively large in turnover but only employing 15 people. At the same time, one hypothesis behind the

³⁸ 'Stakes' was a national governmental expert organisation in social and health affairs, which became a part of 'The National Institute of Health and Welfare' (Työn ja hyvinvoinnin laitos) in the beginning of 2009 and serves under the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö).

³⁹ This the largest business magazine within the Nordic countries, <http://www.talouselama.fi/>, <http://www.talentum.com/>

survey – based on some previous research – was that corporate policies increase when the corporation increases in terms of the number of personnel (see, for example, Aycan 2005). This made the companies with just a few employees less interesting for this specific survey. Finally, a decision was made to buy a database with 280 companies in the Uusimaa region, with the largest employers measured in terms of the number of personnel. Many of the companies proved to be the same as in the *Talouselämä*-listing. The corporations were all private sector organisations with the large number of personnel and they were located in the Uusimaa region⁴⁰.

The sample was selected for two reasons: firstly, the fact that the Metropolitan area is the largest and most attractive business area in Finland, and, secondly, because the number of personnel was regarded as one of the most important factors in the study. The focus of the study was on organisation-level policies and, according to previous research, when organisations grow in size, their HR practices are likely to become more standardised and structured (see, for example, DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Having a sample with a relatively large number of personnel was to ensure that the company would have a relatively formalised structure and there would be different kinds of written corporate policies available. Also, the range of business fields is relatively wide and represents the national division of fields, with a slight over-representation of retail, telecom and services. The data was collected using a web-survey, which was sent to HR managers or a self-reported functional equivalent informant at each organisation and in some cases separately to different business units.

The survey was sent out in mid-October, 2007. The initial number of respondents in the database was 373; additionally the survey was sent to two addresses as “controls”. Altogether, 375 messages and coded links to the survey were sent out. Of the 375 sent messages as many as 51 bounced back with a ‘delivery failure’- message. Additionally, there were 21 out-of office replies and 15 immediate answers giving a new contact name within the organisation. The 51 organisations whose messages had bounced back were contacted, asking for the names and contact information for the failed respondents and, thus, 48 names and addresses were updated. Still, some of the addresses continued bouncing back. All the included respondents had finally been contacted by email by late October. Three reminders were sent, and the survey finally closed after the Christmas holiday at the beginning of January, 2008. Even during the reminders, more than 30 addresses bounced back. Thus, the HR personnel seemed to change often and rapidly in some of the target organisations. During the process, the list of respondents had been edited many times. With several failure notices some of the organisations were lost from the list and also six messages indicating unwillingness to respond were received. In addition, one organisation with several separate sub-units on the initial list had agreed internally that one of the units will answer for all units together. Subsequently, altogether 342 respondents were successfully approached with the web-survey. Completed surveys were returned in 113 cases, corresponding to 98 different companies and in two cases different business units within the same corporation. The response rate was established at 32%. This result seems to be well in line with other survey studies (see, for example, Bardoel 2003: 9).

⁴⁰ This includes the Metropolitan area of Helsinki and nearby cities with surroundings in the southern part of Finland.

7.2.2. Double representation

The above-mentioned database listed as contacts the persons in charge of personnel issues within the company. This meant, in some cases, that several people could be listed within the same company. The survey was not sent in different languages, as the differences in nuances and use of language as well as use of terms and constructs in these different languages cannot fully be avoided. Being bilingual myself and, additionally, using mainly English in my thesis work, I know that the terms and constructs do not always mean exactly the same things when translated, partly because the terms and constructs have not been fully institutionalised yet, and also because the national contexts in the Nordic countries and the Anglophone countries are very different. This is already present in the terms ‘reconcile’ (work with family life) and the Finnish equivalent term ‘yhdistää’ as there are different in nuances, and there is much more of a sense to strive to reach a ‘harmony’ between the domains of work and family in the English construct than there is in the more neutral Finnish construct (see, for example, Lewis 2006b: 428, and the discussion on concepts and constructs in the introduction chapter, Chapter One, of this thesis). So, by collecting the data in only one language, and in the mother tongue of the majority of the respondents, it was possible to ensure that the respondents could linguistically be assumed to understand the questions in a similar manner. The translations of the terms, constructs and their meanings were then done by me, using my knowledge and pre-understanding in order to be as specific as possible.

7.2.3. Forms and sequence of analysis

The quantitative analyses were completed in two phases. First, the different policies were examined by using cross-tabulations, and, later, the reasons for developing the policies were analysed through logistic regression analysis.

First, descriptive statistics on the data were taken and studied. Then, cross-tabulations were conducted. This was done in two separate phases, using different independent variables. The results of the first sets of cross-tabulations, with the existence of corporate-level work/family policies as the dependent variable, are presented and discussed in the following chapter, in Sections 8.3.1, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3. In these sections, three different cross-tabulations are reported: first, the existing policies and their accessibility in companies with work/family policies and in those without; second, which policies are used at all and which ones are used the most in these companies; and third, what has been the importance of given background factors, such as the legal frames and governmental recommendations, upon developing corporate-level work/family policies.

The second set of cross-tabulations with another dependent variable, gender, was then conducted. In these cross-tabulations, both individual-level questions and organisational level factors are cross-tabulated. The results from these cross-tabulations are presented in Chapter Nine.

The regression analyses were carried out in two phases, the initial phase with the first four hypotheses, and the subsequent phase, introducing the fifth hypothesis. The second regression model needed to be adjusted due to some multicollinearity in the model. This process, along with the hypotheses, is explained in more detail in Section 7.7.

7.3. Variables

In the following section, the variables created to give answers and explanations to the questions above are explained more precisely.

7.3.1. *Dependent variables*

The first phase of the analyses has one dependent variable, reflecting the main dividing issue in the setting: the existence or non-existence of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities in the respondent organisation.

The reason for choosing this variable for the dependent was the first research question of this project: to see *if there are corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities in companies operating in Finland*. The underlying question was why there would be any in a welfare state with a relatively long tradition of widely extended public sector child care. The existence or non-existence of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities in the respondent organisation was used as the dividing variable in order to see what kind of differences there were between companies with and without written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children.

7.3.2. *Independent variables*

The following variables were used in the cross-tabulations. Regarding the different questions, the variables were listed differently, depending on whether the question only included corporate-level policies, or also the mandatory rights concerning family leaves from national family policies. For example, flexible working hours, which can be included in the labour market agreements of some sectors, are here treated as corporate policies. The variables were the reported accessibility and use of the following policies:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- parental leave
- care leave
- partial care leave⁴¹
- temporary care leave⁴²
- flexible working hours

⁴¹ Parents can choose to take part-time child care leave, i.e. to reduce their working time until the end of their child's second year of school. This reduction is not financially compensated for. The parent must have been employed with the same employer for at least six months during the previous year. The specific arrangements of the leave must be agreed with the employer (<http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/NET/150502161053EH?OpenDocument>). Parents can also take this leave simultaneously.

⁴² Each one of the parents can stay home and take care of a child (up to 10 years of age) that has fallen ill for a maximum of 4 days. The employer is by law not obliged to pay salary for these days; in practice, some collective labour market agreements secure full salary for the employee even for these sick days.

- autonomy in arranging work shifts or working hours
- teleworking
- work time bank⁴³
- vacation bank⁴⁴
- part-time work
- workplace nursery
- cleaning and/or care of children at the employees home
- nurse / nanny for employees' children who have fallen ill.

These are all already existing and/or frequently discussed policies and practices in Finnish working life. Also, in the survey, questions about the importance of the given alternatives for the companies in their development of policies and practices for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children were included. The variables were the following:

- the national-level family policies (/family law)
- the national-level gender equality policies (/gender equality law)
- the governmental gender equality strategies
- the values of the company headquarters
- the work/family reconciliation strategies of the company headquarters

The variables were cross-tabulated.

In a later phase, a cross-tabulation with gender was conducted. In this analysis, different questions about the perceived work/family conflict and its effect on work, and home-life, respectively, were analysed against the respondent HR manager's gender in order to examine whether female and male HR managers perceive and present work-family issues similarly or differently.

After studying these perceptions, some background variables of the companies as well as some reported perceptions were tested in a logistic regression model. In the next section, the variables from the hypotheses are presented.

7.4. Hypotheses

Altogether, six hypotheses were tested. The hypotheses were tested by using respective variables from the survey. The hypotheses and the process used to derive them are more closely presented in Chapter Five as well as in the Results, Conclusions and

⁴³ A system that counts overtime-hours, enabling the employee to be compensated by either money or vacation time.

⁴⁴ A system according to which vacation days accumulate in atypical working contracts in the same way as in the typical ones.

Discussion chapters. In order to be able to go through the variables used for the hypotheses, they are briefly repeated in the following section. They are marked with a capital H and a number.

H1: The proportion of female employees positively correlates with the existence of written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities within an organisation that go beyond the national legislation.

The first hypothesis is measured by the percentage of women in the respondent organisation. This was measured because the question of enabling mothers to work and attracting them to the organisation has been an issue in other contexts.

H2: The proportion of employees at the age of 40 or younger positively correlates with the existence of written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities within an organisation that go beyond the national legislation.

The survey asked about the proportion of employees of different age categories. The second hypothesis was measured by the number of 31-45-year-olds in the organisation, as this group of people would, based on nativity statistics,⁴⁵ be the age group that would most probably include the highest proportion of employees with children up to 10 years of age and, therefore, would have at least some amount of care responsibilities to cope with, and would also be subjects to the policies included in the national legal framework binding all companies operating in Finland.

H3: Companies with more personnel will be more likely to have written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities that go beyond the national legislation.

The third hypothesis was measured with help of the absolute number of personnel. This was important as the organisation tends to become more structured and formalised as it grows. Therefore, as a result, policies for reconciling work and children should exist in a larger scale in larger organisations than in smaller ones.

H4: Companies with their headquarters outside of Finland will not be more likely to have written policies specifically for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities than those with their headquarters in Finland, as they typically adjust to the host country legislation in HR questions.

H5: As Finland has broad legislation for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities, companies that have their roots⁴⁶ in Finland do not have specific corporate-level written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities.

Hypotheses four and five were tested by a variable put together from four different questions mapping the past and the present location of the company headquarters, defined as the location of the company top management. The first alternative described the companies with their headquarters in Finland both currently and during its history. The second alternative was not represented among the respondents, but described companies which previously had their headquarters elsewhere but now have

⁴⁵ http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/ssaaty/2008/ssaaty_2008_2009-05-06_kuv_001_en.html (accessed 26.1.2010)

⁴⁶ Specifically organisational roots, including both administrative and cultural aspects, articulated as headquarter location.

them in Finland. The two latter variables describe the non-Finnish location with either earlier the headquarters in Finland but now abroad, or the company headquarters always outside of Finland. These variables were re-coded into one variable illustrating the corporate national background.

H6: Corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children are implemented in order to enable a competitive advantage in recruitment and retaining of staff.

Initially, this hypothesis was tested through three different variables indicating the perceived value of corporate-level policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities to (1) the company image, (2) employer attractiveness and (3) its recruitment processes. However, some multicollinearity was detected, and the variables were tested one-by-one. Employee attractiveness seemed to be too similar with the two other variables. In the final model, employee attractiveness was omitted, and the others were taken into the model one by one. As a result, the multicollinear effect disappeared.

As the control variable was a binary one and the sample size was not very large, the hypotheses were fed into a logistic regression model. The dependent variable was once again: “*Are there written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children in your organisation*”, with 0=no, 1=yes. The independent variables in the analysis were the number of females in the organisation, the number of 31-45-year-olds in the organisation, the size of the organisation and the headquarter-country of the organisation (1 and 2 had headquarters in Finland, 3 and 4 had headquarters abroad), the importance of written corporate policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities in recruitment (Likert-scale from 1-5, with 1 indicating very important), and the implication of written corporate policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities for the company image in Finland (Likert-scale from 1-5, with 1 indicating very important).

This chapter has presented the relevant variables and the different forms and sequence of analyses as well as the hypotheses formed and tested. The results of the different analyses are presented in the following chapter.

8 SURVEY RESULTS

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the analyses conducted on the quantitative data of my dissertation are reported. The results from the analyses of the qualitative data will be presented later on in Chapter 11, and all the results are then summarised and discussed in Chapter 12. The decision to divide the results in this way was made because of the two separate phases in the research process, which also have had different, though related, aims and outcomes.

The aim of the quantitative phase of the study was to seek answers to two of my research questions. The first question was:

“1) To what extent are there written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland, what are these policies and what is their availability and use in organisations?” This was answered by the survey, at least for the present sample.

The second question was: *“2) Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?”* This question was partly answered by the survey, in order to be further deepened in the qualitative phase that would follow.

The answers gained from the quantitative phase increased my understanding of these issues and served as a guiding pre-understanding for the following phase, the gathering of qualitative data by interviewing HR managers.

8.2. Defining the dependent variable

Almost all of the respondent companies (94 out of 98) answered the question about whether or not the company had corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children. Over half, 54.3% (n=51), of the companies replied that they did have and 45.8% (n=43) of the companies replied that they did not have any corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children. As four did not answer this question, it is hard to tell about the situation in these companies, but, as the respondent had been the HR manager or equivalent, it is fair to assume that he or she would be aware of any kind of corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children; therefore, the more plausible explanation would be that they do not have such policies. Even so, in order to avoid any false conclusions, these answers were not included in this analysis.

The information about having or not having corporate-level work/family policies partly answered the first of the research questions and served as dependent variable to test against different independent variables, testing for the existence, accessibility and use of these policies, as well as indicating some reasons for why these policies had been developed at the corporate level. The survey provided a relatively broad overview of questions related to these policies (see Appendix 1), including the impact (HR manager’s perception) of such policies on corporate image, the importance of such policies in recruitment negotiations, whether or not management is trained and/or

informed about the national legislation on these issues, which factors have influenced the development of such corporate policies within the organisation, which policies are most frequently used (also a comparison between the organisation in Finland and the headquarter-country in 21 cases) and which were used at all. The different variables derived from the questions were then tested against the dependent variable. Further, gender differences in HR managers' experiences and perceptions were tested. The key gender differences are presented in Chapter Nine.

Immediately, some descriptive statistics revealed some interesting initial results which had a crucial impact on the process. First of all, the descriptive statistics showed that 87 of the respondents stated that the headquarter-country is at present and has always been Finland, only 12 answered that the headquarter-country had previously been Finland and that the headquarters had later on moved away from Finland, and only nine responded that the headquarters had always been outside of Finland. Therefore, the headquarter country could not be used as the basis for analysis. Even if other variables could be tested against the national background, the dimension of national comparison was omitted from this study. However, the idea of different national context was borne in mind during the interview phase, with regard to reflection upon whether or not there are differences between the companies with the headquarters in Finland and with the headquarters abroad.

The vast majority of the companies had up to 2500 employees. Less than 10 had 2500 to 5000 employees and only some sporadic companies had between 5000 and 30,000 employees. On the other hand, five companies had less than 100 employees. Thus, the variation in company sizes was relatively high. All targeted companies were private sector actors. The gender and age divisions were normally distributed. The fields of businesses had a slight over-representation of telecom, retail and services. On the other hand, the telecom industry is one of the most significant fields in Finnish business life.

The following Anova-table (Table 5.) illustrates the descriptive statistics of the variables of the hypotheses.

Table 5 Anova of the variables of the hypotheses.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Size of the company/number of employees	Between groups	5640773.126	1	5640773.126	.404	.526
	Within groups	1.241E9	89	1.395E7		
	Total	1.2479	90			
Amount of female employees/ % of women	Between groups	46.892	1	46.892	.081	.776
	Within groups	50846.932	88	577.806		
	Total	50893.824	89			
Percentage of employees 31-40 years old	Between groups	207.106	1	207.106	1.380	.244
	Within groups	12006.046	80	150.076		
	Total	12213.152	81			
Headquarter status	Between groups	.003	1	.003	.004	.951
	Within groups	61.286	88	.696		
	Total	61.289	89			
Importance in recruitment	Between groups	2.450	1	2.450	4.325	.040
	Within groups	50.985	90	.566		
	Total	53.435	91			
Importance to company image	Between groups	4.220	1	4.220	8.844	.004
	Within groups	42.943	90	.477		
	Total	47.163	91			

8.3. The existence, accessibility and take-up of policies

In this section, the results of examining the existence, accessibility and take-up of policies are reported. Even if the focus is on corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children, policies from the national legal framework for family policies are also included. This includes maternity leave, paternal leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave and temporary care leave, which are mandatory and, thus, supposedly are largely in use in Finnish companies.

The national policies listed above were formed into variables that were used in the cross-tabulations. Additionally, in questions about which work/family reconciliation policies and practices were used, the variables were listed as follows, differently depending on whether the question only included those outside of national family policies or both national- and labour market agreement-level⁴⁷ or strictly company level policies:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave

⁴⁷ Finland has a tradition of strong unions and agreements between the state, employer organisations and employee organisations. These define the minimum levels of wages and other reciprocal responsibilities for all companies operating in that sector.

- parental leave
- care leave
- partial care leave⁴⁸
- temporary care leave⁴⁹
- flexible working hours
- autonomy in arranging work shifts or working hours
- teleworking
- work time bank⁵⁰
- vacation bank⁵¹
- part-time work
- workplace nursery
- cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home
- nurse / nanny for employees' children who have fallen ill.

These are all already existing policies and practices in Finnish work life.

8.3.1. What kind of policies and practices are there and what is their accessibility?

The first point of interest of the analyses was which work/family reconciliation policies and practices there were available in the organisations, examining in particular whether there were differences between the organisations with written corporate-level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children and those organisations that did not have these policies.

⁴⁸ Parents can choose to take part-time child care leave, i.e. to reduce their working time until the end of their child's second year of school. This reduction is not financially compensated for. The parent must have been employed with the same employer for at least six months during the previous year. The specific arrangements of the leave must be agreed with the employer (<http://www.kela.fi/in/internet/english.nsf/NET/150502161053EH?OpenDocument>). Parents can also take this leave simultaneously.

⁴⁹ Each one of the parents can stay home and take care of a child (up to 10 years of age) that has fallen ill for a maximum of 4 days. The employer is by law not obliged to pay salary for these days; in practice, some collective labour market agreements secure full salary for the employee even for these sick days.

