

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY STUDY  
OF ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND EMPLOYEE PREFERENCES  
IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

by

Christopher B. McGrath

MARY EVANS KASALA, PhD, Faculty Mentor and Chair

GREGORY MCLAUGHLIN, DBA, Committee Member

MARC MUCHNICK, PhD, Committee Member

William Reed, Ph.D., Dean, School of Business and Technology

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## **Abstract**

The research entails a qualitative explanatory study of alternative work arrangements (AWAs) and employee preferences in the manufacturing sector. The study was to understand the employees' perspectives for family and work life balance policies. It was based in one of the manufacturing firms located in the Northeastern part of the United States. The location used for this study had 200 employees. A sample of 27 employees was used which was from various organization levels and departments. The sample was obtained by using a non-probability sampling method that is purposive sampling. The sample was categorized into two using both the staff sample and management sample. The face-to-face in-depth interview consisted of open-ended structured questions. Data collected was summarized in tables and percentages. The study showed that many employees responded positively to the policies that allowed them to balance their home and work life. It was also found that a balanced work-home life could lead to the company achieving its objectives. Balanced work-home life increases efficiency; motivation and workers develop a positive attitude toward their work. Thus, they increase their productivity. The study recommended that, there should be formalization of policies regarding work-home balance that should be in written form. Managers in the organization should formulate and promote policies that support flexibility as it enhances efficiency. Lastly, there should be formal methods designed to monitor and control abuses of privileges relating to work-home balance.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to Emily, who has supported me along the journey and been there since I began the coursework for my master's degree. In the journey for my doctorate, no one could have been more helpful and understanding throughout the many years of research and the long nights on the computer working on my dissertation than Emily. Emily offered many insightful ideas, read numerous drafts of papers, and provided guidance and encouragement. Besides being a great listener, Emily is my partner and my best friend. I thank her for being there to support me and put up with all the challenges and sacrifices that it took to complete this dissertation.

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## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to understand employee perspectives for various family friendly and work-life balance policies using in-depth interviews and document analysis. Huberman and Miles (2002) claimed the purpose of qualitative explorative research studies is to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural context within which they live. The central phenomenon of the study included employee perceptions from alternative work arrangement participants at a manufacturing firm located in the Northeastern part of the United States. The study included in-depth interviews with a purposive sampling of approximately 27 participants from various levels, including frontline employees, department managers, and senior level managers.

Employees, managers (supervisors), and senior level management agree on the need to maintain a sound balance between work and family life for workers (Grzywacz, Carlson, & Shulkin, 2008; Lucas & Heady, 2002; Potter, 2003; Valcour, 2007). Torun (2007) believed work-life balance is indispensable across all sectors and industries, irrespective of the business environment and prevailing market conditions. Many organizations have become more aware of the growing need for work and life balance for their employees. This paradigm shift has seen the introduction of work-life policies across firms with the aim of assisting their workers to strike a balance between professional demands and family and social commitments.

Companies such as Hewlett Packard in Boise, for instance, operate on a work flexibility program based on shorter schedules to enable workers to create a work and family balance (Torun, 2007). Other companies, such as Westinghouse Electric, offer fitness centers and daycare centers to help their employees balance family life with the demands of work. To be effective, a work and family balance policy must take note of the organizational and customer needs while respecting individual concerns for the benefit of all stakeholders. According to Clayton (2005) and Matuska and Charles (2009), a positive correlation between work-life balance and increased organizational performance is clear because of job satisfaction among workers. In essence, work and family life balance encompasses the use of deliberate measures by an employer to enable workers to achieve professional commitments while enjoying the opportunity to attend to other life or social commitments (Torun, 2007).

Work-life balance does not imply striking an equal balance, but rather simply helps to schedule work activities and family commitments in a realistic and rewarding arrangement for the two fundamental needs (Valcour, 2007). Emphasis must therefore be on individual employee needs and work activities, because there is no perfect work-life arrangement among employees of the same organization. The priorities of individual lives are the reasons for the differing requirements. At the same time, individual work-life balance needs usually vary with time management on a daily basis. In this regard, attention usually shifts to the entire employee population and individual needs within the context of professional achievement and life enjoyment (Matuska & Charles, 2009).

## **Background**

More than 154 million people are employees in the United States, and with work hours rising, balancing work and family life has become a critical issue for many Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Today's workforce is changing at a phenomenal rate because of the shift in demographic composition of the United States (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003). As more women enter the workforce, the need to take care of children and maintain a balance between family and work becomes a major concern. In the past, a single household income could sustain a family and allow one parent to stay home with the children (Hill et al., 2003). In addition to increased working hours, higher expectations from family responsibilities have limited the performance of work duties (Valcour, 2007).