⁵⁰ A system that counts overtime-hours, enabling the employee to be compensated by either money or vacation time.

⁵¹ A system according to which vacation days do accumulate in atypical working contracts in the same way as in the typical ones.

The cross-tabulation which divided the companies into those with written corporate-level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children and those without them was conducted, and the level of accessibility of the policies was also included in the analysis. Those policies that are mandatory were excluded from the analysis. Thus, policies left out at this phase were maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave, and temporary care leave. These were not included in this analysis as all employers are by law obliged to arrange for these forms of leave (with the slight exception of partial care leave that the employer is only obliged to arrange as long as it does not inflict overwhelming inconvenience). Thus, the policies and practices included in the cross-tabulations were flexible working hours, autonomy in arranging work shifts or working hours, work time banks, vacation banks, teleworking, part-time work, workplace nurseries, cleaning and/or care of children provided by the employer at the employees' home, and a nurse or a nanny provided by the employer for employees' children who have fallen ill. The results below are best illustrated by the following table (Table 6.):

Table 6 Policies and their accessibility in organisations

Policy or practice	Accessible for all	Accessible via negotiations	Policy not available
Flexible working hours, companies with policies	55%	41.7%	3.3%
Flexible working hours, companies without policies	40.5%	52.4%	7.1%
Autonomy in arranging work shifts or working hours, companies with policies	9.8%	25.5%	64.7%
Autonomy in arranging work shifts or working hours, companies without policies	10%	25%	65%
Work time bank, companies with policies	25.9%	27.6%	26.6%
Work time bank, companies without policies	17.1%	31.7%	51.2%
Vacation bank, companies with policies	33.9%	26.8%	39.3%
Vacation bank, companies without policies	12.2%	36.6%	51.2%
Telework, companies with policies	11.5%	67.2%	21.3%
Telework, companies without policies	2.4%	70.7%	26.8%
Part-time work, companies with policies	45.9%	54.1%	0%
Part-time work, companies without policies	23.8%	73.8%	2.4%
Workplace nursery, companies with policies	0%	0%	100%
Workplace nursery, companies without policies	2.4%	0%	97.6%
Cleaning and/or care of children, companies with policies	1.7%	0%	98.3%
Cleaning and/or care of children, companies without policies	0%	2.4%	97.6%
Nurse/nanny, companies with policies	20.7%	6.9%	72.4%
Nurse/nanny, companies without policies	12.5%	5%	82.5%

Regarding the alternative of flexible working hours, it is important to note that flexible working hours are included in many of the collective labour market agreements, which may explain the high level of accessibility of this policy in many of the sample companies. These results seem to be in line with the Establishment survey 2004-2005 of the European Foundation, according to which 67% of the Finnish employers provide for flexible working hours (ESWT 2004/2005; den Dulk and Spenkelink 2009: 18). An additional note to the data in table above; also the alternatives of a work time bank or a vacation bank are part of some collective labour market agreements.

It is also important to note that when asking about part-time work, partial care leave was not given as the same option, as partial care leave can be used for a given period of time and the work time is shortened from a full-time position (see Chapter Two). However, some of the respondents may have not been aware of the difference and conceivably might have confused partial care leave with part-time work. Unusually, Finland lacks a part-time work culture, as continues to exist in many other countries. In other Nordic countries, such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark, part-time work has been a more frequent way to combine working life and family life (Kivimäki and Otonkorpi-Lehtovaara 2003). In Finland, the levels of reported access directly or through negotiations may partly indicate and be mixed with partial care leave, as partial care leave in practice enables shorter work days or a shorter working week. In 72% of the sample companies with corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children, partial care leave was used during 2006. The corresponding share for companies without corporate-level policies was 78.4%. Even these figures seem surprisingly high.

A workplace nursery was available in only one of the respondent companies. As day-care has been a public sector activity for decades, companies have not had the same need to be active in questions of arranging for care as, for example, has been the case in the U.S. When industrialisation began in Finland, some of the larger manufacturers did start both day-care centres and schools, but only few, if any, of these still exist today.

Cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home provided by the employer were available for everyone in one company and negotiable in another company. Cleaning help has been said to increase in demand as more women reach top positions, but as it stands today the policy does not seem to be offered. It is noteworthy that in recent years privately-purchased cleaning services are subject to tax relief. This means that people use cleaning services, but this is not done via the employer as a benefit of employment.

A nurse or a nanny provided by the employer for employees' children who have fallen ill was much more commonly offered than a carer for a child on a day-to-day basis⁵²: the first alternative has been widely discussed in the media in recent years and seems to have found its place in the employer-supplied bundle of policies. It was used in 23.5% of the companies with work/family policies and in 9.3% of the companies without the policies. This policy of an external care-taker in the cases of a child's illness steers the employees to use the policy of temporary care leave less and remain at work while their children are ill.

⁵² This in practice is a non-existent alternative due to the public day-care system.

8.3.2. Which policies and practices were used the most?

The second question to analyse was which work/family reconciliation policies and practices were used the most, examining in particular whether there were differences between the organisations with written corporate-level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children and those organisations that did not have the policies.

The cross-tabulation which divided the companies into those with written corporate-level policies for reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children and those without them was conducted, and both national level and corporate level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children were included in the analysis. As is to be expected, legal parental rights topped the list in both types of companies. Maternity leave was the most frequently used policy, followed by parental leave, and care leave close after, with approximately the same values in both companies with policies and companies without policies. The fact that maternity leave, parental leave and care leave are evenly used in both companies with and those without written corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children is unsurprising, as these policies are enacted by law.

All in all, the policies and practices used are quite closely in line with the level of provided accessibility. National policies are used in most companies, with or without corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children. During 2006, maternity leave was used in 96.8% of the companies, parental leave in 94.7%, care leave in 93.6% and paternity leave in 91.5% of the companies. Partial care leave was used in 75.5% of the companies, with a slightly higher frequency of use in the companies without corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities. The division of use and non-use of temporary care leave was divided equally among companies with and without corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities. Among companies with corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities, this policy of temporal care leave was used in 59.6% of them, and among companies without the policies in 40.4% of them. Even if the law guarantees the parental right to stay home with a child that has fallen ill, other factors, for example the nature of the work as well as the attitudes at the workplace can affect the take-up of these rights.

The table below (Table 7.) illustrates the use of the additional policies⁵³ used in 2006.

⁵³ This means policies not guaranteed by the national family law.

Table 7 Policies and practices used in 2006, excluding family leaves

Name of policy or measure	In companies with written corporate w/f policies	In companies without written corporate w/f policies
Flexible working hours	86.3%	72%
Autonomy in arranging work shifts or working hours	15.7%	4.7%
Work time bank	35.3%	16.3%
Vacation bank	41.2%	11.6%
Telework	66.7%	53.5%
Cleaning and/or care of children	0%	0%
Nurse/nanny	23.5%	9.3%
Workplace nursery	0%	2.3%
Part-time work	Data missing *	Data missing *

One interesting result is the rare use of employee autonomy in arranging work shifts, individually or team wise, or individual working hours: only 15.7% of the companies with corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities, and 4.7% of the companies without the policies had used it. This indicates that even if there is certain flexibility in working hours in many companies, total autonomy is far rarer. In addition, the informal ‘swapping’ of shifts was not reported in this survey, and it is possible that in practice the employees can manage their shifts more flexibly than it appears from the study of more official responses.

Furthermore, 64.3% of the companies with policies reported that the use of legal parental rights and other policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children had increased during the last five years. This shows that in spite of better economic times, employees seem to have children to a similar extent than during recession times. Of the companies without corporate-level written policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children, 55% reported an increase in the use of legal parental rights and other policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children. Of the companies with policies, 35.7% reported no change within the last five years, compared with 42.5% of the companies without policies. A reduction in the use of legal parental rights and other policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children was reported by none of the companies with corporate-level policies and in 2.5% of the companies without policies.

8.3.3. Background of corporate-level work/family policy development

The third question to analyse was the background to the development of policies and practices for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children; more specifically, what the role of the different variables has been in developing the policies⁵⁴. This, too, was addressed by cross-tabulations. The respondent companies were asked to evaluate on a Likert-scale of six (alternatives ranging from “Not at all” to “Very extensively”) the importance of the given alternatives for the companies in their development of policies

⁵⁴ The Finnish text reads: “Nimeä kuinka merkittävästi kukin alla oleva tekijä on vaikuttanut organisaation työn ja perheen yhdistämiseen liittyvien käytäntöjen kehitykseen”.

and practices for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children. The variables were the following:

- the national-level family policies (/family law)
- the national-level gender equality policies (/gender equality law)
- the governmental gender equality strategies
- the values of the company headquarters
- the work/family reconciliation strategies of the company headquarters
- the gender equality strategies of the company headquarters
- the demands of the employees.

Cross-tabulations were performed on the variables above, with the existence or non-existence of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities in the respondent organisation as the dependent variable. The two groups of companies are from now on addressed as ‘proactive companies’ and ‘reactive companies’. The results are concluded in table 8 below:

Table 8 The cross-tabulations showing the percentage of companies regarding the variables as very or rather important in their development of policies and practices for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children.

	Proactive⁵⁵ companies	Reactive⁵⁶ companies
Family law	93.2%	82.5%
Gender equality law	75.8%	62.5%
Governmental gender equality strategies* (p=0.022)	66.7%	50%
HQ values	81.1%	63.2%
W/f strategies of HQ	64.6%	42.8%
Gender equality strategies of HQ	67.9%	48.5%
Employee demands** (p=0.018)	85%	72.5%

It was perhaps to be expected that the national-level family policies scored the highest and were assessed as very or rather important in the development of organisational

⁵⁵ Companies with written corporate w/f policies.

⁵⁶ Companies without written corporate w/f policies.

policies and practices for reconciling the work and care responsibilities for children in most of the companies. On the other hand, given that gender equality in working life as well as at home is a topical issue in Finland today and that the different governmental settings for several years have promoted gender equality, the importance given to national-level gender equality policies and the governmental gender equality strategies can be regarded as surprisingly low. The t-value difference between the two groups of companies was showed a slight significance ($p=0.022$), which indicates a difference between the two groups of companies in the importance of gender equality legislation in their development of corporate-level work/family policies. The result indicates that proactive companies regarding work/family reconciliation issues are also more active regarding gender equality, as the latter has affected the fact that there are work/family policies in these companies.

To conclude, the national-level family policies seem to have the greatest influence on companies' policy work on work-family arrangements. The employee demands also seem to be an important factor, as well as the values of the company headquarters, especially for the proactive companies. For employee demands as a factor, the t-test result was significant ($p=0.018$) between the groups of companies, which indicates that employee demands are even more important in the proactive companies. This finding was interesting and calls for more attention in the future.

On the other hand, the given importance of national gender equality policies and governmental gender equality strategies can be seen as rather low, especially in the reactive companies. Consistently, the companies with written corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children seem to give higher values to the variables in question than the companies without the policies.

8.3.4. Why have policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children?

Next, in order to remind the reader, the previously presented hypotheses are presented again, and, after that, the results from the logistic regression analysis are presented.

H1: The proportion of female employees positively correlates with the existence of written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities within an organisation that go beyond the national legislation.

H2: The proportion of employees at the age of 40 or younger positively correlates with the existence of written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities within an organisation that go beyond the national legislation.

H3: Companies with more personnel will be more likely to have written policies for reconciliation of work with care responsibilities that go beyond the national legislation.

H4: Companies with their headquarters outside of Finland will not be more likely to have written policies specifically for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities than those with their headquarters in Finland, as they typically adjust to the host country legislation in HR questions.

H5: As Finland has broad legislation for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities, companies that have their roots in Finland do not have specific

corporate-level written policies for the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities.

H6: Corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children are implemented in order to enable a competitive advantage in recruitment and retaining of staff.

See Table 9 for the descriptive statistics for the five first above presented variables.

Table 9 Descriptive statistics for the five first variables

Variable	Proactive companies	Reactive companies	Representation in the whole sample	T-test value
Percentage of women	m=49.65 s=23.9	m=48.20 s=24.22	m=48.82 s= 23.85	0.285
Percentage of employees up to 30-years old	m=22.98 s=17.38	m=24.48 s=18.42	m=23.63 s=17.59	0.380
Percentage of 31-45- year-olds	m=43.07 s=13.22	m=39.89 s=11.14	m=41.97 s=12.56	1.175
Percentage of 46-65- year-olds	m=37.38 s=16.99	m=35.60 s=14.23	m=36.09 s=15.74	0.514
Company size	m=1541.25 s=2972.53	m=2042.88 s=4527.73	m=1737.85 s=3685.18	-0.636
Foreign background of headquarters ⁵⁷	56.3	43.7	17.4	2.736
Finnish background of headquarters	55.3	44.7	82.6	20.524

These hypotheses were tested in a logistic regression model. In the analysis, these hypotheses were tested in two phases. In phase one, the five first hypotheses were included.

This was done to test whether any of the reasons, which apply in other contexts and are based on previous research, also apply in the Finnish context. The sixth hypothesis was included later.

In the following table (Table 10), the logistic regression analysis with the five first hypotheses is presented:

⁵⁷ For percentages of females as well as for different age categories and the organisations' size means and standard deviations were calculated. The different headquarter locations are presented as percentages.

Table 10 Logistic regression predicting reasons for developing corporate-level policies for employee reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children.

Variable	B	S.E	Wald	df	p	Sig.	Exp (B)
Percentage of women	.007	.010	.549	1	0,285	.459	1.008
Percentage of 31-45- year-olds	.026	.021	1,564	1	1,175	.211	1.026
Company size	.000	.000	1.149	1	-0.636	.284	1.000
Headquarter status	.128	.280	.209	1	2,736	.647	1.136
Constant	-1.361	1.328	1.050	1		.305	.256

The Omnibus test for this first step reported Chi-square 4.245, degrees of freedom 4 and a significance of .374. Nagelkerke R square for this model was .071. Further, none of these results were statistically significant. Hence, the additional sixth hypothesis that suggested written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities to be important in recruitment and that would add value to the employers' image and attractiveness as an employer was included in the analyses. For the perceived importance of work/family reconciliation issues for the organisations' image and attractiveness as an employer, as well as for the perceived importance of work/family reconciliation issues in recruitment, means and standard deviations were calculated. See Table 11 for the descriptive statistics for the additional above-presented variables.

Table 11 Descriptive statistics for the perceived importance of work/family reconciliation issues for the organisations' image and attractiveness as an employer, as well as for the perceived importance of work/family reconciliation issues in recruitment

Variable	Organisations with written w/f-policies	Organisations without written w/f-policies	T-test value
Important to company image	m=1.67 s= .589	m=2.10 s= .800	-2.974
Important in recruitment	m=2.22 s= .790	m=2.55 s= .705	-2.080

These hypotheses were included in the logistic regression model. The following tables 12 and 13 show the logistic regression model for the remaining hypothesis.

Table 12 Logistic regression model A for the sixth hypothesis.

Variable	B	S.E	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Percentage of women	.005	.011	.254	1	.614	1.005
Percentage of 31-45- year-olds	.039	.022	3.052	1	.081	1.040
Company size	.000	.000	1.206	1	.272	1.000
Headquarter status	.130	.291	.200	1	.655	1.139
Important in recruitment	-.868	.354	5.992	1	.014*	.420
Constant	.273	1.519	.032	1	.857	1.314

For this step (2), the Omnibus test reported Chi-square 6.639, df 1 and a significance of .010. Nagelkerke R square for this model was .174.

Table 13 Logistic regression model B for the sixth hypothesis.

Variable	B	S.E	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Percentage of women	.001	.011	.016	1	.901	1.001
Percentage of 31-45- year-olds	.025	.022	1.253	1	.263	1.025
Company size	.000	.000	1.375	1	.241	1.000
Headquarter status	.117	.292	.159	1	.690	1.124
Important to company image	-1.107	.395	7.879	1	.005**	.330
Constant	1.162	1.606	.524	1	.469	3.196

Further, the changes in the model when moving on to step 3 were the following. The Chi-square was 5.305, df 1 and significance .021. Nagelkerke R square for this model was .250.

The results of the logistic regression model revealed that the perceived importance in recruitment ($p < 0.014$) and the perceived importance to company image ($p < 0.005$) are statistically significant and, thus, would be the issues to consider as the main reasons for the companies to develop corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities. Further, the model itself showed that importance in recruitment and image explain a substantial part of the model, individually tested the importance to corporate image even more than the importance in recruitment.

8.3.5. End comments

The quantitative data analyses contributed many interesting findings. In my opinion, the most important and interesting findings were found in the logistic regression analyses. The fact that the initial hypotheses did not give any significant results is as such an interesting finding, as it contrasts with much of the pre-existing UK and U.S. research (Lewis and Lewis 1996; Scheibl and Dex 1998). However, the importance of corporate-level work/family policies for corporate image and recruitment being

significant is in line with the research conducted in the traditionally more liberal or neo-liberal welfare regime contexts (Scheibl and Dex 1998), which is slightly surprising in the present Finnish context, where companies have been able to remain relatively passive towards work/family reconciliation issues.

Based on these results, a decision was made to conduct interviews, to deepen my understanding of the reasons for and motivations to start building and developing corporate-level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities for children. In Chapters 10 and 11, the data collection process and the findings from the interviews are presented. The concluding chapter discusses the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Before proceeding to the qualitative data, the next chapter briefly discusses the gendered statistical analysis of some of the quantitative data.

9 GENDERED ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

Prior to going into the interview data and findings, some descriptive data and cross-tabulations from the survey are presented in this chapter from a gender perspective. To include the gender perspective in the quantitative analysis is important as gender is a central focus in this research, both as a research perspective as well as in the epistemological perspective of this study. To include this perspective in a quantitative study with a more positivist tradition of approach is a way of granting a greater perspective to the phenomenon in focus, as the first analyses of the quantitative data were done without a focus on gender, but as gender might be an important factor in the study. The gender-based analysis is done separately, because this short chapter lies ‘in-between’ the previous and following chapters. To separate the quantitative results into two separate chapters is done because in the previous chapter on quantitative results, Chapter Eight, the epistemological position is somewhat different from that in Chapters Nine, 10 and 11. Chapters Seven and Eight rely strongly on institutional theory and the positivist assumptions that the theory draws from. In the analyses in this chapter, the focus is on a more post-positivist⁵⁸ perspective, where the approach is more reflective, critical and gendered. These analyses were completed some time after the analysis presented in Chapter Eight. At that point the following phase of qualitative data collection was planned. This is why these sections are closely connected. Gender and gendering was also more explicitly addressed in the qualitative phases of the thesis; both when gathering the qualitative data and when analysing it, and because the gendered analysis of quantitative data is relevant to both the preparations of the interviews and the conducting of the interviews themselves.

The gender analysis provides answers both on the individual level of the managers themselves and also through the individual perceptions explain some their corporate-level motivations for developing or not developing corporate-level policies, describing issues with meso- and macro-level outcomes.

9.1. The relevant gendered statistics selected

In this section, some relevant gendered descriptive data and cross tabulations from the survey are presented.

Among respondents, there was an over-representation of women (65% against 35% males). Of these women, 76.4% had children of their own; the corresponding figure for men was 84.2%. Of the women, 62.7% worked in a company with corporate written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of or children; the corresponding figure for the men was 52.8%.

Question number 39 in the survey (see Appendix 1) dealt with perceived individual conflict between work and family. Questions 32 and 33 dealt with the HR managers’ own perception about the *work/family conflict experienced* within the organisation. There were some interesting differences between the answers of women and men both in the question about the perceived work/family conflict in *their own* lives and their

⁵⁸ Post-positivism is defined as a combination of several different genres (including critical realism), rejecting the positivist frame, questioning its knowledge production and perception of social reality, valuing research as critique (Prasad 2005:9).

perceptions of *their employees'* work/family conflict. The results are displayed in the table (Table 14) below:

Table 14 Perceived employee and own work/family-conflict among men and women

Perceived employee w/f conflict	Not at all	Very little	Relatively little	Relatively much	Very much
Women	0%	5.8%	42%	49.3%	2.9%
Men	0%	10.5%	57.9%	28.9%	2.6%
Perceived own w/f conflict	Not at all	Very little	Relatively little	Relatively much	Very much
Women	12.3%	20.5%	41.1%	20.5%	5.5%
Men	21.1%	36.8%	21.1%	13.2%	7.9%

So, generally, it can be concluded that men report less work/family conflict than women, both regarding the perceived w/f-conflict among the employees and their own w/f-conflict.

The vast majority of men reported 'relatively little' perceived work/family-conflict among the employees, adding up to 57.9% of the responses. Women reported most of all 'relatively much' perceived work/family-conflict among the employees, with a total figure of 49.3%. All in all, men reported 68.4% 'little' or 'relatively little' perceived conflict and 31.5% 'relatively much' or 'very much' conflict. Correspondingly, women reported 47.8% 'little' or 'relatively little' perceived conflict, and approximately 52.2% 'relatively much' or 'very much' conflict.

Still, 47.6% of the female respondents felt a need to further develop the 'family-friendly policies' within the organisation, whereas 52.4% did not feel that need. Among the male respondents, 29.4% felt the need to further develop the policies and 70.6% did not. This division in answers between the genders is in line with the responses. To conclude, female respondents felt a larger need to further develop corporate-level policies for reconciling work with family life and also perceived a greater work/family conflict among the employees.

Regarding their own work-family conflict, men reported less conflict with their 57.9% of 'not at all' to 'very little' conflict between the demands at work and at home, compared to the women respondents' figure of 32.8%. The amount of women experiencing relatively or very high conflict between the demands at work and at home was 26%, and the corresponding rate for men was 21.1%. The largest number of answers among women was placed at 'relatively little' with 41.1%, whereas for men most answers were placed at 'very little' with 36.8% of the answers.

Another interesting division between the answers of female and male respondents was in connection to their own work/family-conflict, when asked if the possible conflict affected their own work and leisure. The summarised answers are seen in table 15 below:

Table 15 Perceived effect of work/family conflict on work and leisure

Does w/f-c affect your work?	Not at all	Very little	Relatively little	Relatively much	Very much
Women	20.8%	30.6%	43.1%	4.2%	1.4%
Men	41%	20.5%	28.2%	7.7%	2.6%
Does w/f-c affect your leisure?	Not at all	Very little	Relatively little	Relatively much	Very much
Women	12.5%	16.7%	29.2%	31.9%	9.7%
Men	23.1%	30.8%	25.6%	12.8%	7.7%

Women reported 20.8% ‘not at all’ and altogether 73.7% ‘very little’ or ‘relatively little’, whereas men reported as much as 41% ‘not at all’, and a total of 48.7% ‘very little’ and ‘relatively little’. Both men and women reported relatively low scores on the alternatives reported for relatively or very high work/family conflict affecting work. On the other hand, women reported high scores on work/family conflict affecting leisure; 41.6% ‘relatively much’ or ‘very much’, in relation to men’s 20.5%. The vast majority of men, 79.5%, reported no to relatively small effect on leisure, with 23.1% with no affect, whereas only 12.5% of women reported no affect, and also altogether lower figures for the effect of work on leisure being ‘relatively little’ or less.

9.2. Conclusions

In this section, the conclusions of the gender analysis are presented and discussed.

Male and female respondents seem to experience and perceive the questions of work/family conflict differently. Males reported less conflict in their own lives, and less effect of work/family conflict both on work and on leisure. They also perceived less work/family conflict among the employees and less need to develop further corporate-level policies for reconciling work with family in the respondent organisation.

As the relations between individual work/family conflict and the perceived employee conflict were not tested on an individual basis, as well as their connection to the perceived need to develop more work/family policies in the organisation, this could be an interesting part of the data to return to in the future.

So, do male and female managers perceive their own and their employees’ work/family conflict and balance differently? Or do they just present the issue differently? Are there different expectations for males and females as employees and as managers? This analysis cannot answer these questions, but the relatively large survey sample would indicate that there are differences between the perceptions and ways of reporting work/family conflict between the genders.

Even if these were not direct questions posed to my respondents, I had these questions in mind when I visited to conduct the interviews. The interview methods, data and results are presented in the following chapters.

10 QUALITATIVE DATA AND METHODS

10.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the qualitative data collection process. The findings are reported in the subsequent chapter. I first discuss the background of the decisions related to the data-collecting process, then the selection criteria for the case companies and respondents, and finally, focus more closely on what has been asked, how and why.

The purpose of the interviews was to deepen my understanding of the key findings from the survey data in order to be able to understand which are the societal and institutional factors affecting the development of corporate level work/family policies and, thus, answer the second research question.

10.2. Background of the interviews

The interviews were conducted after the survey when most of the quantitative data analyses were completed. As previously presented, the purpose of the survey was to obtain information about corporate policies in reconciling work with care responsibility for children. One major purpose was to gather information about:

- (a) if there are policies on reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for children that go beyond the Finnish legislation in these companies,
- (b) which these policies are,
- (c) which policies are used and what is their accessibility within the organisation, and
- (d) why the policies are developed.

This last point concerns the gathering of information about the background and development of the corporate policies in reconciling work with care responsibility of children, and examines if these are developed from headquarter company policies on work/family issues or rather derived from the Finnish legislation and context.

10.3. Purpose, selection criteria and process

The main research question steering the interviews was the following:

Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

The research question steering the interviews was the following:

What affects the development, i.e. both the quality and quantity, of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children?

The selection of case companies was done during and after analysis of the quantitative data received from the survey from a logistic regression analysis (n=98) testing six

hypotheses. One of the hypotheses showed significant results, as explained in Chapter 8⁵⁹. Hence, some basic assumptions for the rationale behind corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities were established. The aim of the interviews, then, was to get a detailed view of this rationale by choosing case companies and going back to them to ask more in-depth questions about the issues concerning the development of corporate-level work/family reconciliation policies.

Companies were classified into four different clusters based on two variables; (a) the existence of corporate written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children, and (b) how important the respondent had perceived the existence of corporate written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children for the company image and in the recruitment of new employees. By drawing a four-field-table (see below) and placing the respondent companies within, four case companies were chosen and contacted from two of these clusters. In both of the clusters, there were at least some existing written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children in all companies, but the clusters differed in terms of the distinction of the perceived importance of the policies, based on the perception of the respective HR manager.

Altogether, 10 interviews were conducted. The final division between the clusters was the following: there was one interview in each of two companies and four interviews in each of two companies. These companies were also divided according to the clustering, so that in all four companies there were corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children. The perceived importance of the policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children for the company image and in the recruitment of new employees varied. In both the two companies where only one interview each was conducted, one of the companies perceived a high importance, whereas the other did not. Further, in the two companies where four interviews each were conducted, likewise in one of the companies high importance was perceived, whereas in the other a relatively low importance of corporate written policies was perceived.

So, regarding the perception of importance of the policies, the case companies did represent different views (see Table 16).

⁵⁹ Corporate-level work/family reconciliation policies tested significant for company image and recruitment.

Table 16 The four-field table showing the results from the clustering made based on the logistic regression model

	Have written corporate w/f-policies	Have no written corporate w/f-policies
Perception of high value of w/f-policies in recruitment and company image	+/ Company A (1 interview) Company B (4 interviews)	-/
	+/- Company C (1 interview) Company D (4 interviews)	-/-

Perception of little value of w/f-policies in recruitment and company image

The decision had been made not to look further into companies with no written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children, as those companies operate solely on the mandatory policies from the national legislative framework or informal organisational practices. Those would be the target for another study. Now, the prime focus was on companies who had developed the policies but perceived their importance differently.

From this focus, and the clusters that had been developed, the plan was then to move on to ask about the use of policies. This concerned, whether policies were treated merely as employee parental legal rights, and thereby, as possible inconveniences for the employer, or whether they were used more actively, as a tool in recruitment and employee commitment, so that the company would be using 'family friendliness' as a competitive advantage in recruitment and employee commitment. The HR managers and corresponding HR responsible other managers were interviewed in order to collect their interpretations of governmental and corporate policies, as well as of the contrasting policy regimes.

This was done in order to gain a greater understanding of the development processes and to discover if the groups really differed from each other with regard to the quantity and quality of policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities; if yes, then I wanted to understand why they differed and how, as well as what affects the

development of the policies. Primarily HR managers were chosen in order to obtain as specific information as possible about the policy development and reason behind it, as in most cases they are those responsible for HR policy implementations and development processes.

Before entering the organisations, I had contacted two of my previous HR contacts, and one of them agreed to do a pilot interview. It was agreed that the interview would not be included in the analysis and that I would go back to this company to report my thesis findings later on.

When contacting the chosen companies, in most cases it was possible to obtain access. Only in one of the cases⁶⁰ did this not go as planned: I would have wanted to conduct an interview with one business group level HR manager from Company C (see table above). However, this was not possible due to the fact that she was very busy and travelling between the units in different countries. This eventuality steered my sample in the direction of focusing more closely on two organisations and doing four interviews in each, thus leaving two organisations with only one interview in each. In the end, this still seemed to work fairly well, in spite of the obvious limitations caused by limited time, resources and logistic issues. I reached the saturation point⁶¹ during the four interviews in each company, and felt that I had obtained sufficient data from those organisations also to be able to compare and build on the understanding I had received from the companies with one single respondent.

When contacting the chosen companies, in most cases it was possible to get access. Only in one of the cases, a manufacturing company, this did not go as planned: I would have wanted to get an interview with one business group level HR manager from company C (see table above). However, this was not possible due to the fact that she was very busy and travelling between the units in different countries. This eventuality steered the sample; the focus was put more closely on two organisations and doing four interviews in each, thus leaving two organisations with only one interview each. However, this still seemed to work fairly well and sufficient data was obtained from those organisations, in spite of the obvious limitations caused by limited time, resources and logistical issues.

The companies with a high perceived importance of corporate written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children came from the sectors easily combined with the knowledge society, one being a bank and the other a multinational consultant company. The companies giving low values to the 'importance factor' were representatives from retail and manufacturing. The size of the organisation varied from a unit of 300 employees up to two of over 650 people and one 3,000. Four of the respondents were women, six of them were men. In the organisations where I only interviewed one person, each of the cases was male. In the additional two organisations, the divisions were three males to one female and one male to three females. The youngest respondent was approximately 35 years old and the oldest was in his sixties, just about to retire from work. Six of the respondents were the same people who answered the survey, and these were the self-reported HR responsible people within their organisations. In practice, this meant one retiring CEO and his successor, one HR developer, one HR manager and two business unit-level managers. Of the four later interviewees, three were business unit-level managers and one was a financial

⁶⁰ The manufacturing company.

⁶¹ Saturation point is here used to illustrate the situation when no new information, nor different aspects were reportceived, rather than not to refer to grounded theory.

manager with the over-arching responsibility for work/family issues in his organisation with 3,000 employees. In order to guarantee the respondents' anonymity, I will not go into more specific details. However, in the organisational level, the respondents are summarised as follow in table 17:

Table 17 Description of case companies

organisation	size ⁶²	sector	policies yes/no	perceived importance of policies	# of female respondents	# of male respondents	total # of interviews
A	large	consultancy	yes	high	0	1	1
B	large	banking	yes	high	1	3	4
C	large	retail	yes	low	3	1	4
D	large	manufacturing	yes	low	0	1	1

Additionally, in Chapter 11 the respondents' gender and formal position are discussed.

10.4. Interview as process

10 interviews were conducted within the two chosen clusters, based on the existence of corporate level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibility for children and the perceived importance of these policies. My goal was to learn more about how management and HR units in particular perceive and work on the issues of work/family reconciliation and both national and corporate level policies within that area. Is it merely a parental, legal right and inconvenience for the employer or is 'family friendliness' used as a competitive advantage in recruitment and employee commitment? I also asked about the development of corporate level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities – or lack of it – and the reasons behind of the policy development. Additionally, I was looking for possible gendered differences in the contextualization of work/family-issues, in line with the results from the gender analysis of the quantitative data, as well as the perceived need to develop corporate policies to enable better work/family balance for the employees of the company.

10.4.1. Semi-structured interviews

The discussion on methodology and methods from Chapter Six needs to be continued at this point. An interview is defined as a purposeful discussion between two or more people (Saunders et al. 2003: 245). In fact, 'interview' is a general term for several types of interaction processes performed in order to gather valid and reliable data, and the form should be consistent with the research question, aim and purpose as well as the research strategy and design (Saunders et al. 2000: 242-246). Also, from what perspective you derive and how you treat the gathered data makes an important difference (Silverman 2005: 44-49). Interviews can be strictly formalised and structured, or they can be informal and unstructured discussions (Saunders et al. 2000: 246).

The purpose of a semi-structured interview is to get to know each interviewee as a separate entity (Saunders et al. 2000: 540). It is conducted freely, possibly with a list of

⁶² According to the definition of Statistic Finland, a large enterprise employs more than 250 people.

themes to be discussed, but in a relatively free order and flexible order (Saunders et al. 2000: 246). It is possible for both the respondent and the interviewer to build on each interview along the way, to reflect and seek understanding (Saunders et al. 2000: 540). The underlying assumption in conducting semi-structured interviews is that the researched area is complex and dynamic (Saunders et al. 2000: 253).

Interview situations are influenced by the participants of the interview, their age, gender and power relations. The relation between the interviewer and the respondent is always a subject-subject-relation (Eneroth 1984: 81) with the ability to participate in a communicative interaction which defines what is to count as 'truth' (Fay 1975: 83). Furthermore, the interview demands that both parties understand the questions and the answers, and the actions and the beliefs of the actor in the same way (Fay 1975: 82; Eneroth 1984: 103). Only the content structures need to be shared in understanding; the two parties do not have to agree on the content material.

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews, covering specific areas but giving the respondents the freedom to talk in a more open way about their perceptions and giving me as an interviewer the possibility to steer the discussion and ask additional questions to obtain more specific information. Each respondent was interviewed alone, at their workplace and at their convenience. All interviews were conducted in Finnish, as that was the primary language for both all the respondents and me. Nine interviews were done face-to-face, and one on the telephone. Acknowledging the importance of tape recording and transcribing in qualitative interviews, this was done in all ten cases. Six of the interviews lasted from one to one and a half hours; the remaining four lasted approximately half an hour each. In the four shorter interviews, questions about the policy development of that specific company were asked right at the beginning. The organisational information was known from two previous interviews in each of the two companies with altogether four interviews. Hence, questions regarding the general organisational issues were omitted and the respondents were relatively directly asked about the perceived importance of policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children and the development of these policies in the organisation. Of the respondents in the longer interviews, three were female and three were male. In the shorter interviews, three respondents were male and one was female. The following table (Table 19.) illustrates the division of longer and shorter interview in the respondent companies:

Table 18 The number of long and short interviews in each of the companies

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Number of 'long' interviews	1	2	1	2
Number of 'short' interviews	0	2	0	2
Total number of interviews	1	4	1	4

In order to get the interview to flow well the order of the processed areas of interest was changed according to the respondents' level of talkativeness and engagement. However, in the first six interviews, the structure was closely followed.

10.4.2. General issues regarding the company

Specifically, the six first respondents were asked these questions. Naturally, I did my homework before the interview, but still wanted to ask about the background of the company, both regarding possible organisational changes as restructuring, mergers or acquisitions and the national background and status and development of HR function. This part I strived to keep relatively short, with a focus on the relevance for the possible corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children. Here, I already tried to discover whether there had been any specific people, events or examples advocating the policies. I began with more general questions, listened to what they said about the background and how they said it, then moved on to more company-specific questions.

10.4.3. Specifics of each company

Moving on to the company-specific part, and also moving more into greater depth with the possibly existing policies, I asked about the policies they had stated they have and those that are most frequently used. However, I did not want to repeat what they or a colleague had responded in a survey, but talked more on a general level, letting the respondents talk freely about the policies. I already had a pre-understanding concerning all this after the survey. I wanted to let the respondent elaborate further and talk about the specific policies and in more depth about the reasons for developing them. I then moved on to ask about management attitudes towards the policies, and then asked about what the respondents felt to be the most important reasons to have and to further develop these policies. In these discussions, I let the respondents elaborate quite freely and if the respondent earlier in the interview had brought up something that related to this, I tried to get him or her to combine these parts by referring to what he or she had previously said.