Both men and women voice growing concern for balancing the responsibilities of work and home. Researchers have advocated for years the importance of family-friendly benefits to help create a balance between work and family life. According to experts Grzywacz et al., "Workplace flexibility is a poorly understood concept, despite its widespread use in both the academic and practitioner literatures" (2008, p. 150).

Over the past decade, the term "*work/family*" has transitioned into what is today known as "*work/life balance*" (Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). A significant increase in the adoption of family-friendly benefits such as flextime and telecommuting has occurred because supervisors and upper-level managers have recognized the need for such benefits. Providing flexibility in the workplace has gained popularity as a dual agenda,

which is a way for organizations to meet business objectives while providing increased opportunities to meet the demands of work and personal life (Hill et al., 2003).

In addition to the necessity for life/work balance, the increasingly challenging economy has caused many businesses to do everything they can to improve their bottom line by reducing employee turnover. Because of the increasing need for balancing work and family life, organizations have developed alternative work arrangements to accommodate their employees. Many people are struggling to balance their professional lives and their home life (Golembiewski, Yeager, & Hilles, 1975).

The term “alternative work arrangements” (AWAs) has many alternative names, including family-friendly, work-life balance policies, family responsive policies, flexible staffing arrangements, and others. According to Polivka (1996), AWAs apply to “individuals whose employment is arranged through an employment intermediary such as a temporary help firm; individuals whose place, time, and quantity of work are potentially unpredictable” (p. 6). The term “alternative work arrangement” has been used interchangeably with the terms alternative employment arrangements, contingent employment, and nonstandard work arrangements (Cohany, 1996). Alternative work schedules include almost anything outside the standard nine-to-five business schedule (Cohany, 1996).

The many examples of AWAs in the workplace illustrate how they affect people differently. Many organizations today have adopted a flexible work schedule in order to offer a family-friendly atmosphere to attract and retain qualified employees (Rogier & Padgett, 2004). Studies have shown that when flexibility increased, workers reported

better sleep, attended more health classes, and were more likely to describe themselves as maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Rogier & Padgett, 2004). The AWAs can help to bridge the gap between work and family life. Many organizations implementing a flexible working schedule, some as early as 1979, have realized long-lasting benefits for both the employer and the employee. The percentage of the workforce working a flexible schedule increased from 12.4% in 1985 to 27.9% in 2004 (Rogier & Padgett, 2004).

Benefits of AWAs include higher levels of productivity and motivation that can help to reduce stress and absenteeism (Rogier & Padgett, 2004). Unlike other flexible schedule arrangements, flextime is an alternative working arrangement providing the employee a set of variable working hours. The working hours are much different from the traditional nine-to-five hours many businesses implement. Flextime not only gives the employee a choice in hours, such as coming in early to leave early or coming in a little later in the day, but flextime also allows for flexibility without reducing the total work hours for the week.

Several other types of alternative work schedules are available. These work arrangements include flex place (better known as telecommuting), which provides employees the ability to work from home (Chomiak, 1998). Other work arrangements include part time and compressed work schedules (Chomiak, 1998). According to Chomiak, “Teleworking offers significant benefits to employers, employees, self-employed individuals, entrepreneurs, and in developing the local economy” (p. 24). Employees not only save money on dry cleaning bills and fuel cost, but they also do not waste time in a long and stressful commute to work (Chomiak, 1998).

Organizations who adopt AWAs can use them as an effective tool to reduce turnover and tardiness and to help increase productivity and job satisfaction (Hill et al., 2003). In addition to representing a benefit for the workers, alternative work arrangements can be beneficial for the organization (Levin-Epstein, 2005). As AWAs can help reduce turnover in an organizations, telecommuting may also help to diminish overhead cost (Hill et al., 2003).

For many companies, large and small, office space can be costly. One way to reduce office size and save money is to encourage employees to work from home. The payoff can be huge for organizations able to implement a telecommuting schedule. Sun Microsystems, a San Francisco-based company, saved \$67.8 million in 2006 by allowing around 18,000 employees to work from home (Fleetwood, 2007). Currently, 39% of employees using some form of AWAs reported increased loyalty and willingness to work harder in the company (Travis, 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

While scholars have conducted considerable research into this area, special attention has focused on other sectors, excluding the manufacturing industry. The purpose of the study is to provide an initial exploration to determine the preferences of a work-life balance policy within a manufacturing firm. The central phenomenon studied includes employee perceptions and utilization of AWA participants at a manufacturing firm located in the Northeastern part of the United States.