10.4.4. Specifics of the respondent

I had gathered data about the respondent in the survey and had an idea of the family situation of the respondents that had personally answered the survey. I also asked in some cases if he or she felt his or her own situation had affected their engagement in the development of policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children. For example, if the respondent had children and had earlier said that he or she has worked hard to develop the company policies, I asked if their own situation has affected this. In this way, I attempted to discover whether the role of the HR manager is a determining factor for the existence and development of these policies, or whether something else is more important, for example the HQ policies or the personality of the CEO, etc.

10.4.5. Additional interviews

In some cases, if the respondent had a relatively insignificant role in the existence and development of these policies, I tried to elicit who had had, or still had, a more significant role and tried to negotiate access to get to talk to this person, too. For example, one of the respondents had recently come to replace the person who answered the survey from that specific company. In cases like this, the previous HR developer was definitely interesting as a complementary respondent. I knew that she had moved

on become a manager in another unit of the same corporation and luckily was able to interview also her later. In another company, an additional interview was already agreed upon before the first one had taken place. As previously mentioned, in one of the companies, an additional interview with the global HR manager was not possible. All the four shorter interviews were agreed upon later on, and they had the purpose of illustrating whether other manager-level respondents from the same organisation, but possibly from a different unit, would support or oppose the comments that the previous respondents from the same organisations had made.

I chose to give the single interviews conducted in two of the companies as much weight as the others, even if the role of single case interviews can be seen as problematic. This was done because I began by analysing the contents thematically and only later combined the contents with the case companies I do appreciate the possible bias in stating something about the specific companies with a single conducted interview, but no direct connections to single companies are made. The analyses focus on similarities in types of businesses⁶³ rather than looking at specific fields, as will be illustrated in the following chapter. Finally, the purpose of the interviews was to deepen the information received from the survey. Having the two types of data enables the researcher to triangulate⁶⁴ the data in a loose manner. The term triangulate is here used in a loose manner, illustrating that by having them both it possible to compare and increase the understanding as well as ‘check’ if the issues are presented and understood in similar ways.

10.4.6. Concluding remarks

In the last four interviews, the structure was very similar, except for the first and general part, which was in most cases left out. Also, I did not ask as many specific questions, as I moved more quickly to the central questions – which were the reasons for developing the corporate level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children – based on the experiences I had gathered from the earlier interviews within the same organisation.

When conducting the interviews, I went to these companies to listen to the HR managers and respective managers tell me what they thought has and will affect the existence and development of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children in their specific company. I tried to lead them to cover the above explained areas, but the main focus was in the second part, in the *specific situation* of the company. The level of saturation was reached in the organisations where four interviews were conducted; the respondents in the last interviews did not add any new issues to the data.

In the following chapter I reflect further on these issues in discussing the results and conclusions of the interviews.

⁶³ Such as ‘knowledge work’, referring to altogether five interviews conducted in two different companies with fairly similar kinds of employee profiles.

⁶⁴ The term “triangulate” is here used to refer to having two or more data sources to compare, so increasing understanding as well as ‘checking’ if the issues are presented and understood in similar ways.

11 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

In this chapter, the results from the interviews are presented. The chapter starts with (re-)presenting the organisational background and, further, giving a more personified profile of the respondents. After that, the data is allowed to speak, and the analysis is concluded in the end discussion.

11.1. Background information about the selection criteria, organisations and respondents

Altogether, 10 interviews were conducted, with the division presented in the previous chapter. In order to make it clearer, below is a concluding table (Table 19.) on the respondents and organisations.

Table 19 Organisational division of respondents

organisation	size	sector	policies yes/no	perceived importance of policies	# of female respondents	# of male respondents	total # of interviews
A	700	consultancy	yes	high	0	1	1
B	850	banking	yes	high	1	3	4
C	3000	retail	yes	low	3	1	4
D	300	manufacturing	yes	low	0	1	1

As previously explained, the respondent organisations for the interviews were chosen based on the selection criteria that the quantitative analyses (logistic regression) pointed out as the most important factors for developing corporate-level policies for reconciling work with family, those being the corporate image and the importance of the policies in recruitment. The organisations were sorted according to the values they had given to these factors. Further, organisations were sorted according to whether they reported having corporate level policies for reconciliation of work and family.

‘Case companies’ were chosen from the group with corporate-level written work/family policies. Both companies who gave high values and who gave low values to the importance of the corporate level policies to corporate image, recruitment and attractiveness as employer were chosen; two companies in each categories. In two of the companies – one in each category – only one interview was conducted. In the two other companies – one in each category – four interviews were conducted in each. The table below illustrates the division of respondent organisations into categories.

Table 20 The division of respondent organisations according to selection criteria.

<p style="text-align: center;">+ / +</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes corporate w/f-policies Perception of high value of w/f-policies in recruitment, company image and attractiveness as employer (A1 + B1-B4 = 5 interviews)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">- / +</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No corporate w/f-policies Perception of high value of w/f-policies in recruitment, company image and attractiveness as employer</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">+ / -</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes corporate w/f-policies Perception of little value of w/f-policies in recruitment, company image and attractiveness as employer (C1+ D1-D4 = 5 interviews)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">- / -</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No corporate w/f-policies Perception of little value of w/f-policies in recruitment, company image and attractiveness as employer</p>

11.2. Interviews

In the following section, the interview data is presented in chronological order. In the table above can be seen the division into categories. As the order is chronological, in order to describe the interviewing as a process, the interviews within one organisation are necessarily not placed after one another.

First interview (C1)

The respondent of the first interview is aged 50+, male, and working as a unit manager in a manufacturing company. His company is coded as C and he as 1, so from now both he and the interview with him will be addressed as C1.

Respondent C1 is married and has two adult children. His formal education is from junior high school. He himself does not experience any work/family conflict. He stays partly in another city than his hometown during working weeks. He does feel any need to develop further work/family policies in the organisation.

The respondent unit of the organisation, operating locally even if the organisation as a whole operates globally, has its headquarters in Finland and consists of approximately 300 employees, with 38% females and 62% males. The age division is even among the employees over 25 years old but there are fewer young workers than those over 24. The figure for the under 24-year-old employees is only 8%. The total number of employees has increased steadily since 2004, after a structural and organisational re-structuring process. The local workforce supply has decreased noticeably during the last years, which is a substantial difference to the past, and the new trend is for Russians to apply to work at the factory. The trend is also that all new workers are employed via temporary manpower organisations, and then after four months to one year, permanent employment is established between the manufacturing company and the employee. The company requires no specific education from its workers, but gives on-the-job training to new employees.

The corporate-level policies include flexibility in working hours and the opportunity to telework for those who work with clerical tasks at the unit. A ‘work time bank’ is used for the factory workers. Informally, changing shifts with colleagues was possible, and it was possible to do this relatively freely; no permission from one’s superior was needed, but there was a strict demand to inform one’s superior.

No other work/family policies exist, but the respondent who partly also works at another manufacturing unit within the organisation did state two things; firstly, that this unit is much more flexible than the other one the respondent is connected to, and, secondly, that the headquarter-level, fairly new, HR manager has started to work towards the harmonisation of corporate HR policies and is keen to adopt some more ‘family-friendly’ ways of operating for the entire organisation. One example of this was to acknowledge employees having a baby.

In developing corporate-level work/family policies, none of the statutory nation-level policies have had a remarkable impact. This is mainly a result of the fact that the company operates first and foremost according to the collective labour market agreement. This can be illustrated by inserting two quotes from C1-interview:

(Quote 1: C1) “[...] pretty often there are in the collective labour market agreements for different employee categories such, and also in the law, such steering factors that, well, demand that the employer has a certain kind of attitude towards, well, reconciliation of work and family.”

(Quote 2: C1) “We are pretty precise in following the collective labour market agreements and act according to them; pay what is stipulated and do not pay if it is not stipulated, and so on.”

The use of family leaves has increased during recent years. The most frequently used policies are today paternal leave, flexible working hours and the work time bank. Additionally, maternity leave, parental leave, care leave and telework have been used. One specific issue about the manufacturing field is that a female worker takes special maternity leave as soon as she finds out about her pregnancy. This is because the processes and chemicals used in the work can be unhealthy for the foetus. According to the respondent, this does not affect the ways in which the company is recruiting male and female employees. Further, work/family issues are not discussed in recruitment. They are not perceived as at all important in recruitment, for the company image or its attractiveness as employer. The following two quotes illustrate this:

(Quote 3: C1) “[...] a person comes to work here probably because the pay is relatively good and the employment is relatively secured.”

(Quote 4: C1) “[...] so especially for a **woman**⁶⁵ the pay is good, compared to what she would get as a cashier or something.”

The attitudes towards the statutory leaves are reported to be neutral. The management is informed about and trained in both the national level statutory family policies and the corporate-level work/family policies. New workers are not specifically informed about these issues.

The respondent estimated that the employees experienced relatively modest work/family conflict. Additionally, he suggested that the employee sees how the organisation works during the period of employment by the manpower organization, and either stays with the company afterwards or leaves.

⁶⁵ Original emphasis.

To summarise this interview, the way the unit works is very strictly tied to collective labour market agreements and labour law. There seems to be a policy change going on at the concern level, including policy harmonisation of the units across the different countries. However, this still shows only very moderately on the unit level. An interview with the headquarters HR manager would surely have been further enlightening, but this unfortunately ultimately was not possible.⁶⁶

The attitudes towards reconciliation of work and family were neutral and understanding, but few things beyond the statutory elements were introduced. Relatively good pay and a relatively stable job were regarded as the important factors in recruitment; work/family issues did not play any part. Interestingly enough, the new employees were taken in via a manpower organisation and they had a period of four months to one year to prove themselves to the employer. The attitude was that if the new employees were not satisfied with the ‘company way’, they would leave. Also, the employment negotiations were held mainly in phase one, when still in a ‘test period’. An organisation that does not require any specific training can relatively easily replace employees with new ones. Still, people under the age of 24 and locals in general were no longer especially keen to work for the company. This might indicate that things have changed. This issue is discussed further at the end of the chapter and, later on, in the discussion chapter.

11.2.1. Second interview (B2)

The second interview took place fairly soon after the first. The respondent is the new CEO, who also has responsibility for HR matters, of a bank, aged 50+, and is married with two (nearly) adult children. She had previously been at the headquarters unit, but then moved to another unit within the same concern, and is now returning in order to take over after the resigning CEO.

The organisation that she represented has always had its company headquarters in Finland, and the company has an over 100-year history. There are approximately 850 employees, of which 70% are females and 30% males. According to the background info from the survey, the age groups were fairly even. On the other hand, in the discussions with both this respondent and her predecessor, who also had completed the survey and who was interviewed subsequently, the organisation was missing a generation in between the youngest and the oldest employees, deriving from the 1990s recession in Finland, when no new people were recruited. In addition, 50% of all employees are 25-29-year old and have worked in the field for a maximum of three years. Further, the retention figures have exploded during the past years, but had stopped during the recent economic crisis.⁶⁷

The company has corporate-level written policies for reconciling work with family. Predominantly, these are separately negotiated policies, depending upon the needs of the employee. In use are flexible working hours, part-time work and a vacation bank. According to the survey, which had been answered by her predecessor, the most important factors of the national statutory policies and strategies affecting the development have been the national family legislation and the governmental gender equality strategies. In addition, corporate values and employee demands have had a significant impact. All in all, the importance of work/family policies for the corporate

⁶⁶ This was also discussed in the previous chapter.

⁶⁷ The interview was conducted in February 2009.

image, for its attractiveness as employer and for recruitment is regarded as being very high.

Use of statutory family leaves has increased during the past years. The form of leave used the most is maternity leave, care leave and partial care leave. Other family leaves used within the past years are paternity leave, parental leave and temporary care leave. The respondent reported that approximately 50 employees are at the moment (of the interview) on family leave, and that there is a similar trend to that during the economic crisis in the 1990s, that women staying on parental leaves have another baby immediately, without returning to work in between.

The predecessor had reported in the survey that management attitudes towards the work/family policies and practices are very positive. The management is informed about but not trained in work/family issues. New employees are informed about the corporate-level work/family policies. The estimate of the number of employees experiencing work/family conflict was 25%.

The respondent spoke relatively lengthily about her own experiences in an expert unit within the same corporation during the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s when she had her children and fought her own battles regarding the reconciliation of work and family. While she had worked during evenings and weekends, she has now both experienced a shift in the general thinking of how a 'good worker' should combine the two spheres, and actively as a manager wanted herself to introduce a more balanced culture into the organisation. Moreover, she sees a shift on the societal level, and combines it very much with the gender equality promoting work, both within her own organisation and society more widely. 'Family-friendly' attributes have also been documented in the corporate equality plan. As an example, a quote from B2:

(Quote 1:B2) "[In the corporate equality plan] *men are encouraged to take parental leave.*"

The development of the situation and its interconnection with gender equality is present in the following quotes:

(Quote 2:B2) "... Well, the young fathers, in some way they are away from work when the baby is born ((laughter)), not for very long but still."

(Quote 3:B2) "Every man is away [on paternity leave]. I remember the time when no man was ((laughter))."

(Quote 4:B2) "[...] somehow I feel that every man is away [on paternity leave], umm these thirty-somethings, if a baby is born."

(Quote 4:B2) "I do think we have the right attitude, in a way, everyone knows that if a young woman is recruited, she might soon take maternity leave [but this does not affect the recruitment]."

The respondent thinks that the organisation has developed greatly since she had small children, and that it has established it as normal procedure to occasionally go home earlier to take care of domestic issues, and, on a regular basis, to go home after the working day and not support the 'long hours' culture.

To summarise the second interview, it was interesting to hear the respondent quite openly talk about the development of a more gender equal organisation. The respondent specifically asked me not to take up the difficult issues concerning her in person. Her wishes were followed and summarised in a notion of the importance of gender equality work in the organisational change. This change also led to a greater

understanding of the work/family issues present in most organisations. Even if the respondent was newly arrived in her position, she had held the corresponding position earlier and had a long history within the organisation.

11.2.2. Third interview (B1)

This respondent is the predecessor referred to above, and also the one who had completed the survey in the organisation. Hence, all the organisational facts, such as figures and stated policies, from the interview above apply even in this case. At the time of the interview,⁶⁸ the respondent was working two or three days a week, finishing off some projects, and inducting the successor before he himself completely retired. The respondent is aged 60+, male, and married with two adult children. He reported experiencing very little work/family conflict himself but feels a need to develop the corporate-level policies for reconciling work and family within the organisation.

The respondent started by describing the organisation. Without repeating everything from the previous interview, it can here be noted that he wanted to very bluntly explain the gender division of the organisation; he said it was 80-20 to females, but that in the executive group of five members only one is a woman. Further, in the middle management the figure is approximately 50-50. This means that in the lower levels of the organisation, the majority of the workforce is female. Of the workforce, 44% is under 30-year-olds and the retention rate is very high.

In the survey, the respondent had given a very positive picture regarding the organisation's view on work/family reconciliation. During the interview, he very clearly illustrated the importance of work/family policies and other forms of flexibility developments as means of retaining the workforce, and especially the youngest employees. It can best be illustrated by a quote:

(Quote 1: B1) "I guess this work/family reconciliation started from the "statutory" maternity leaves, like a constraint⁶⁹... well, the world has changed in a way that this issue... at least I see it in a way, that the employer has an interest to take care of these issues well and actively. That it has sort of changed from being forced to, to... hmm, how should I put it, actually to be a prerequisite that the company is healthy and can have... because it has content and committed personnel."

Here, he continues by saying:

(Quote 2: B1) "And then that point I was raising, that we have this kind of a age structure... well, here the expectations for the relations of work and leisure and their importance of the 'new generation' shows completely. [...] if we are not able to respond to demands like this regarding the relations between work and leisure, work and family... well, it will not end well."

The respondent was worried about the situation; the changing values towards work and commitment to the employer, as well as the increased focus on leisure in the lives of the youngest employee and potential recruits. Some discussions and internal material and statistics were asked to kept confidential, but the following set of quotes give a representational picture of the discussions with respondent B1.

⁶⁸ February 2009

⁶⁹ The Finnish word here is 'pakkopulla', meaning something compulsory that one does without any desire to do it.

(Quote 3: B1) “The starting point, I guess is that, really, the notion of career is completely different for these young people [...] entering the labour market than for the more mature generation who have made... it is possible to make a career within the same organisation, and somehow it feels that... the attitude climate is... for this younger group, that a career is made of several bits and pieces.”

Further, he discussed career changes within his own organisation, moves on to discuss competitors and more drastic changes to different fields, and the gathering of experience and building up of a career from very different bits and pieces. He called this trend “*obvious and typical*”⁷⁰.

The respondent has a clear view on the value shifts among the youngest generation, which also shows in the relationship between work and family.

(Quote 4: B1) “And specifically this group [Generation Y] whose relationship to work or career, and the relationship between work and leisure, preferences, is different from what we, we are used to... so it is a big challenge and is surely also related to this, this work/family reconciliation, well **especially**⁷¹ strongly here. Sure, the question is relevant for other age pyramids, but there... this is the main group where this issue exists.”

And he continues:

(Quote 5: B1) “That is why this question [developing policies for the reconciliation of work and family] is very important to us... when one thinks that people are inspired by their work and committed to the employer and everything... what are then the expectations for different possibilities.”

Further, when discussing the development of the corporate level policies, it became clear that for some years the organisation had already wanted to develop their internal and external image among employees and potential recruits, and had paid great attention to human resource development for approximately ten years. To retain motivated and content personnel is highly important when seeking to remain competitive, and in order to succeed, the organisation has developed policies and practices for individual development, career paths and work/family reconciliation. The respondent described the corporate values as being focused on human beings and individuals. But still he stated that the labour market situation, the need to have a good image and the need to be an attractive employer have been the foremost factors initiating policy development. He has seen the field of business change during his years, but he kept returning to the question of values and the new value climate facing the recruiters. He stated that the difference to the past is substantial and that it challenges the companies in totally new ways. The respondent gave examples of a phenomenon where young employees will ask for a personal leave of absence for one year for a very individualistic reason, for personal interests or desires, for example in order to travel, and if this is not agreed upon, he or she will resign from their job. He explained that it requires a lot from the employer organisation, as in some cases they cannot afford to lose the employee and they need to agree. Still, he said, this cannot be done for everybody. It depends on the importance of that specific employee to the organisation, whether he or she is easily replaceable or not and what his or her attitude towards work has been. According to the respondent, the phenomenon is fairly recent, being visible for the last couple of years.

The connections of gender equality and work/family issues in this respondent’s discussion can be summarised into one statement about paternity leave:

⁷⁰ Quoted.

⁷¹ Original emphasis.

(Quote 6: B1) “I have a gut feeling that as the years have gone by, men have more and more used their right to take paternity leave.”

Being, as he stated, all for gender equality, he reflected upon the gender balance in management positions and the recruitment processes. These reflections are illustrated by a final quote by respondent B1:

(Quote 7: B1) *“For example, when we have an opening for a manager for a big office... well, I would like to see more applicants and interested, also women... but this is just a sudden thought... is reconciliation of work and family a bigger problem for **women**⁷² than men attitudinally. The bigger the boss, the longer the days often are, and it is hard to distinguish... this is just a thought and a hunch, that is it so that males more easily push the domestic responsibilities onto their partners and are, like, more ready to allocate more time to the tasks of the dear employer?”*

Respondent B1 was relatively clear and specific in his statements, and in many ways pleasant and easy to talk with. As he was the resigning CEO, there might have been a final testimony in his words, and the way he kept coming back to the generational issues made it quite clear that this issue should be taken seriously and given more thought.

11.2.3. Fourth interview (D1)

The fourth interview was conducted at a retail company with approximately 3,000 employees. The gender division of the organization is 75% females and 25% males. The age division is reported as follows: the youngest age group with employees under the age of 30 amounts to 40% of the employees; the medium group with employees between the ages 30 and 45 amounts to 30%; and the remaining amount of 30% are employees up to 65 years old. The headquarters of the company has always been in Finland, and the history of the company reaches back to the mid-1900s.

The respondent⁷³ is aged 30+, female, and with one child. She is the human resource developer of the company and fairly new⁷⁴ in her job. Her previous jobs have been HR jobs with competitors. Her predecessor at this present organisation answered the survey, which preceded the interviews. The respondent’s superior is the chief financial officer, who is also responsible for the HR function.

The organisation has written corporate policies for reconciling work with family. These are flexible working hours and part-time work, which both are negotiable policies. According to the predecessor’s answers to the survey, family legislation has had the largest impact in developing corporate-level policies. Equality law, corporate values and strategies for both gender equality and work/family reconciliation have had a relatively large impact, whereas governmental strategies for gender equality and employee demands have had a fairly small impact on the development of corporate work/family policies.

⁷² Original emphasis.

⁷³ When meeting the respondent face-to-face, I noticed that I knew her very distantly from our junior high school times. I mentioned this to the respondent, as I did not want her to speculate about whether she remembered me. After this comment, we did not discuss the issue further. We were never personal acquaintances and had not seen each other for approximately twenty years.

⁷⁴ This was approximately five months at the time of the interview.

The use of statutory rights has remained unchanged during the past years. Maternity leave, parental leave and care leave are the most frequently exercised legislative rights. Of all work/family policies, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave and care leave as well as partial care leave, temporary care leave and flexible working hours have all been used during the last years. According to the respondent, the right to work flexible hours only applies to the personnel working in central administration, which is approximately 12.5% of the personnel. The majority of the personnel, working in stores work in two shifts. It is possible to change shifts, but no regular special arrangements are made for single mothers or others. Finally, how much the wishes are taken into consideration depends on the closest superior. At the time of interview,⁷⁵ the stores were open approximately 12 hours a day, six days a week. After that, the regulations for keeping stores open on Sundays have become freer, which additionally affects the shifts. This was acknowledged in the interview.

According to the predecessor's answers to the survey, the attitudes of the management towards work/family reconciliation are very positive. Management is informed about and trained in the policies and new employees are informed about them. The respondent further revealed that information about the statutory rights is available on the Internet. Furthermore, she estimated that while the last training has taken place for some years ago, there had recently been a 'road show' throughout the units in the country with HR personnel discussing and informing the management teams of each unit. The impact of having corporate-level work/family policies is unimportant in recruitment and does not play a significant role in the attractiveness of the company as an employer, even if the impact on the image is seen as somewhat more important. The respondent's predecessor also estimated that approximately 40% of the employees do experience work/family conflict and that this conflict is substantial. However, no need to develop further policies was acknowledged.

Moreover, the respondent was reluctant to develop new policies. On the other hand, for the personnel working in the central administration, she was willing to allow more opportunities for teleworking. She expressed a wish to be able to telework approximately one day a week, as she has a small child. But on the whole, she did not see development of further work/family policies as possible. To illustrate this, a quote follows:

(Quote 1: D1) "Well I do have a personal opinion of a fundamental conflict, and that somewhere there has to be the optimal point just how far it is possible to go, to be family-friendly and put the needs of an individual first, when this is about a profit-making, profitable, profit-seeking business ((laughter))."

The laws and regulations were the main reasons for developing any policies. The respondent stated several times that they are not in the forefront of developing policies, but rather the type to adjust to existing regulations, legislation and collective labour market agreements. The attitudes, she said, towards the statutory regulations have been positive and superiors have been trained. However, she repeated that the final outcome in the use of policies and the informal practices is dependent upon the attitudes of superiors and managers.

She also stated that work/family reconciliation issues can be quite sensitive to economic trends. At the end of the interview, she brought up the fierce fight about workforce and said that in times of lack of personnel these issues gain more attention. On the other hand, she said that companies like the one she represents would like to

⁷⁵ February 2009.

see themselves as stable and would not let economic trends affect attitudes towards work/family reconciliation. But, she stated, the reality in the quartile economy is different and creates pressures to allocate means very carefully and only to that which is indispensable, and to “*squeeze more out of people with less flexibility ((laughter))*”.

The majority of the personnel have a relatively low level of education. Some academic students work for periods of a maximum of three to four years but those with the lower level education tend to have long careers in the organisation. The stores are situated in all parts of the country, and the retention rate is lower in other parts of Finland than in the Metropolitan area. All in all, in the discussion, the respondent seemed to be categorising employees according to position and regional status. Also, the division between those with lower education levels staying in the organisation for years and decades and those academic students just “*passing by*” was clear. Work/family reconciliation policies were not seen as any kind of “*triumph in recruitment*”⁷⁶, or “*visible in employer brand*”⁷⁷. Rather, she said that the people applying for jobs at the organisation seek the security and stability that a big organisation can provide.

Even if this had been a good interview, the fact that the respondent was fairly new in her job and that her predecessor had answered the survey and later changed jobs within the same organisation affected the perception of the need for more interviews in the organisation, starting with this specific predecessor. In fact, three additional interviews within the organisation were later conducted.

11.2.4. Fifth interview (A1)

The previous interview was chronologically followed by the present one only two days later. The organisation was another one, not having been visited before. The organisation operates in the what is often called ‘knowledge business’, providing consultation. The company had previously but not originally had its headquarters in Finland, but due to organisational changes the headquarters are now outside of Finland. The origins of the company date back to the mid-19th century, and the number of employees of the company is today approximately 700. The gender balance is even and the age structure such that the oldest employee group, 45+ up to retirement age has a share of 20% and the two younger groups, up to 30 and 30-45, each have a share of 40%.

The company has written corporate policies for reconciling work with family. The policies consist of a nurse for an employee’s child who has fallen ill and a work time bank for all employees, and flexible working hours and autonomy in working hours, part-time work and a vacation bank as negotiable policies. The headquarters outside of Finland have some of the same policies, but always via negotiations, not automatically. The three most frequently-used policies in Finland within the past years have been paternity leave, parental leave and the nurse provided for an employee’s child who has fallen ill.

According to the respondent’s answers in the survey, the most influential factors in the development of the policies have been the corporate strategies for gender equality and work/family reconciliation as well as employee needs and demands. Family legislation has had some effect, but equality law and governmental equality strategies relatively

⁷⁶ Quoted.

⁷⁷ Quoted.

little. For the company, work/family policies were perceived as very important for recruitment, attractiveness as employer and for the corporate image.

The respondent himself had been in the job for two years and did not feel any work/family conflict, nor did he perceive that his employees had any substantial conflict. The respondent is a man in his 50s, co-habiting with no children.

The respondent began by talking about the high retention rate of female employees before entering a managerial level in the organisation, generally when they are 30-38 years old and have 5 years of employment behind them. He believes that gaining budget responsibility and being a superior for the first time might not go together very well with the typical life cycle-phase of women of that age. Still, he sees that the reason for not having 50% females in managerial posts has a historical explanation; as those in top management today have gone through the 'long hours' culture of the 1990s in order to get where they are today.

Special attention has been directed towards the female employees by starting networks and a mentoring program especially for women. Additionally, employees on parental leave are allowed and encouraged to keep their laptops and mobiles, and the employer stays in touch with these people, enabling him or (most often) her to take part in in-house or external training. According to the respondent, male employees do still not take up as much parental leave as, for example, their colleagues in Sweden, but he does see a growing trend of fathers going on parental leave. The company policy encourages employees in all kinds of ways to reconcile work and family.

The generational differences and challenges with retaining Generation Y employees were visible and dominant also in this interview. The challenges were similar to those in the other 'knowledge work' organisation, here coded as company 'B'. The challenges appear in the following quotes:

(Quote 1: A1) "...the kind of exceptions made in regular working contracts; fixed-time contracts or times-off or... well, part-time work or telework, and these kinds of individual solutions, and if people want to change city or country, we allocate a lot of resources to these in order to retain the people within the organisation."

(Quote 2: A1) "As soon as we get rid of this economic crisis, we are again facing the question, that do we have enough workforce supply locally, do we get the best people to work for us and will they pursue a long career with us. That is, kind of, the central question."

(Quote 3:A1) "We will have to be able to offer working conditions that they are ready to accept. If somebody every year wants to take a long time off, and we want this guy to work for us, the only way is then to accept it and reconcile."

The respondent sees further challenges with the 'Generation Y' employees. Besides not committing to one organisation for very long and having different expectations regarding their employer than the older employees, they do not seem to gravitate to managerial positions but rather enjoy the challenges of work without becoming a part of the staff organization, but to retaining their freedom both in questions of time and responsibility. He also sees them as no longer having separate networks for work and their private life, but that they have one large network and no boundaries for work and private when they use the social media. He feels that it is important to include these young people, starting to represent 15% of the employees, to create the organisational culture, as he feels it is difficult to understand their needs and create it for them without being a representative of that generation himself.

As already discussed earlier, the respondent perceived work/family, or more broadly, work/life reconciliation and balance to be a crucial factor for the company image, its attractiveness as employer and for recruitment. By having the policies, the company achieves a competitive advantage. Or, as he said, the policies are formed by the mimetic pressures of the few serious competitors:

(Quote 5: A1) “I do not think that anyone will have the time to really compete with them, well, all the others are ready to walk that walk very rapidly, so that it would not become that kind of a question.”

This interview did emphasise the generational challenges within the ‘knowledge society’. This interview showed that it would be well-motivated to focus on two different kinds of organisations more closely in order to see if these differences and arising themes would reveal more.

11.2.5. Sixth interview (D2)

The sixth interview was the second of the additional interviews agreed upon in an organisation where one interview had already been conducted. This respondent was the former HR developer of company D and was the respondent in the survey that preceded the interviews. She had moved to another unit within the same organisation approximately a year earlier, being in charge of that business unit. She defined her change of jobs as a question of looking for new challenges and that the time of change had been dependent on her family situation; *“that the family situation allowed her to build a new career.”*

The past year had been a tough one in the unit because of the economic crisis in Finland, which had affected the business. The respondent reported that she had fairly soon noticed the decreased well-being among the employees and had arranged for the employee’s health care to become involved. She said that the employees needed to gain control over their work again. This she sees to be very closely connected to work/family issues, as their work had spilled over to the employees’ family life.

Even if the policies to reconcile work with family are not very numerous in the company, and they are unevenly distributed according to the employment status, the respondent defines the attitudes among the superiors as being fairly positive, especially if they have children themselves.

Quote 1 (D2): “Absolutely, having a family oneself helps to see the issues...”

The corporate-level policies offered to reconcile work and family include flexible working hours for clerical workers in the organisation. Further, for all, there is the possibility of cutting down on the hours on a temporal or continual basis or to change to another kind of job within the same (fairly large) organisation. The development of policies had started in the context of gender equality work, equality planning and development. The superiors are trained in and informed about family leave of various types.

Respondent D2 also brought up the issue of the younger generation. This is illustrated by two quotes:

Quote 2 (D2): “[there will be] such a lack of a competent workforce... I think that... well that has been forgotten in all this talk about recession, but in the near future it will become a challenge to get a competent workforce with these low salaries.”

Quote 3 (D2): “[...] It is not self-evident that... I would say that there is [a generation] coming... who will work for some time, then go off to travel, earn the travel money, come back and... so it is a different kind of... next generation.”

To sum up, this respondent talked quite openly about her own experiences, in a similar way to respondent B2 in an earlier interview. Both these respondents were women with teenaged or nearly adult children, and they described their situation as being much freer and easier, and that they understand the needs of the employees better now than before. The organisations that they represented were very different, but I did recall similarities in their ways of talking about work and family, combining it with the gender equality issues and having more time for their careers at their present state now their children are older.

Quite surprisingly, even respondent D2 raised the issue about the generational differences. The employees in her organisation are not required to have a high level of education and they seldom have rare expert skills, but still the lack of workforce is seen as an issue and a challenge in the company’s future. In company D, the question was problematic because of the turnover of employees.

After this interview, I decided to try to obtain an interview from the financial manager of the corporation, as he was said to be formally in charge of all HR issues within the organisation. Further, an additional unit manager was approached and an interview agreed upon. These will be discussed later, after some initial results from the first six interviews.

11.3. Analysis of interview data

In this section, the analyses of the first six interviews are presented. These interviews were the initial six, where all parts of the interview manuscript were carefully discussed. They were also somewhat longer than the last four. These interviews were analysed in several phases during the spring, summer and autumn of 2009.

11.3.1. Content analysis

The first thing done with the interview data of the initial six interviews was that I attempted to find some frequently arising themes concerning how to talk about work-family reconciliation and the policies. Then, I did a form of content analysis on the material, using a rather positivist position and quantitative count to look at which themes the respondent combined their talk of work/family reconciliation with. I was applying the idea from a method called the ‘substance-method’⁷⁸ to group the data in different groups according to their qualities (Eneroth 1984: 141). The data is summarised into qualities which in their turn give a name or a label to the phenomenon that is researched.

This method helped me to find the groups for the content analysis, and I used it as an instrument even if I was not looking for new ways of defining things but for alternative ways of conceptualising them. I was not looking for ‘ideal types’ or even looking at being able to ‘label’ everything. I simply listened to the managers’ talk and later on began to code in repeated themes in the transcripts.

⁷⁸ Freely translated from the Swedish word ‘Väsens-metod’, i.e. ‘the being of something’.

The themes were inductively derived from the data, including the over-arching topics 'legislation', 'gender equality' and 'competition for employees' in the discussion, not counting words or sentences, but sections where the issues were addressed. By looking at the themes more closely, and alternately reading about theory, it was possible to see connections to institutional theory; the categories quite naturally followed the basic logics of institutional theory and the different pressures central to the theory. So, the themes or categories were re-defined to respond to 'normative pressure' (previously 'legislation'), 'coercive pressure' (previously 'gender equality') and 'mimetic pressure' (previously 'competition for employees').

The first six interviews resulted in the following division within the categories, the numbers representing statements connected to one of the categories. These are illustrated in table 21:

Table 21 Categories of contextualisations

	Legislation	Legitimacy	Competition for employees
	Normative pressure	Coercive pressure	Mimetic pressure
male	20 (60.1%)	11 (32.4%)	26 (70.3%)
female	13 (39.4%)	21 (61.8%)	11 (29.7%)
total	33	34	37
links to	Family policies	Gender equality	Corporate management

While conducting the interviews, I had a 'gut feeling' that I was getting slightly different data from men than from women. I could not quite put my finger on it, but I wanted to understand it better. That is why I wanted to divide the answers according to gender. The division into themes and categories seemed to shed some light on the differences. This light content analysis shows that the three male and the three female respondents in the five initial interviews had answered differently when, first, generally talking about reconciliation of work and family and, then, contextualising the existence, development and meanings of corporate policies for the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities.

In the following sections, each of the categories is discussed separately.

11.3.2. Legislation/Normative pressure

Legislation, leading to normative pressures for companies to develop corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities, was used to describe the challenges of re-organising work while an employee stayed on family leave and also for taking aboard different policies established by collective labour market agreements, such as flexible working hours or vacation banks, not specifically creating something new themselves, but adapting to orders coming from the state or union levels and trying to get it work optimally in their own organisation.