In-depth interviews took place with 27 department managers, front-line employees, and senior level managers. In addition to helping understand employee satisfaction of AWA benefits, another goal of the study was to explore organizational support for AWAs. Examination of replies to questions posed may help to understand a range of alternative work arrangements including part-time, compressed work schedules, telecommuting, and flextime situations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem was that many employees need a more flexible work/life arrangement, which caused supervisors and senior level managers to review and renew organizational policies on balancing work and life (Travis, 2010). The United States' manufacturing industry is highly profitable, competitive, and represents the fifth largest economy in the world (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). In 2007, the output in services totaled over \$1.837 trillion, which was about 12% of the entire gross domestic product for the nation (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). U.S. manufacturers understand that to remain competitive, they need not only to retain employees, but also to attract them. Many manufacturing firms are reluctant to develop work/family arrangements because of the need to have a fully staffed assembly line (Lalla, Lewis, Pun, Chin, & Lau, 2003). Chrysler has pondered the idea of developing a four-day workweek to allow the assembly line process of car manufacturing to begin on a Monday and end on a Thursday (Travis, 2010).

In considering the nature and scope of production framework, work-life balance programs tend to have a direct impact on productivity, in conflict with the requisite fully staffed assembly line (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005). Introducing alternative and flexible work schedules is normally a form of upside opportunity that would affect performance of such businesses. Nonetheless, Clutterbuck (2003) asserted the need to develop flexible or alternate work schedules as a vital issue to manufacturing firms. The growing adoption of flexible work schedules to promote work-life balance implies the need has grown to become a right employees expect. The legal framework for human capital seems to appreciate the importance of this right, as captured in various regulations and legislations (Romer, 2011). Despite gender and marital status, most workers today have family responsibilities (Romer, 2011).

### **Rationale**

The topic of adoption of alternative and flexible work schedules in the manufacturing sector suffers a gap in research, despite the existence of consensus on its importance in any sector. Alternative work arrangements have been in existence for over 30 years, but many organizations do not clearly understand or utilize them. Further investigation of the various outcomes of alternative work arrangements is essential and might help increase understanding by scholars and practitioners. Having scholars and practitioners work together to develop effective flextime programs could help to eliminate absenteeism and turnover.

The intent of the research study was to examine how and why various employees within a manufacturing firm considered particular work/life balance policies as helpful. Using an exploratory qualitative study, in-depth interviews and document analysis provided data as the key resource instruments. Looking at the choices and preferences of various departments yielded results to help organizations understand and better develop a benefits package amenable for everyone, rather than just for select groups within a firm (Fleetwood, 2007; Golden, 2001; Hall, 1990).

### **Research Questions**

One problem with studying work life balance is that such balance means different things to different people. Life contains much more than work, and the concept of work-life balance suggests employees want the right to work as well as time for individual pursuits. The goal of the study was to determine whether alternative work arrangements helped improve employee health and well-being, reduced absenteeism, and increased job satisfaction, work performance, and productivity. An organization that develops alternative work arrangements may experience an increase in workplace cooperation, commitment, and motivation. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are employees' perspectives for various family-friendly/work-life balance policies, based on demographic characteristics such as gender, tenure with organization, educational level, marital status, number of children, and elder dependents? How do employees react to work/life balance policies?
2. To what extent do supervisors support the utilization of family-friendly/work-life balance policies? Are the formal written policies public to all employees on work/balance programs offered by the company? How are managers trained on work/life balance policies?

3. To what extent does the organization at large support family-friendly work-life initiatives? Does this include senior level management support? How is the culture organized to be a supportive workplace on work/life policies?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study findings offered significant contributions to practice as well as to academic literature (Kalleberg, 2001; Katzenback, 2006; Moen & Sweet, 2004). The intent of the study was to contribute to work/life literature in areas where some research gaps existed. For example, the current literature failed to examine the manufacturing industry: in particular, frontline assembly workers and administrative employees. Previous literature focused on industries such as healthcare, government, banking, and education (Perry, Mesch, & Paarlberg, 2006; Potter, 2003; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Little research has focused on the manufacturing industry (Fagnani & Letablier, 2004; Houseman, 2001).

Management must understand that employees need to feel they belong to an organization if the organization wants the workers to be as motivated as possible. Recent research, which included work over the last 21 years, focused on motivation in regard to family life (Chen, Powell, & Greenhaus, 2009; Facer & Wadsworth, 2008; Fang & Baba, 1993; Grzywacz et al., 2008; Hall & Richter, 1989; Hau-siu & Keng-Howe, 2006). Today's organizations want employees who are knowledgeable and dependable. Workers see their jobs as much more than just income. Workers look for the benefits offered by the company and the possibility of advancements. In a changing global economy, people rarely take a job thinking it would last longer than three years, much less decades. A

company offering a flexible work schedule and other arrangements might be more attractive to employees concerning motivation, compared to pay and bonuses alone (Lee & Phillips, 2006).