In some cases, the legislation or collective labour market agreement was used as an argument for not developing corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities. In cases like that, the company remains reactive and only does what is formally expected from it. These comments came dominantly from male

respondents, especially strongly and frequently by one individual, who was a unit manager, representing a manufacturing company. However, also some of the female respondents, especially a unit manager in a retail company contextualised the issues around legislation and normative issues. In the following, I provide a few examples:

“[...] Well, as most people here work in shifts with a salary according to the labour market agreements, well not that kind of shifts but we’re open late and soon even Sundays, well it’s hard to reconcile with family and if you have a small child, it is no treat[...] It demands flexibility from the whole family, and it’s hard to find any solutions[...] the company does not provide a nurse if the child falls ill, or something.” (Female respondent, D2)

“[...] Pretty often in the collective labour market agreements for different employee categories such, and also in the law, there are such steering factors that, well, demand the employer to have a certain kind of attitude towards, well, reconciliation of work and family.” (Male respondent, C1)

11.3.3. Gender equality/Coercive pressure

Gender equality was present in a few different ways in the five respondents’ discussion. It was far more used by women than by men, but it is noteworthy that it was used by two of the three respondent women, these representing not only different organisations but also different sectors and being representatives of employees doing very different types of jobs. The third female respondent, being from one of the previous organisations but being younger than the other two women, very strictly kept her distance from anything relating to gender equality issues when talking about reconciliation of work and family. It was interesting especially because one of the women who did talk a lot about gender equality as being relevant to work/family issues in the organisation was her predecessor in the organisation, and had now moved on to other responsibilities within the same organisation. The predecessor had been central in the development of corporate level policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children, and the work had been started as a part of the gender equality work that got started by normative pressure when the law began to require equality plans from companies that have more than 30 employees. When male respondents referred to gender-equality-related issues, often they were talking about paternity leave. In the following I provide some examples of how the issues were addressed:

“When thinking of recruitment... well, it isn’t like... well, that when a young woman applies for a position they would think that, hey, she’ll be on maternity leave soon, as she’ll have plenty of work years ahead of her... so I think it concretely shows in recruitment that – well, there is a positive attitude towards families.” (Female respondent, B2)

“Today every man is taking paternity leave. It is a rule, so that... surely, no, no, that will not go unused; everybody takes paternity leave.” (Male respondent, C1)

“[In the corporate equality plan] men are encouraged to take parental leave.” (Female respondent, B2)

“Well, I think they have learned, as this is a female dominated field and half of our superiors are women and most of the men have families, ((laughs)) so somehow the situation is understood.” (Female respondent, B2)

11.3.4. Competition for employees/Mimetic pressure

The third theme frequently rising from the interviews was the theme of competing for the best employees both regarding recruitment and retention. The theme was more

present in the companies representing the knowledge industries than in the companies representing retail and manufacturing, but in some form it did come up in all the interviews. This category was the most frequent and also the clearest one. In the following, a few quotes illustrate the category:

“I do think that... well... in a way, it [the importance of w/f policies] would grow and have an effect if we... we emphasised them and, as we have recruited so many young people and now so many of them are away and we are just waiting for them to return ((laughter))... sort of for the positive message.” (Female respondent, B2)

“[...] The attitude towards these things [w/f policies] and, and, and the solutions in practice, well, with them it is possible to create a positive employer brand. Absolutely.” (Male respondent, B1)

“Well there is a connection to business in the way that if we succeed in that area [w/f policies], well... well, we ensure that the good employees are more likely to stay with us. (Male respondent, A1)

11.4. The remaining interviews

After the first six interviews, I went back to two of the organisations and conducted two more interviews in each of them. The two new respondents in company B were unit managers working in the knowledge business. Of the other two respondents, from company D, one was a unit manager and the other one was a financial manager. In company B, the new respondents were both men, and in company D, the unit manager was a woman and the financial manager was a man.

I was partly analysing these interviews as I went along. The two respondents in company B relatively strongly emphasised the same issue that had been frequently discussed in all the earlier interviews already: attracting the best and retaining Generation Y employees in the organisation. The two other respondents, both from company D, focused more on normative issues, the difficulty in being able to arrange the work/family reconciliation issues for shift workers, and the possibility of working flexible hours in clerical work but not on the shop floor. They all emphasised the positive attitude towards work/family reconciliation of the company.

11.5. Discussion

When conducting the interviews, the aim was to go the companies to hear to what the HR managers would tell me about the state of the written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children in their organisation. The other specific aim was to hear what they thought had affected their company so far, and what would affect them in the future, the existence and development of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities for children in their specific companies. The respondents were gently led to discuss all the four areas⁷⁹ in my interview manual, explained in the previous chapter (see Sections 10.4.2-10.4.5). This was especially done in the first six interviews. The main focus in the interviews was on the second part, which discussed the specific features of the work/family reconciliation policy development of the respective company. Also, the four interviews conducted later that were shorter than the previous ones focused specifically on this part of the interview.

⁷⁹ These were general issues, specifics of each company, specifics of each respondent and details about access.

In some cases, the approach of the respondent was more personal and in some cases more company-related. This made it both interesting and a bit difficult, as it felt like some respondents were giving more personal information than the others, leading to a feeling of getting closer to some respondents than others. Previous to the interviews, I had read some critical articles about interviewing ‘the elite’ and also specifically about interviewing men. In the interview situations, interviewing the managers did not feel especially difficult or inconvenient, as they were all very friendly and helpful. Some of them did keep their distance more than others, though. At the same time, I was aware of my own role in the interview process, and tried to minimise the differences between the interview situations by, for example, dressing in a similar way in spite of the different business environments that I was visiting. I also tried to be very polite about the respondents’ private lives, not initiating questions about their family situation, but letting them set the level of intimacy in the discussions. So, I did not push them further if they did not wish to share very much personal information with me.

In the following table (Table 22), I provide a summary of individual features of the interviews.

Table 22 Individual features of the interviews

Respondent	Age (approx.⁸⁰)	Gender	Focus	Interview length	Respondent position⁸¹	Type of organisation
A1	50+	male	competitive advantage	long	distanced	consultancy
B1	60+	male	competitive advantage	long	close	bank
B2	50+	female	gender equality	long	close	bank
B3	40-50	male	competitive advantage	short	close	bank
B4	40-50	male	competitive advantage	short	distanced	bank
C1	50+	male	normative	long	close	manufacture
D1	30+	female	normative	long	distanced	retail
D2	40+	female	gender equality	long	close	retail
D3	40-50	male	normative	short	distanced	retail
D4	30-50	female	normative	short	distanced	retail

To conclude, in the table, some reflections on the differences in contextualising the issues can be seen. Firstly, normative pressures were discussed more in the fields where the employees have a relatively low level of education and do not possess any specialised skills. The threatening lack of labour force was brought up, but not nearly as explicitly as in the knowledge society work. As can be seen in the table, the normative pressures were discussed equally by women and men. For the younger women, who seemed reluctant to discuss gender-related issues in the female-dominated field that they both represented, the discussion around the normative pressures deriving from collective labour market agreements and labour law seemed like a way to avoid

⁸⁰ The ages are very rough estimates for the ones that have not themselves answered to the survey. The age is included as, especially for the women, the age (or the age of their children) seemed to have an impact on how the contextualised work/family issues. Especially hard to estimate was the age of respondent D4 as the interview with her was done by telephone.

⁸¹ This illustrates if I perceived the interview situation as distanced and business-like, or closer, where the respondents shared pieces from their personal lives.

discussing sensitive issues, which gender easily could be. So, this approach could be seen as a strategy for ‘remaining neutral’.

Secondly, gender was present in different ways; paternity leave was discussed in a positive manner by all the respondents. However, the closer connection between work/family reconciliation issues and gender equality was made by only two respondents, B2 and D2, representing different kinds of organisations but being themselves women approximately between the ages of 40 and 50 and having some years ago passed the life stage of having small children of their own. These women were relatively keen to discuss their own experiences when their children had been small, and they then discussed the present situation in their organisations from a gender perspective.

Thirdly, mimetic pressures and the need to have and maintain a competitive advantage, and thus, recruit and retain the best employees was especially present in the organisations operating in the knowledge society businesses, where the employees are highly educated and possess specific skills and knowledge. Lack of workforce was present in all interviews, but the challenges were perceived to be more demanding in the knowledge organisations, as in those the employer was prepared to offer special arrangements if key employees wanted to take a long leave. The need to gain and retain competitive advantage was especially strongly emphasised by four male respondents, representing two different companies.

The interviews totalled only 10, hence there is very limited if any generalisability in the analysis of contextualisation presented above. However, it does partly support the findings of the quantitative data indicating a gender difference in perceiving and presenting work/family reconciliation issues in organisations. And the analysis gives additional context to the interviews and is therefore included in this chapter.

11.6. Final comments

The data had a steering role in the interview process, which was becoming more inductive, compared to the previous stage – collecting the quantitative data – which had been more deductive from the start. The survey data had increased my understanding of work/family policies in Finnish companies, and the interviews deepened that understanding – also by addressing new issues and posing new questions. Especially interesting was the idea of challenges with the so-called ‘Generation Y’, perceived by nearly all⁸². Their values towards work and life were perceived as dramatically different from those of the previous generations. The challenge was twofold: first, to get the best individuals within this generation recruited into the companies, and secondly, to retain them for more than a short period of time. Many times, special arrangements were applied to these employees in order to get them to stay or to get them to come back, for example after hiking in the Andes for six months (as respondent B1 used as an example). All this was something that I could not anticipate finding when entering the interview phase. However, this trend is very strong and deserves more attention in the future.

⁸² 9 of 10 respondents brought the issue up. The one respondent not saying anything about the challenges of recruiting and retaining the Generation Y employees was D3, the financial manager with an over-arching responsibility for HR issues in a retail company.

The tripartite categories presented in Table 17 have similarities with earlier tripartite categorisations of rationalist-idealist-realist approaches to the public interest (Hearn⁸³ 1970: 22) and diverse policy instruments and discourses (Jyrkinen⁸⁴ 2005: 155-165).

Next, there is a concluding discussion about the main findings, their relevance to the research questions as well as the contribution and limitations of this thesis as a whole, and recommendations for further research.

⁸³ Drawing from Schubert (1960).

⁸⁴ Drawing from Vedung (1998).

12 CONCLUSIONS

12.1. Introduction

This thesis addresses the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities and the development of policies in this area. The study explores and explains how Finnish society, through its institutionalised stakeholders of work/family issues, and the companies operating in the most population-dense area⁸⁵, works as the context for work-family reconciliation. The study also looks in more detail at the existence of corporate work/family policies and at the reasons behind developing these policies. Further, it addresses some of the reasons for the variation in corporate-level work/family policies among different companies and suggests theoretical and practice-related solutions.

Three main kinds of institutional stakeholders are included in the theoretical frame of this thesis, and they have been discussed in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five: firstly, Finnish family policies; secondly, Finnish gender equality; and thirdly, Finnish working life and business companies as the representative stakeholders for organisational work/family. The frame is constructed by including the development and history of Finnish family policies in the post-World War II era, including a section on the familialistic perspective that is relevant in relation to the interconnections with other stakeholders. Gender equality is framed by the state-level development of, and connected to studies of gender equality, in organisations. Working life and corporate management is framed with the help of institutional theory to assist the analysis of the corporate level work/family policy development. The framework is concluded by a discussion of the institutional stakeholders and their interconnections.

The empirical part of the thesis focuses on relatively large employers in the Metropolitan area around the Finnish capital, Helsinki. Relatively extensive quantitative survey data was collected from 113 respondents representing 98 different corporations. After analysing⁸⁶ the data on corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and family and the reasons for developing the policies, four case companies were chosen and 10 interviews⁸⁷ conducted within them.

The central question addressed in the study was: Why do some companies that operate in a welfare state such as Finland develop corporate-level work/family policies, and others do not? This question was addressed by measuring (1) the existence and (2) the accessibility and use of corporate policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities in companies operating in Finland. Further, the answer was searched by testing variables and asking questions in order (3) to explain some of the reasons for developing these corporate-level policies. Finally, the context was addressed by (4) analysing the different institutionalised stakeholder interests in work-family reconciliation issues in Finland.

The specific research questions for the project were:

⁸⁵ The Metropolitan area around the Finnish capital, Helsinki.

⁸⁶ See Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

⁸⁷ See Chapters 10 and 11.

1) To what extent are there written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland, which are these policies and what is their availability and use in organisations?

2) Which societal and institutional factors affect the development of written corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for children in corporations operating in Finland?

The following section summarises the empirical findings relevant for these questions. Then, in Section 12.3, some theoretical reflections are discussed. The contribution of this research is discussed in 12.4, followed by discussing limitations of the study and developments in the research area in 12.5.

12.2. Discussion about the empirical results

After discussing societal tensions in the work/family reconciliation agendas of different institutional stakeholders, the project moved to the organisational level to measure several qualitative and quantitative characteristics connected to work/family reconciliation issues. In the following sections, the main findings of this study are summarised and discussed.

12.2.1. Existence of corporate-level policies for reconciling work and family

The first and foremost finding of this study was relatively surprising and, thus, very much steered the rest of the process of the research. This finding, that approximately 54%⁸⁸ of the respondent companies had corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and family, showed a substantially wider existence of corporate-level policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities in Finland than was expected. My results suggest different kind of results than the findings from previous research, which have suggested that corporate-level initiatives were still relatively rare and underdeveloped in Finland (Kiviniemi and Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta 2003; Piensoho 2006). In the light of this information, the development of corporate-level policies seemed to be relatively recent. This was also confirmed by some of the interview respondents. Even if the state-level statutory parental leave policies are the most used policies in the organisations, the importance of corporate-level work/family policies seems to be increasing. This is equally interesting in the light of some qualified restructuring of the welfare state in a neo-liberal direction.

12.2.2. Reasons for developing work/family policies

Next, as another major aim of the empirical part of the thesis, the reasons for developing the corporate-level policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities were examined. The reasons for developing corporate-level work/family policies were also somewhat surprising. By testing the hypotheses derived from previous international research, the importance of the number of female employees, the number of different age groups, the importance of company headquarter country and company size were controlled for. None of these variables had

⁸⁸ n=51

a significant effect on the existence of corporate-level policies for reconciling work and childcare responsibilities.

However, the important factors in my analysis were, first, the importance of the corporate-level work/family policies for company image and, second, the perceived importance in recruitment. According to the analysis of the interview material, gaining and retaining a competitive advantage in recruitment in the fierce competition for workforce was the most frequently reported reason for the companies to develop corporate-level policies for the reconciliation of work and family. The importance of image and attractiveness in recruitment was especially visible in those companies representing knowledge businesses.

According to my data, another reason for developing corporate-level policies for reconciling work and family was based on the awareness of the need of gender equality plans and strategies, and mere adjustments to regulations in collective labour market agreements and labour law. These reasons were less surprising than the previous, and the most clearly stated reason: it is important for a company to develop and retain a competitive advantage in the relatively regulated labour market context with a wide range of statutory-level policies for reconciling work and family.

In the analyses of the survey data here, the sample companies were divided into 'proactive' and 'reactive' according to whether they had corporate-level policies for reconciling work and childcare responsibilities, or not. When asking about the background of policy development, it could be concluded that 'proactive' companies gave more weight to existing legislation in family policies and gender equality policies than the 'reactive' companies in their own policy development. The same situation could be detected regarding governmental strategies for gender equality and corporate-level headquarter strategies for both gender equality and work/family reconciliation. Further, 'proactive' companies also gave more weight to employee demands for more 'family-friendly' ways to operate than the reactive companies. However, the only statistically significant differences between the companies with corporate-level policies for work/family reconciliation and those without were apparent in, first, the perceived importance of headquarter strategies for gender equality and, second, for employee demands for 'family-friendliness'.

12.2.3. Use and accessibility of policies for reconciling work and family

In my data, statutory state-level parental leaves were reported to be the most frequently used work/family-policies in the respondent organisations. When the importance of nation and governmental level policies were measured, the national family policies appeared to have the highest influence on the company level work on developing work-family arrangements. The reported importance of the national family policies can, according to the interview data, most often be connected to the training of superiors and HR personnel to anticipate requests for family leave and to be able to respond in line with the company policy.

With regards to the range, accessibility and use of corporate-level policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities, the differences between the previously defined 'proactive' and 'reactive' companies existed, but were less distinguished than would be expected. Concerning *accessibility* to corporate-level policies and the *use* of these, the data were in line with each other: the policies that are accessible to all are more widely used than those that are accessible only to a restricted group of employees

within an organisation. Flexible working hours is an example of policies widely steered by collective labour market agreements and, therefore, accessible by large groups of employees in sectors and in organisations where the respective collective labour market agreements are applied. Flexible working hours were used in approximately 86% of the ‘proactive’ companies and in 72% of the ‘reactive’ companies. It might be in some ways misleading to call this a ‘family-friendly policy’, as the policy is independent of the employees’ family background; however, it is in practice widely used also to reconcile between work and care and other responsibilities.

In my data, telework is an example of a work practice and organisational policy the accessibility of which was highly dependent on the employment status. Telework was in use in approximately 67% of the companies with work/family policies and in approximately 54% of the companies without those policies; thus, the difference between the companies with corporate-level policies for reconciling work with childcare responsibilities and those without was high but not substantial. However, regarding this policy, the real difference was in the accessibility which was very low for all employees in both groups⁸⁹, but high via negotiations in both groups⁹⁰ and also not available at all in a relatively large number of the respondent companies⁹¹.

Furthermore, the one more recent policy used by companies to help reconcile their employees’ work and childcare responsibilities which creates a more clear distinction between the companies that do have corporate-level policies for reconciling work and childcare responsibilities was that of the employer providing a nurse or a nanny for an employee’s child who has fallen ill. This policy was used in approximately 24% of the ‘proactive’ companies and in approximately 9% of the companies without work/family policies. The majority of the respondent companies did not have this kind of policy available at all⁹².

The existence of this policy differentiated substantially between the groups of ‘proactive’ and ‘reactive’ companies. Further, there was also a difference regards with many other policies, that the accessibility for larger in both groups than the accessibility via negotiations. Hence, this policy was more similar to those stipulated through collective labour agreements, even if it is one of the highly voluntary policies for companies. It is also a controversial policy: opposed by many for being addressed as ‘family-friendly’, as the labour law has traditionally provided most parents with the opportunity to remain at home with a child who has fallen ill.

12.2.4. Finally

Therefore, to sum up, the policies have differences in accessibility and use and the differences do not follow a logic that is easy to predict before closer examination. The policies deriving from collective labour market agreements do work differently to those deriving from the company’s own initiative – whether there are mimetic pressures or employee demands behind the initiative. Copying competitor behaviour and responding to employee demands are ultimately not very far from each other, as employees can be quick to change employers for a more ‘family-friendly’ one if he or she notices a difference among companies operating in the same field. This is especially

⁸⁹ 11.5% versus 2.4%.

⁹⁰ 67.2% versus 70.2%.

⁹¹ 21.3% versus 26.8%.

⁹² 72.4% versus 82.5%.

the case in ‘knowledge society’ work, where the employees sell their knowledge and specific expertise and where the lack of workforce was already a pronounced problem in the interviews.

Finally, a central finding that demands further attention is the change perceived by HR managers in the values regarding work and in commitment to the organisation, shown by the youngest working generation, Generation Y. This combined with the need for key personnel has brought new challenges to companies especially in knowledge business, and will probably lead to further development of flexible practices in organisations. The accessibility of this flexibility seems, however, to be very much depending on the specific knowledge and skills of the employee and, at this point, be more visible in the ‘knowledge society’ than in other types of businesses.

12.3. Discussion about results in relation to the theoretical frame

As more extensively discussed in Chapter Five, the interrelations between the institutional actors are many, and the fact that there are a number of different stakeholders and interests within the area reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities needs further attention. This thesis brings up some of the different and, even politicised, institutional stakeholder interests in the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities. I have focused on the interconnections of gender equality policies, family policies and corporate management in the Finnish context, and also highlighted some of tensions between the gender equality policies and family policies in their different national, as well as international strategies. The framework has included attributes from more ideological perspectives, such as familialism and feminism, and from institutional theory, which draws from a positivist tradition. As illustrated in Chapter Five, the stakeholders interconnect and even at times clash with each other.

When looking at the contextual frames and the institutional stakeholders of this research, and the fourth aim⁹³ of the thesis, as already concluded in Chapter Five, there are ambiguous relations between national gender equality and family policies strategies. Additionally, there are some corporate demands for a national policy framework and demands in the form of normative pressures towards the corporations operating in Finland. The relation between family policies and gender equality agendas is relatively implicit in the Finnish society, but is visible when de-familialising policy turns are taken in order to increase gender equality at the EU and national levels.

Reforms in Finnish family policies have since the 1990s been de-familialising (Salmi 2006). De-familialistic strategies are implemented at the EU-level in member countries. This might have both ideological and practical implications in the EU - countries outside of the Nordic welfare state regimes with a relatively strong gender equality ethos. Even in Finland, the re-familialistic and de-familialistic ideologies are still present but gender equality as a strong institutionalised value hinders the development to take drastic familialistic turns. Interesting enough, familialistic turns on individual levels were taken during the 1990s recession and afterwards, and a similar, even if not as sharp, turn has taken place at the national level during the recent years. These strategies seem to develop differently on the macro- and micro-levels. When the organisational level is introduced to the equation, the issues become even more complex. On the one hand, there is the context in which a company operates,

⁹³ The fourth aim was to analyse the different institutionalised stakeholder interests in work-family reconciliation issues in Finland.

and, on the other hand, its headquarters might represent a context with very different traditions and ideologies.

In the reconciliation of work with care responsibilities in Finland, the focus is often on 'gender-neutrality' in policies. Even if this is the case, the questions and realities are still highly gendered, and might portray themselves differently to males and females, and the gendered nature of management and work/life issues still remains today (Hearn et al. 2008). This could also be seen in the gendered analysis of the quantitative data, where female managers reported more personal work/family conflict and also reported more perceived work/family conflict among their employees.

The interviews conducted after the quantitative analyses showed that there were three main categories for contextualising the managers' talk around corporate-level initiatives concerning work/family reconciliation issues. In my interviews the focus was on corporate-level work/family policies and the main reasons for developing them in the respondent companies. The answers showed what could also be defined as three kinds of observed pressures for developing policies, according to institutional theory.

Firstly, the normative context or normative pressure found in the interview data was mainly combined with family policies, illustrating the need to adjust the company to national statutory legislation on family leave, and the collective labour market agreements on flexible working hours, time banks or holiday banks. This type of pressure was most present in the field of manufacturing. This kind of action was more reactive than proactive, and rather mainly adjusting to external regulations than inventing new ones. Still, as one of the respondent companies where an interview was conducted especially represented this way of contextualising the corporate-level initiatives with regard to work/family reconciliation issues, it did have corporate-level written policies and, thus, did belong to the grouping of 'proactive' companies, as used above. Additionally, in another of the case companies, the retail company, several interviewees used normative pressure as a way of contextualising the corporate level work/family reconciliation policy work. In some of these examples, this way of contextualising was closely combined with the coercive pressures from gender equality strategies, either from the corporate level as corporate gender equality strategies or even wider, from the societal level, as governmental gender equality strategies, affecting the corporate ways of organising. However, in some of these cases, the pattern was partly the same; the pressures were closely connected to the regulations external and 'above' the organisation.

Secondly, in cases where the pressures were coercive, the activity in developing work/family initiatives was very much legitimacy-seeking. The pressure for increasing gender equality was functioning as a force and as a legitimacy-giving factor for both developing new ways to improve the work/family reconciliation and balance of the employees, and also for explaining the state of the matter within the organisation. This was especially visible in the female-dominated workplace; not that new initiatives were very much developed, but it was visible in the description of the present state. Some difficulties regarding, for example, the opening hours of the department stores even during evenings and weekends, and the more informal ways of dealing with the problems, for example by informally changing shifts with the permission of the superior were reported in the interviews. In addition, the development work itself had begun as a part of the gender equality work, when equality plans were made and some specific areas listed as targets for further policy and practice development. On the other hand, the gender equality context was also somewhat present in the knowledge

businesses, but here the activity was stated as a normal strategy in order to be able to recruit and retain the best talents among both men and women.

Thirdly, the most surprising reason for developing corporate-level policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities in the Finnish context, with its relatively wide legislative frame and the state level gender equality ethos, was the need to acquire and retain a competitive advantage among the companies in the same field. Partly, this involved being better than the competitors; partly it involved the mimetic pressures in fields with relatively few competitors. These companies were operating in knowledge businesses, being relatively large companies with the resources to allocate to the development, both innovative and mimetic. Further, the companies were said to be quick to mimic each other, and the constant development was seen as a necessity in order to manage the harsh competition over workforce.

To conclude, the ten interviews conducted after the quantitative analyses strengthened the findings of corporate striving towards a competitive advantage being a reason for developing corporate policies to reconcile work with childcare responsibilities. They strengthened the quantitative findings that corporate image and importance to recruitment were the most important reasons to have policies for the reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities. All in all, the existence of written company policies for reconciling work with family could be seen as a result of a human resource management movement towards a more proactive style and striving for a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining key personnel.

12.4. Contributions

In previous research, there has been identified a lack of a theoretical frame to explain the heterogeneity of organisations in the formation of policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities (Bretherton 2008; Davis and Kalleberg 2006). The current research has developed a theoretical framework for institutional stakeholders of national and organisational work/family reconciliation activities and testing implications of it in four case companies selected from multivariate data analyses, then choosing two organisations representing different fields and different profiles of workforce for closer analysis. Further, this research has illustrated the importance of addressing the national macro and meso contexts, and also the limited applicability of models and research results from a different welfare state context.

A further critique of previous research is that research has too extensively been conducted through individual perceptions of balance and different roles (Grzywacz and Carlson 2007). Especially, there is a gap between research examining state policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children and research conducted on organisational level, defining and examining company-level ways of promoting the balance between work and family (Lewis 2006: 387). The present study specifically addresses this gap of knowledge on macro and meso levels in the context of Finland, also including multi-method analyses on both macro and meso levels.

The numerous important empirical findings presented in Section 12.4 on the existing and accessibility of corporate level work/family policies, as well as the use of both national statutory work/family policies and the voluntary corporate work/family policies derived from both quantitative and qualitative data contribute to the field of organisational studies on work/family reconciliation, but also to the fields of social policy and policy studies. The fact, that there indeed are written corporate-level policies

for reconciling work and family in companies operating in Finland, in spite of the strong state level involvement in creating a policy context in work/family reconciliation is both interesting and a result that contrasts the previous research on meso -level work/family policies conducted in this context. Further, the study shows that the existing policies vary in accessibility and use, and that the most frequently utilised work/family policies are still the statutory state-level policies for family leave, taking place when a baby is born and during his or her first years. Nonetheless, the study shows that there are new policies arising, such as a nurse being provided for an employee's child who has fallen ill, that are based on company activity only, which shows in both the accessibility and use of the policy. In the context of Finland, there is still little research with this kind of detailed information about the accessibility and take-up of the corporate work/family policies.

Likewise, the reasons for developing corporate level work/family policies empirically contribute to the fields of organisational studies on work/family reconciliation, as well as to the fields of social policy and policy studies. When examining reasons for developing corporate-level work/family policies the study found a variation between the so-called 'proactive' and 'reactive' companies. In general, family law has a substantial effect on developing corporate-level policies. Additionally, headquarter gender equality strategies as well as employee demands are important. In regression analyses, it was found that corporate image and importance in recruitment are the foremost reasons for companies to develop policies, not, for example, the number of female employees in the company. These reasons are intertwined and, thus, contribute to the interdisciplinary field of work/family reconciliation. Additionally, the central finding, the HR managers' perceived change in values towards work and commitment towards organisation at the youngest working generation, Generation Y also contributes to organisation and labour studies with a perspective on the future.

The theoretical contribution includes the tripartite framework of institutional stakeholders and interests, actors and activities, theoretical perspectives and levels, which has been developed along the thesis. This framework is built on both substantive and methodological multiplicity. The reasons for policy development have been summarised into normative pressures, coercive pressures and mimetic pressures, in line with conceptualisations from institutional theory. However, the study includes awareness of different stakeholder interests and recognises that institutional theory needs to be complemented with notions of gender relations and family, in order to more subsequently be able to address the theoretical questions behind work/family reconciliation issues in macro and meso contexts.

The thesis also seeks to contribute to organisational and societal decision-making in questions connected to reconciliation of work and childcare responsibilities.

12.5. Limitations and future developments in the area

This has been a multi-perspective and mixed-method research. The research has been located in the macro societal context of Finnish society, along with the broader European and European Union (EU) context. Further, it has been located and contextualised in a specific macro -level historical perspective of key areas of this study. These areas have been examined through three specific macro- and meso- institutional stakeholders which all derive from different standpoints. These three levels of analysis can be said to constitute the substantive multiplicity of the study.

Further, the research questions have been explored through the use of mixed methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The epistemological and ontological positions underlying this work are multiple and have defined the methodological choices. Finally, reflexivity has been used in positioning the research and the researcher. These second three levels of analysis above can be said to constitute the methodological multiplicity of the study.

These six multiple perspectives are intertwined and connected in the different levels: firstly, at the substantive and contextual levels which include societal and historical contexts and the different institutional stakeholders; and secondly, at the deeper levels of mixed methods, epistemological and ontological positions, and reflexivity. These perspectives and levels are more closely discussed in the introduction of the thesis.

The present research project has suffered from limitations on resources and has smaller samples than many substantial research projects. However, the statistical analyses are adjusted to the sample size and additional interviews were conducted in order to collect further data. In my data, I have not had the possibility to compare the data of international companies and their work/family policies. This would be the next step forward, as there is very little comparative research on macro- and meso -level work/family policies where Finland, with its specific characters, would represent the Nordic welfare state model. More generally, comparative, multidisciplinary and multi-method research approaches have much to contribute to the understanding of the complexity of work/family reconciliation research and the underlying stakeholder interests of work/family reconciliation issues.

In Finland, with a different institutional setting than in the Anglophone world, the existence of written company policies for reconciling work with family could be seen as a result of a human resource management movement towards a more proactive style. However, in the case of Finland, as the state level policies remain unchanged, and are rather developed than phased out, there seems to be a development of policies both on macro- and meso -levels. Corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities are developed even if research has found evidence of the ongoing “societal effect”, meaning in practice macro-level work-family supports for dual earner model, that already relatively effectively are diminishing work-family conflict of the Finnish people. The interesting question remains on what this depends. A key finding that is one of the reasons for the corporate level engagement in proactive policy development, and that needs substantially more attention, is the perceived value shift among the youngest generation in the labour market, the so-called ‘Generation Y’. As research has concluded an increase in the importance of family and leisure among working Finns in general, the perceived lack of commitment among the youngest generation brings new questions and challenges to research in the relationships between work and family. This finding is closely connected to the mimetic pressures and the need to be innovative in proactively developing corporate level work/family- and other flexible policies. However, the theoretical approach needs to recognise some central differences between values and behaviour of the different generations. Thus, how this generation will change the organisations remains to be seen in further research.

In implementing work/family policies, responsible people in strategic human resource management in organisations should ensure that the policies are beneficial both to the organisation and to those people who are involved: women and men, mothers and fathers, and that the implementation is done strategically including a multi-layered communication strategy coupled with information to managers and line managers

(Waters and Bardeel 2006: 79-80). In the future, including research of the strategic implementation of corporate-level work/family policies would be beneficial even to this present research.

Finally, further research on the effects of the national gender equality policies and family policies on corporate family friendly policies is needed, as well as research on the pressures from corporate management toward the society and the legislation framework. The data I have gathered for this research and the analysis of it offers new perspectives for the discussion. In my research I approach the question of work/family reconciliation from different angles, seldom combined in the same research. This involves many questions that have not been specifically addressed in this research, such as: What should companies do to enable women to be part of the top management, and how would this affect the corporate level work/family policies? What are the individual companies' responsibilities, in general and in the Finnish society, in enabling a good work-life balance for the employees? What is the public vs. the private responsibility in the care responsibilities for children? My research has sought to outline a basis for further research in the multidisciplinary area of work/family reconciliation, approaching the topic of work/family reconciliation in a broad way and offering key implications for theory, policy-making, corporate policy development and the practical implications on peoples' lives.

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APPENDIX 1**THE SURVEY**

15.10.2007

Arvoisa vastaanottaja,

Työn ja perheen yhdistämisen kysymykset ovat muodostuneet yhä tärkeämmiksi yritysten päivittäisessä toiminnassa. Työn ja hoivan yhdistämisen monitahoiset kysymykset eivät koske ainoastaan työntekijän hyvinvointia, vaan myös koko yritysten kehittämistä.

Tämä kysely on osa väitöskirjaprojektiani, jota teen Hankenilla (Svenska handelshögskolan), johtamisen ja organisaatioiden laitoksella. Tämän takia pyydän sinua ystävällisesti antamaan tälle tärkeälle asialle noin 15 minuuttia aikaasi ja huomiotasi. Sinun avullasi voin analysoida työn ja perheen yhteensovittamisen käytäntöjen kehitystä ja nykytilaa Uudenmaan 250 suurimman työnantajan osalta.

Sinulle ja organisaatiollesi tulokset tuovat mahdollisuuden vertailla omaa organisaatiotasi suhteessa muihin ja nähdä mahdollisia kehittämisen kohteita ja tarpeita. Yhteenveto tuloksista lähetetään kaikille tutkimukseen osallistuneille tahoille.

Vastauksia käsitellään akateemista tutkimusta säätelevien eettisten periaatteiden mukaisesti, eikä sinun tarvitse antaa tutkimukselle nimeäsi tai nimetä organisaatiotasi. Kysely on viisiosainen käsitellen - (1) organisaatiotasi, (2) työn ja perheen yhdistämistä koskevia lakeja, säädöksiä ja käytäntöjä, (3) työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavien käytäntöjen kehitystä organisaatiossanne, (4) lakien, säädösten ja käytäntöjen merkityksestä, ja (5) kysymyksiä sinusta itsestäsi.

Pyydän sinua ystävällisesti palauttamaan täytetyn lomakkeen 31.10.2007 mennessä. Pyydän myös ottamaan minuun yhteyttä, jos sinulla on mitään kysyttävää kyselystä tai tutkimuksesta kokonaisuudessaan. Haluan jo tässä vaiheessa ilmaista kiitollisuuteni osallistumisestasi tähän tärkeään tutkimukseen, jota ovat rahoittaneet Liikesivistysrahasto, Vuorineuvos kauppat. ja tekn. tri H.C. Marcus Wallenberg Säätiö, Oscar Öflundin Säätiö, Ella & Georg Ehrnroothin Säätiö, Svenska handelshögskolanin säätiö sekä Johtamisen ja organisaatioiden laitos Hankenilla. Väitöskirjaohjaajinani toimivat professorit Jeff Hearn ja Linda McKie. Kysely on pilotoitu monivaiheisesti.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

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Työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavat käytännöt yrityksissä

Tästä alkaa kysymyslomakkeen ensimmäinen osio. Organisaatio-sanaa käytetään kuvaamaan koko yritystä Suomessa, ei vain sen yksittäistä osaa. Pääkonttorimaan toiminnoista kysyttäessä viitataan koko yrityksen/konsernin korkeimman johdon sijaintimaahan.

Kysymyksiä organisaatiosta ja alasta

1) Kuinka monta työntekijää organisaatiossasi on?

Lukumäärä

2) Mikä on työntekijöiden sukupuolijakauma organisaatiossasi?

Naisten %-osuus

Miesten %-osuus

3) Mikä on työntekijöiden ikäjakauma organisaatiossasi?

15-30-vuotiaiden %-osuus

31-45-vuotiaiden %-osuus

46-65-vuotiaiden %-osuus

4) Asemasi organisaatiossa?

henkilöstöjohtaja ▼

Jos jokin muu, nimeä tähän tittelisi

5) Millä alalla organisaatiosi pääasiassa toimii?

telekommunikaatio/elektroniikka ▼

Jos ei mikään edellämainituista, nimeä ala

6) Mikä oli organisaatiosi viimevuotinen liikevaihto? (euroissa)?

7) Onko organisaatiosi pääkonttori aina ollut ja edelleen on Suomessa?

kyllä ei

8) Onko organisaatiosi pääkonttori aiemmin ollut Suomessa ja sittemmin muuttanut muualle?

kyllä ei

9) Jos on, minne?

Esim. Ruotsiin

10) Onko organisaatiosi pääkonttori aiemmin ollut muualla ja sittemmin muuttanut Suomeen?

kyllä ei

11) Jos on, mistä?

Esim. Ruotsista

12) Onko organisaatiosi pääkonttori aina ollut Suomen ulkopuolella?

kyllä ei

13) Jos on, missä?

Esim. Ruotsissa

14) Jos organisaatiosi pääkonttori ei ole Suomessa, koska organisaatiosi toiminta laajentui Suomeen?

Esim. 1995

15) Jos organisaatiosi on läpikäynyt rakenteellisia muutoksia viimeisen 10 vuoden aikana, erittele mitä ja milloin.

16) Mikä oli organisaatiosi pääkonttorin perustamisvuosi?

Esim. 1995

Tästä alkaa kysymyslomakkeen toinen osio. Organisaatio-sanaa käytetään kuvaamaan koko yritystä Suomessa, ei vain sen yksittäistä osaa. Pääkonttorimaan toiminnoista kysyttäessä viitataan koko yrityksen/konsernin korkeimman johdon sijaintimaahan.

Kysymyksiä työn ja perheen yhdistämisen käytännöistä

17) Onko organisaatiossasi työn ja perheen yhdistämistä koskevia kirjattuja ohjeita ja käytäntöjä?

en osaa sanoa

18 a) Onko organisaatiossasi työn ja perheen yhdistämistä koskevia käytäntöjä lainsäädännön määrittelemien oikeuksien (esim. äitiysloma, isyysloma, vanhempainvapaa, hoitovapaa, osittainen hoitovapaa, tilapäinen hoitovapaa jne) lisäksi?