### **Definition of Terms**

***Absenteeism.*** This term is common to many employers and is a major problem in the workplace. Absenteeism is the habitual failure to appear for work (Glass & Estes, 1997). The behavior may relate to abusing paid sick time or personal days due to low motivation in the workplace (Fang & Baba, 1993). According to a recent CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, organizations lose approximately \$764,000 a year due to employees calling in sick at the last minute (CCH, 2005).

***Alternative work arrangements.*** According to Polivka (1996), alternative work arrangements, also known as AWAs, as apply to “individuals whose employment is arranged through an employment intermediary such as a temporary help firm; individuals whose place, time, and quantity of work are potentially unpredictable” (p. 6).

***Compressed workweek.*** Under a compressed workweek schedule, the work hours are compressed into fewer than five days by increasing the number of hours employees work per day (Bates, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999). Employees can work 10 hours in four days to earn 40 hours a week. By working only four days, people have extra time to take care of their personal needs. Employees typically have either Friday or Monday off when utilizing a compressed work schedule (Bates et al., 1999).

**Core operating hours.** Core hours, a subset of operating hours, is the time period during which all regular employees are normally be expected to be present in the workplace (Geurts, Beckers, Taris, Kompier, & Smulders, 2009). Core operating hours are often referred to as *face time* or a *gliding schedule* (Houseman, 2001). An employee's flexible schedule includes core hours to help facilitate the scheduling of employees in the workplace (Guerts et al., 2009).

**Elder dependents.** This term refers to older people for whom an employee is personally responsible on a consistent basis. Employees can have an aged relative to care for, whether living with them or not (Bates et al., 1999).

**Flexibility.** To a worker, this term means an adjustment to the traditional norm of working 9-5. This form of work arrangement is adjustable regarding the numbers of hours worked, depending on both anticipated and unanticipated deviations in the worker's desired number of hours (Golden, 2001).

**Job satisfaction.** Typically, job satisfaction addresses a person's general attitude towards his or her job. This includes both positive and negative feelings toward the job and includes the sense of fulfillment and pride felt by people who do their daily task (Baughman, DiNardi, & Holtz-Eakin, 2003).

**Labor turnover.** This term, from a human resource context, is the ratio at which employers gain and lose their workforce (Fang & Baba, 1993). High turnover within an organization can describe more employees leaving the company than joining it.

**Motivation.** In the workplace, motivation is the process of energizing employees to work towards a goal through a special path (Kalleberg, 2001). The development of

incentives and desirable working environments can help enable people to perform to the best of their ability (Levin-Epstein, 2005).

***Occupational stress.*** Occupational stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the needs of the worker (Wallace, 2004). Such stress generally appears with excessive workload demands or conflicting expectations from employers (Wallace, 2004). Stress can be the result of variety of problems, which include both work and non-work stressors (Fang & Baba, 1993).

***Organizational tenure.*** This refers to the total number of years an employee has worked within an organization (Bates et al., 1999).

***Part Time.*** Part-time employees typically work fewer hours in a day or during the week, compared to full-time employees (Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000). Any worker who is employed less than 34 hours per week is considered a part-time employee (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Some organizations offer health benefits to those who work part-time hours, but not all organizations follow this trend. Some individuals believe part-time work offers the best of both worlds, and part-time employees usually have lower work-family interference and better time management ability (Higgins et al., 2000).

***Productivity.*** This is the measurement of the efficiency of a person or machine in converting inputs into useful outputs (Hughes & Parkes, 2007).

***Spillover theory.*** As mentioned above, spillover theory suggests conflicts at work can spill over and interfere with family obligations and responsibilities, such as

preventing an employee from attending work due to a child's illness (Geurts et al., 2009). The conflict at home can increase stress in the working environment.

***Tardiness.*** Tardiness is an employee's absence from his or her workplace at their regularly scheduled start time (Kalleberg, 2001). Tardiness can also occur when employees come in late from scheduled breaks (Kalleberg, 2001). In addition to coming in late to work, failure to remain at work during one's scheduled work time is also a form of tardiness.

***Telecommuting.*** Nilles (1997) described telecommuting as “working periodically out of the principal office, one or more days per week, which can be either at home or at a client's office” (p. 1).

***Work-family interference.*** This term generally applies to work-family conflict. Work-family interference occurs when work demands and responsibilities at home create difficulties for an employee to fulfill both family and work responsibilities (Geurts et al., 2009; Hill, Jacobs, Shannon, Brennan, Blanchard, & Martinengo, 2008; Hughes & Parkes, 2007). Problems may occur due to extended hours at work that prevent an employee from attending a child's sporting event, for example (Huang, Hammer, Neal, & Perrin, 2004). The result of increased hours at work and not being able to spend time with family may cause work stress to spill over into the home environment, increasing conflict with the family (Geurts et al., 2009).

***Work-life/work-family balance.*** The explanation for work-life balance, also known as WLB, is the equilibrium between the amount of time and effort an employee



devotes to work and the time given to other aspects of his/her personal life (Hughes & Parkes, 2007).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

Data collection for the study consisted of self-reported data from individual employees, which included in-depth interviews. As with all forms of data collection, limitations were present. The study involved only a single organization and therefore might not be representative of the population (Yin, 2009).

Qualitative research implies the study of non-quantifiable social aspects (Creswell, 2009). This type of design involves a number of research methodologies used to collect, analyze, and present information. In-depth interviews at a Northeastern U.S. manufacturing facility provided the data. In-depth interviewing referred to one-on-one interaction with respondents during collection of data (Creswell, 2009). This methodology involved a number of assumptions, the most basic of which was the implicit nature of the respondents. All respondents were considered to have equal knowledge of the aspect under study.

Working under this assumption was vital to avoid the possibility of bias (Creswell, 2009). Bias can affect the validity and reliability of findings and distort truth (Kirk & Miller, 1986). A concern for quantitative researchers is to find and eliminate bias, while qualitative researchers acknowledge it and understand that bias is inevitable (Huberman & Miles, 2002). While some research bias is inevitable, a researcher must be able to show understanding of the dilemma while having tried everything possible to

reduce the impact. To assess the data quality, a researcher can check for representativeness and researcher effects, triangulating and weighing the evidence (Swanson & Holton, 2005).

The use of in-depth interviews assumed a complete study of all phenomena. For any subject under study, narrowing down a phenomenon to make simple dependent and independent variables would be inappropriate (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research places few assumptions on study aspects, thus enabling full exploration. However, the method is time consuming and costly to undertake, as it requires series of activities including data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

In-depth interviewing, on the other hand, has specific benefits and limitations as a method of qualitative research. For instance, by conducting an in-depth interview, a researcher obtains first-hand information from respondents, and the use of the open interviews process allows respondents to respond in their own words (Boyce & Neale, 2006). An advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In addition, in-depth interviews give the respondent a sense of confidentiality, which is appropriate for looking into sensitive social issues. However, such interviews have some drawbacks. They do not employ the rule of random sampling and the sample size is relatively smaller, posing the question of credibility and objectivity of the findings (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The following assumptions and limitations may appear throughout the study.

## **Assumptions**

1. All participants viewed this study as important and allowed 25–30 minutes for the interview.
2. The interview guide was valid. Five independent reviewers reviewed the interview guide for face validity.

## **Limitations**

1. The possibility of selection bias was present because the selected sample was from one facility in the Northeastern part of the United States.
2. The interviews were time-intensive due to the time required to conduct the interviews, transcribe the text, and analyze the results (Patton, 2002).
3. The interviewer required appropriate training in interviewing techniques so the research could provide rich data from an interviewee while making the interviewee comfortable with the questions (Patton, 2002).

## **Conceptual Framework**

The focus of this study was to examine corporate alternative work arrangements and to try to understand if alternative work arrangements helped employees balance work and family life. Appendix A shows the conceptual framework figure for the study.

## **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

This chapter contained the need for the study, its theoretical base, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, the nature and significance of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions, and limitations. The remainder of the study has four chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review of prior studies related to the topic of the effects of alternative work arrangements on both work/family balance and motivation.

Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the benefits of a qualitative study for the utilization of alternative work arrangements to help balance work and family obligations in the manufacturing industry. The study results added to the body of knowledge on the phenomenon of improving motivation and increasing job satisfaction while balancing work and family obligations. Chapter 4 contains the results of the research study. The purpose of chapter 5 is to tie everything together with a discussion of the findings and then conclude with a presentation of the implications of the study and the recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter contains a summary of the relevant literature on the topic of the effects of alternative work arrangements on work/family balance. The alternative work arrangements discussed in the study include flextime, telecommuting, and compressed workweeks.

The workplace today is very different, compared to what it was like in the 1950s. In the 1950s, the man was the primary breadwinner and worked outside the home while the woman was a caregiver who stayed home with the children (Cabrera, 2009). Women in that time constituted only 30% of the workforce (Council of Economic Advisors [CEA], 2010). Much has changed since the 1950s, in that 63% of all men in the United States were the primary breadwinner compared to only 17% of men who worked while the female was at home (Benko & Weisberg, 2007). During the 1950s, the concern with working mothers and dual earner couples was not an issue (Cabrera, 2009). As more people began to see the importance of a balanced worklife, organizations soon began to see the advantages of alternative work arrangements (AWAs).