Valitse alla olevasta listasta sopiva vaihtoehto:

Kaikkien käytettävissä oleva käytäntö	Tapauskohtaisesti neuvoteltavissa oleva käytäntö	Käytäntöä ei ole tarjolla organisaatiossani	En osaa sanoa
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b) Mitä muita työn ja perheen yhteensovittamista helpottavia käytäntöjä organisaatiollasi on käytössään? Nimeä alle:

	kaikkien käytettävissä oleva käytäntö	tapauskohtaisesti neuvoteltavissa oleva käytäntö
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Tästä alkaa kysymyslomakkeen kolmas osio. Organisaatio-sanaa käytetään kuvaamaan koko yritystä Suomessa, ei vain sen yksittäistä osaa. Pääkonttorimaan toiminnoista kysyttäessä viitataan koko yrityksen/konsernin korkeimman johdon sijaintimaahan.

Kysymyksiä työn ja perheen yhdistämisen käytäntöjen kehityksestä

20) Nimeä kuinka merkittävästi kukin alla oleva tekijä on vaikuttanut organisaatiosi työn ja perheen yhdistämiseen liittyvien käytäntöjen kehitykseen.

ei lainkaan	hyvin vähäisessä määrin	melko vähäisessä määrin	melko suuressa määrin	erittäin suuressa määrin	en osaa sanoa/ ei oleellista organisaatiossani
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21) Miten kansalliseen lainsäädäntöön kuuluvien perhevapaiden ja muiden perheen ja työn yhdistämiseen liittyvien oikeuksien (esim. äitiysloma, isyysloma, hoitovapaa, osittainen hoitovapaa) käyttö on kehittynyt organisaatiossasi viimeisen 5 vuoden aikana?

en osaa sanoa/ei oleellista organisaatiossani

22) Mitkä 3 työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavaa käytäntöä ovat organisaatiossanne yleisimmin käytössä? (valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot tai määrittele)

- Äitiysloma
- Isyysloma
- Vanhempainvapaa
- Hoitovapaa
- Osittainen hoitovapaa
- Tilapäinen hoitovapaa
- Työnantajan maksama hoitaja sairaalle lapselle
- Työnantajan maksama lastenhoito- ja/tai siivousapu
- Lastenhoito työpaikan yhteydessä
- Etättyö
- Joustava työaika
- Työaika- tai -vuoroautonomia
- Työaikapankki
- Lomapankki

Tai määrittele puuttuva vaihtoehto alle

En osaa vastata tähän kysymykseen

23) Jos organisaatiosi pääkonttori ei ole Suomessa, mitkä 3 työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavaa käytäntöä ovat pääkonttorin sijaintimaan toiminnoissanne yleisimmin käytössä? (valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot tai määrittele)

- Äitiysloma
- Isyysloma
- Vanhempainvapaa
- Hoitovapaa
- Osittainen hoitovapaa
- Tilapäinen hoitovapaa
- Työnantajan maksama hoitaja sairaalle lapselle
- Työnantajan maksama lastenhoito- ja/tai siivousapu
- Lastenhoito työpaikan yhteydessä
- Etätö
- Joustava työaika
- Työaika- tai -vuoroautonomia
- Työaikapankki
- Lomapankki

Tai määrittele puuttuva vaihtoehto alle

En osaa vastata tähän kysymykseen

24) Mitä työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavia käytäntöjä organisaatiossanne käytettiin vuoden 2006 aikana? (valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot tai määrittele)

- Äitiysloma
- Isyysloma
- Vanhempainvapaa
- Hoitovapaa
- Osittainen hoitovapaa
- Tilapäinen hoitovapaa
- Työnantajan maksama hoitaja sairaalle lapselle
- Työnantajan maksama lastenhoito- ja/tai siivousapu
- Lastenhoito työpaikan yhteydessä
- Etätö
- Joustava työaika
- Työaika- tai -vuoroautonomia
- Työaikapankki
- Lomapankki

Tai määrittele puuttuva vaihtoehto alle

En osaa vastata tähän kysymykseen

En osaa vastata tähän kysymykseen

25) Jos organisaatiosi pääkonttori ei ole Suomessa, mitä työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavia käytäntöjä organisaationne pääkonttorin sijaintimaan toiminnoissanne käytettiin vuoden 2006 aikana? (valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot tai määrittele)

- Äitiysloma
- Isyysloma
- Vanhempainvapaa
- Hoitovapaa
- Osittainen hoitovapaa
- Tilapänen hoitovapaa
- Työnantajan maksama hoitaja sairaalle lapselle
- Työnantajan maksama lastenhoito- ja/tai siivousapu
- Lastenhoito työpaikan yhteydessä
- Etätyö
- Joustava työaika
- Työaika- tai -vuoroautonomia
- Työaikapankki
- Lomapankki

Tai määrittele puuttuva vaihtoehto alle

En osaa vastata tähän kysymykseen

Tästä alkaa kysymyslomakkeen neljäs osio. Organisaatio-sanaa käytetään kuvaamaan koko yritystä Suomessa, ei vain sen yksittäistä osaa. Pääkonttorimaan toiminnoista kysyttäessä viitataan koko yrityksen/konsernin korkeimman johdon sijaintimaahan.

Kysymyksiä lakien, säädösten ja käytäntöjen merkityksestä

26) Kuinka määrittelisit organisaation johdon asenteen työntekijän käyttämiä kansalliseen lainsäädäntöön kuuluvia perheen ja työn yhdistämisen käytäntöjä kohtaan?

erittäin kielteinen melko kielteinen neutraali melko myönteinen erittäin myönteinen en osaa sanoa/ei käytetä organisaatiossani

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27) Tiedotetaanko johtoa kansallisen lainsäädännön piiriin kuuluvista sekä yrityksen itsensä kehittämistä työn ja perheen yhdistämisen käytännöistä ja koulutetaanko johtoa niiden tiimoilta?

en osaa sanoa

28) Tiedotetaanko uusia työntekijöitä yrityksen omista työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavista käytännöistä?

en osaa sanoa

29) Ovatko organisaationne työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavat käytännöt tärkeä aihe rekrytointineuvotteluissa?

en osaa sanoa

30) Kuinka tärkeiksi arvioisit työn ja perheen yhdistämistä helpottavat käytännöt organisaation imagon kannalta?

erittäin merkitysettömäksi melko merkitysettömäksi melko tärkeäksi erittäin tärkeäksi en osaa sanoa

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31) Kuinka paljon arvioit organisaation perheen ja työn yhdistämisen käytäntöjen vaikuttavan organisaation houkuttelevuuteen työnantajana?

ei lainkaan	hyvin vähäisissä määrin	hyvin vähäisessä määrin	melko vähäisessä määrin	melko suuressa määrin	hyvin suuressa määrin	en osaa sanoa
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32) Missä määrin arvioit työntekijöitteesi kokevan ristiriitoja työn ja perheen asettamien vaatimusten välillä?

en osaa sanoa

33) Kuinka suuri osuus työntekijöistä kokee arviosi mukaan ristiriitoja työn ja perheen asettamien vaatimusten välillä?

Esim. 35%

Tästä alkaa kysymyslomakkeen viimeinen osuus.

Kysymyksiä sinusta

34) Sukupuolesi?

nainen ▼

35) Syntymävuotesi?

Esim. 1962

36) Siviilisäätysi?

Naimaton ▼

37) Onko sinulla lapsia?

kyllä ei

Jos kyllä, kuinka monta?

Esim. 2

Jos kyllä, minkä ikäisiä hän/he on/ovat?

Esim. 4 ja 6

38) Korkein suorittamasi koulutusaste?

Ei-ylioppilas ▼

39) Missä määrin koet itse ristiriitoja työn ja perheen vaatimusten välillä?

En osaa sanoa

39) Missä määrin koet itse ristiriitoja työn ja perheen vaatimusten välillä?

En osaa sanoa

40) Vaikuttaako se työhösi?

en osaa sanoa

41) Vaikuttaako se vapaa-aikaasi?

en osaa sanoa

42) Koetko tarvetta perheystävällisten käytäntöjen lisäämiseen organisaatiossasi?

en osaa sanoa

43) Jos kyllä, tarkenna.

Onko edellä jäänyt käsittelemättä jotakin mielestäsi tärkeitä ja sinussa ajatuksia herättäviä asioita?

APPENDIX 2 TRANSLATION TO THE SURVEY

Dear respondent,

Employee work-life balance, and more specifically reconciliation of work and care of dependent children, has grown to be a very central issue both in the every day lives of businesses. The question of reconciliation of work and care in this multi-layered area is not only about employee well-being and loyalty but also the profitability of businesses.

This survey is a part of a doctoral study that I am conducting at the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Department of Management and Organisation. That is why I am kindly asking you to spare this important issue 15 minutes of your time and attention. With your help I am able to analyze the development of policies for reconciling work and care of dependent children and current situation within this area in the 250 organisations with the largest amount of personnel in southern Finland. For you, the results will provide a possibility to benchmark your company with others and see possible needs of improvement. A summary of results is sent to all those who take part of the study. The answers are handled and processed according to ethical principles for academic research and you will not have to name of yourself or your organisation.

The questionnaire is in five parts – (1) the company and the industry, (2) policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children (i.e. family friendly policies), (3) the development and use of family friendly policies, (4) policies and practices and (5) questions about you. The questions are focusing on your perception on the issues, as the human resource manager and expert that you are. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the survey or the study as a whole. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you for taking part in this important study, that has been financed by Liikesivistysrahasto, Bergsrådet Tekn. och Ekon. dr h.c. Marcus Wallenbergs Stiftelse för Företagsekonomisk Forskning, The Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation, Hanken Foundation Funds, Oskar Öflund Stiftelsen and the Department of Management and Organisation at Hanken School of Economics. The supervisors for this thesis project are Professor Jeff Hearn and Professor Linda McKie. The survey has been piloted in several phases.

Kind regards,

Charlotta Niemistö

HANKEN, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Department of Management and Organisation

P.O. Box. 479, 00101 Helsinki

e-mail: charlotta.niemisto@hanken.fi, mobile phone: +358-50-5201530

I. Questions about the company and the industry

1. How many employees are there in your organisation?
2. What is the gender division of employees in your organisation?
3. What is the age division of employees in your organisation?
4. What is your position in the organisation?
5. In which of these sectors is your organisation mainly? Listed:
telecommunications and electronics, forest products , banks and financial services, energy, insurance, communications and publishing, chemicals, metal products, food processing, distributive trades, other services, other manufacturing, other.
6. What was the total turnover of your organisation last year?
7. Are your organisation headquarters in Finland and has it always been there?
8. Have your organisation headquarters earlier been in Finland and then moved elsewhere?
9. If yes, where to?
10. Have your organisation headquarters earlier been outside of Finland and then moved there?
11. f yes, from where?
12. Have your organisation headquarters always been outside of Finland?
13. If yes, where?
14. If your company HQ is not in Finland, which year did your organisation become established (also through merger or other solution) in Finland?
15. Have there been any major structural changes in your organisation within the last 10 years?
16. What was the start-up year of your organisation HQ?

Questions about policies for reconciling work and care responsibilities of children, i.e. family friendly policies

17. Does your organisation have written corporate family friendly policies?
18. Does your organisation have family friendly policies that go beyond the Finnish legislation? Please specify if the family friendly policies your company has are

mandatory/voluntary? Listed policies: flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery. B: list and specify any other w/f policies you have.

19. If your organisation HQ is not in Finland, please specify if the family friendly policies your organisation HQ are mandatory/voluntary? Listed policies: flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery. B: list and specify any other w/f policies your organisation HQ have.

Questions about the development and use of family friendly policies

20. Please name factors that have affected the development of corporate policies family friendly policies in your organisation? (national legislation on family policies, national legislation on gender equality, government recommendations on reconciliation of work and family, government recommendations on gender equality, HQ corporate values, HQ corporate family friendly policies, HQ corporate policies on gender equality, demands from personnel, or something else, please specify)
21. Has the take up of national family friendly policies been increasing/ decreasing during the last 5 years in your organisation? (increasing/ decreasing)
22. Has the take up of corporate family friendly policies been increasing/ decreasing during the last 5 years in your organisation? (increasing/ decreasing)
- .
23. Which 3 family friendly policies are used the in your organisation the most? (Listed: maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave, temporal care leave, flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery or something else, please specify.)
24. If the HQ is not in Finland, which 3 family friendly policies would you estimate are used the most in your organisation's operations in the HQ country? (Listed:

maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave, temporal care leave, flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery or something else, please specify)

25. Within the year 2006, which family friendly policies have been used in your organisation? (Listed: maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave, temporal care leave, flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery or something else, please specify)
26. If the HQ is not in Finland, within the year 2006, which family friendly policies have been used in your organisation's operations in the HQ country? (Listed: maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave, temporal care leave, flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery or something else, please specify)

Questions about policies and practices

27. How would you perceive the corporate attitudes (in your organisation) towards employee take up of national family friendly policies? Listed: maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, partial care leave and temporal care leave.
28. How would you define the corporate attitudes (in your organisation) towards employee take up of corporate family friendly policies? Listed: flexible working hours, work time bank, work time or shift autonomy, part-time work, vacation bank, telework, nanny or nurse to an employee's child, cleaning and/or care of children at the employees' home, workplace nursery or something else, please specify.
29. Is management in your organisation informed about and trained in the national and corporate family friendly policies?
30. Are new personnel informed about the corporate family friendly policies when recruiting new personnel?

31. Are your corporate family friendly policies an important topic in recruitment negotiations?
32. How would you estimate corporate family friendly policies to affect the corporate image in general?
33. How would you estimate corporate family friendly policies to affect the corporate image of companies In general? For your specific organisation in Finland? For your specific organisation as a whole (Finland and elsewhere)? And of your organisation HQ country if the HQ is not in Finland?
34. To what extent would you estimate your employees to experience conflicts in demands of home and work?
35. What proportion of personnel would you estimate to experience conflicts in demands of home and work?

Questions about you

36. What is your gender?
37. What is your year of birth?
38. What is your marital status?
39. Do you have children? If yes, how many? If yes, how old are they?
40. What is the highest education you have completed?
41. To what extent do you experience conflicts in demands of home and work?
42. Does it affect your work?
43. Does it affect your domestic life?
44. Do you feel a need for any additional corporate family friendly policies in your company?
45. If yes, please specify.

Have you come to think of anything else you find relevant and which the questions have not addressed?

I kindly ask you to return the form as soon as possible. My sincere thanks for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW PRO FORMA

Pro forma for interviews/ Charlotta Niemistö

21.1.2009

Background

The interviews are conducted in companies that were picked out on the basis of the results of analyses conducted from parts of the quantitative data from my survey in 2007. From a logistic regression analysis testing six hypotheses some variables showed significant results. Hence, some basic assumptions for the rationale behind corporate level written policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities were established. By drawing a four-field-table and placing respondent companies within, five example companies (with two in the same field) were found and contacted. At present, three of the companies have agreed to give an interview deepening some issues from the survey. Two more companies will be contacted within the next few days.

Schedule

Week 4 week the pro forma was planned. It will be discussed with Jeff on Jan. 26th. The plan is to pilot one interview this present week (4). Two contacts were approached and one of them agreed to do a pilot interview. It was agreed upon that the interview would not be included in the analysis and that I would go back to the company to report my thesis findings sometime within a year or so.

The first interview will take place on Jan. 27th, the second on Feb. 5th and the third on Feb. 11th. The last two are going to be suggested to take place w. 7-9.

Research questions

The research question steering the interviews is the following:

What affects the development, i.e. both the quality and quantity, of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children?

The research question is approached with the pre-understanding gained from the quantitative data, and the idea is to try to get to the depth of the issues of *importance in recruitment*, *importance to image* and *importance in attractiveness as employer*⁹⁴, which were the three variables shown to be of most importance from the quantitative data.

The interviews will be conducted as semi-structured, covering specific areas but giving the respondent the freedom to tell in a more open way and giving me as an interviewer the possibility to steer the discussion and ask additional questions to get more specific information. In order to get the interview to flow well the order of the titles might be

⁹⁴For more specific results, please see my paper "Why have written company policies for reconciling work and family in the "perfect society"?"

changed according to the respondents' level of talkativeness. The structure of the interview is, however, going to be close to the following:

General issues

These are the issues that are asked from all the companies. I am doing my homework but will still ask about the background of the company, both regarding possible organisational changes as restructuring, mergers or acquisitions and the national background and status and development of HR-function. This part I am striving to keep relatively short with a focus on the relevance to the possible corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children. Here I already try to find out if there have been specific people, events or examples advocating the policies. It naturally depends on the length of the respondents' history within the organisation how well he or she can answer the questions about the background. Still, I'll start with more general questions, listen to what and how they tell about the background, then move on to more company specific questions.

Specifics of each company

Moving on to the company-specific part and also moving more in depth with the possibly existing policies, I'll ask about the policies they have stated they have and the ones that are most frequently used (all this I have a pre-understanding about thanks to the survey). I'll move on to ask about management attitudes towards the policies and then ask about what the respondents feel to be the most important reasons to have (and/or to further develop) these policies. This discussion I hope to be quite elaborated and if the respondent has earlier (in part one) brought up something that relates to this, I'll try to get him or her to combine these parts.

Specifics of the interviewee

I have gathered quite extensive data about the respondent in the survey and will ask if he or she feels his or her own situation affects the development of policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children; e.g. if the respondent has children and has earlier told that he or she has worked hard to develop the company policies, I'll ask if the own situation has affected this. I'll try to find out if the role of the HR-manager is determining for the existence and development of these policies, or if something else is more important, e.g. the HQ-policies or the personality of the CEO, and so on.

Details about access

If the respondent has a very insignificant role in the existence and development of these policies, I'll try to find out who has had, or still has, a more significant role and try to negotiate access to get to talk to this person, too. E.g. one of the respondents has recently come to replace the person who from that company answered the survey. This might be one of the cases where the previous HR-manager would be interesting as a

complementary respondent. I know that she has moved on become a manager in another unit of the same corporation.

Finally

Basically, I am going to these companies to listen to these HR-managers tell me what they think has and will affect the existence and development of written corporate policies for reconciling work with care responsibilities of children in their specific company. I will try to lead them to cover the above explained areas, but the main focus is going to be in the second part, specifics of the company. I'll try to reflect back to this even when discussing the other parts.

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