Many organizations today are reluctant to develop AWAs because they fear reduced productivity (Weber, 2003). The 40-hour workweek has represented the norm for employment in the United States since the adoption of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 (Hill et al., 2008). The traditional, structured 40-hour workweek has become outdated and does not meet the current needs of employees (Benko & Weisberg, 2007).

Managers noticed their employees were dissatisfied with their jobs, and some experienced substance abuse and psychological problems caused by the imbalances of the work and family life (Ammons & Markham, 2004). Ammons and Markham discovered that working long hours deprived employees of the time they needed to spend with their families. Organizations that developed flexible schedules to meet the needs of their workforce found such benefits could increase productivity (Weber, 2003). Organizations use alternative work arrangements as a tool to improve recruitment, retention, and management workload, and to respond to employee diversity (Weber, 2003).

The 1980s sparked a new revolution within corporate America, which helped to reinvent the American workplace. The change in the workplace was a direct result of the men and women who demanded better balance between their families and their jobs. Although women initially made the request, many requests by men followed, as they were also concerned with meeting the needs of their families while balancing their full-time jobs (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). Some employees, especially men, who received offers of AWAs by organizations, were afraid to use this benefit because of the stigmatized identification of the “mommy or daddy track” (Hall, 1990, p. 5).

Flextime schedules may be difficult to manage in a manufacturing environment because of continuous process operations, which include assembly lines. The focus of the study was not only on the employees who worked on the assembly lines in the manufacturing industry, but also those who worked in the business environment within the manufacturing sector. Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, the goal

of the study was to contribute to a greater understanding of the dimensions of the issue of work/life balance for manufacturing employees.

In the current economic crisis, organizations struggle to survive. During these trying times, many organizations have difficulty maintaining a high level of morale as well as significantly increasing productivity among employees. Employees are the infrastructure of a business, and without their support and cooperation, the business begins to crumble. Ensuring that those in a position of leadership understand the various strategies available to meet the wants and needs of their employees is essential. One way to create such understanding is to use research to fully identify employee desires in an ever-changing work environment. Low motivation can result in reduction of productivity, high turnover, and increased absenteeism (Katzenbach, 2006), characteristics that can be devastating to organizations, because hiring and retraining new employees can be costly.

Researchers as well as many business leaders have struggled to understand motivation. Without a clear understanding of the problem, the result can be complete failure of a business. Those who have gathered information on the subject have concluded repeatedly that no single solution exists to the quandary of maintaining a balanced and motivated workforce (Katzenbach, 2006). Some people are motivated by money, while others are motivated by company benefits and job security (Katzenbach, 2006). As money and pay may be a motivational tool for some people, a study by Perry et al. (2006) showed that pay was a concern for some employees, but offering pay as the

primary tool to increase motivation might be dysfunctional, as other benefits and non-financial rewards were also critical.

To try to resolve the issue of motivation, researchers developed many theories and strategies to help leaders improve motivation. Some theories include the works of Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg, who attempted to understand the needs of employees while helping leaders make changes to their business to help improve motivation (Steers, Mowday, & Shapiro, 2004). As a behavioral scientist, Maslow developed the theory because he wanted to understand human behavior, including what motivates each individual (Steers et al., 2004). Maslow developed the hierarchy of needs model and the hierarchy of needs theory in his seminal research (Maslow, 1943). Scholars in all disciplines have studied this well-known theory of motivation, made up of five needs (Maslow, 1943).

As a postmodernist and a founder of the humanist philosophic tradition, Maslow was unhappy with the works of Freud and Skinner on behaviorism and human potential, and instead decided to study in detail what motivates human beings. Fundamental to Maslow's theory of motivation is that human needs are hierarchical, ranging from basic needs to self-actualization. Maslow separated the five needs into higher and lower orders. Maslow called the basic needs the physiological and safety needs, which included water, safety, and food (Maslow, 1943). In order to reach the self-actualization need, which is the highest level within Maslow's hierarchy, a person needs to have met all lower satisfiers, which include self-esteem, social needs, safety needs, and physiological needs (Maslow, 1943). Those who want to motivate someone, according to



Maslow, must understand what level of hierarchy the person is currently on and focus on satisfying the needs at or above this level. Maslow's theory is widely used today to help organizations understand human motivation, management training, and personal development.

Herzberg continued the seminal research Maslow developed, and Herzberg tested the theory to investigate which factors increased motivation and which lowered motivation within an organization (Steers et al., 2004). While the methods are crucial for the survival of a business, researchers must continue studies to find new ways to motivate employees. Over the past 50 years, motivational research has grown due to the high demand from businesses who want motivated and productive employees. As motivational research continues to be in high demand, new theories and studies must be ongoing to allow businesses to remain both competitive and successful while having a workforce with high morale.

### **Alternative Work Arrangements**

As more organizations offer AWAs, the extent to which employees actually utilize the benefits remains unclear. Results of a study by Clark (2001) suggested supportive supervisors who helped to promote alternative work arrangements were a factor in determining if the employees would embrace the benefits. According to Clark, "Without supervisors to encourage employees to use leave policies and flexible work policies, a policy-based strategy to reinforce a family-friendly culture will have limited effect" (p. 351). A strong culture fully supportive of AWAs is critical for a successful

implementation of AWAs, due primarily to the assumption that many companies continue to believe those who work longer hours are more productive (Clark, 2001). In addition to providing support from both supervisors and managers, many employees believe businesses should train their supervisors to be more accommodating during family crises (Clark, 2001).

### **Flexible Work Schedule**

A review of the literature suggested many organizations that adopt a flexible work schedule, also known as *flextime*, may require employees to carry over their hours from day to day (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman 1999; Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976; Pierce & Newstrom, 1980). This means that if an employee only works five hours in one day, he or she would then carry three hours over to the next day. Some organizational policies for working a flextime schedule state that employees cannot arrive before 7 a.m. or stay past 9 p.m. The policies and procedures vary among organizations. Allowing employees to make up hours lost in a workweek can help make flextime a more efficient benefit for employees. In addition to working varied hours, many firms require employees to be present during specific hours of the day. An employee could be present from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to satisfy the firms' core working requirements. Implementing a core hourly pay procedure can help to ensure adequate staffing to conduct business (Baltes et al., 1999).

Past studies focused on alternative work schedules included the works of Pierce and Newstrom (1980). Pierce and Newstrom developed the work adjustment model to help explain how flextime schedules could influence employee attitudes and behaviors.

While the theory focused on correspondence between employees' duties and the requirements of the job, the results would lead to high role performance.

Oldham et al. in 1976 developed a study focused on the job characteristics theory. The theory addressed the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction and the model included the core characteristics of autonomy, task identity, and skill variety (Oldham et al., 1976), suggesting flextime could positively affect an employee's sense of autonomy, which in turn would help to increase job satisfaction (Baltes et al., 1999). As researchers continued to provide inadequate research on the benefits of flexible schedules, Baltes et al. (1999) developed a meta-analysis to examine the impacts of flexible work schedules, compressed workweek schedules, and various work-related criteria.

As managers and company executives in the 1970s became frustrated by increased employee turnover and high levels of absenteeism, the idea of arranging different work schedules to fit the needs of employees seemed to be a solution to the problem. Golembiewski et al. (1975) began the seminal research of flextime and motivation. They developed a quantitative study on the effects of flextime in the workplace, with the idea that an employee could start between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. and could end the day, depending on the time they started, between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (Golembiewski et al., 1975). Golembiewski et al. suggested a flexible work schedule was not only effective for business organizations, but could be useful in both the education environment and government agencies. For the theory to be effective, an employee must be at work during the core hours and at other times to accumulate 35

hours per week. The researchers gave individual questionnaires to 30 employees and managers in all levels of income (Golembiewski et al., 1975).

Golembiewski et al. (1975) stated, “There are some jobs, such as security, and sets of jobs, such as those at the interfaces between quality control and production, for which the present flextime model may not be appropriate” (p. 502). Implications for research could include the use of technology when gathering data. In the past, many researchers did not have access to computers to calculate statistical data whereas programs today make the process convenient. Researchers today can utilize a larger sample because they have the technology to process the data, whereas previously, obtaining a larger sample from the population would have been difficult.

Hicks and Klimoski (1981) developed a study to test the effects of a flexible work schedule in the workplace. While previous research on flextime had focused on improving congestion around parking facilities and highways, Hicks and Klimoski focused on the effects of flextime on family commitments. They realized that a study on a flexible work schedule would be difficult to test because of bias within the organization: if the employees wanted to keep their flexible work hours, they might respond to the questions in a way to ensure they kept their current schedule, which could skew the results.

The current study incorporated an administrative procedure designed to minimize bias in the questionnaire (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981). The results showed little significance in job satisfaction differences between those who had a flexible work schedule for a long period and those who had recently implemented the program. Hicks

and Klimoski concluded a strong probability existed that other factors more powerful than a flexible work schedule influenced work satisfaction (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981).

Hau-siu and Keng-Howe (2006) conducted a study on the effects of alternative work schedules on employee performance and discovered people with a genuine need to have flexibility in their working hours were less likely to move to another company that did not offer flexible work hours. The resulting increase in job autonomy then caused greater commitment towards a company (Hau-siu & Keng-Howe, 2006). In addition to increasing autonomy, the results of the study showed companies should offer flexible work schedules to all employees, but recommended priority should focus on employees with children. The researchers found a strong correlation between employees opting to utilize AWAs and overall job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism levels.

Psychologists and other theorists in the 1990s began to study the effects of cognitive theory on learning. Albert Bandura developed the self-efficacy theory, also known as the social cognitive theory and the social theory of learning. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura & Jourden, 1991). Managers can help their employees achieve high levels of self-efficacy by bringing together goal-setting theory and self-efficacy theory. Bandura and Jourden tested a hypothesis suggesting different patterns of social comparison would affect performance and decision-making by managers.

Bandura and Jourden (1991) developed the study to advance understanding of managerial decision-making. The subjects were 40 male and 20 female volunteers from a graduate program in business studies; participants ranged in age from 21 to 49 years, with

an average age of 31 years. The results showed the social-comparative influence had a strong impact on level of organizational attainment, which increased in strength with tenure of management in the organization. The findings revealed social comparison could have both beneficial and detrimental effects. Bandura and Jourden used quantitative research and an interpretivist philosophic approach, as culture can affect the views of people in the way they associate meaning.

According to Behson (2002), “Research on work-family role juggling indicates that family concerns intrude on the workplace quite often, and working parents adapt to this by combining the two roles” (p. 324). In 2008, over 43.5 million Americans were caregivers to a family member over the age of 50 (CEA, 2010). Studies showed less skilled workers had less flexibility in workplace scheduling than many skilled workers had (CEA, 2010). This problem motivated many Americans to continue their education so they could improve their quality of life and become skilled employees. More and more adults over the age of 25 have attended school to improve their skills, which has produced an increased demand for organizations to accommodate employees taking additional classes (CEA, 2010).

Flextime can be beneficial for families by helping to resolve family conflicts, leading to lower levels of stress and improved morale (Behson, 2002). To investigate the impact of work on the family, Behson distributed 500 questionnaires to 10 different telecommunication companies located in the Northeastern United States. The response rate was low, consisting of 141 returned questionnaires. The implications for a low response rate might have included the number of questions on the survey. Lengthy

surveys may discourage participants from taking the time to participate (Creswell, 2009). To test reliability, Behson developed a pilot test. While maintaining reliability in the study, Behson also developed a mixed methods study to increase validity. Behson (2002) explained one implication of previous research as focusing on formal work family policies rather than on informal behaviors of people.

Best Buy's corporate headquarters in Richfield, Minnesota has become an innovator for alternative work arrangements. Best Buy believed in giving employees control, which they believed is the key to success. Since developing this magnificent strategy in which employees can take total control of when, where, and how long they work, productivity increased by 35% while turnover declined by 90% (Cabrera, 2009). Best Buy initiated the program, known as "ROWE" (Results Only Work Environment), in 2002; others know the program as the results-only work environment (Peters, 2008). The ROWE program includes the concepts of flextime and telecommuting while eliminating the required core hours of many organizations, when employees must be present (Peters, 2008).

Best Buy's belief envisions the most important concept as task accomplishment: as long as the employee gets the job done, the employee can work anytime during a 24-hour period. Peters (2008) believed this new concept would open the eyes of many other companies who had tried to adopt a policy. Some companies have already adopted the program, with the help of Best Buy's subsidiary called "Culture RX" (p. 31). Peters suggested the program could save an estimated \$13 million per year in reduced turnover and increased productivity.

Results of a study by Kauffeld, Jonas, and Frey (2004) indicated flexible work schedules not only increased motivation in the workplace, but also fostered employees' learning opportunities in the job. Flexible work schedules provided a high degree of employee autonomy to not only boost employee involvement, but also to foster increased communication among all levels within the organization (Kauffeld et al., 2004). When organizations offered flexible work arrangements, employees became more motivated in their work ethic, took on more responsibilities, and sought further education to continue working within the business. The need to leave declined because current employee needs were met; as a result, the employees did not seek employment elsewhere. A surprising result in the study was an increase in customer satisfaction because of the flexible work schedules. Fewer people coming in late and calling in sick from work produced an increase in the number of employees present at work each day, increasing customer satisfaction (Kauffeld et al., 2004).

Absenteeism and tardiness tend to be common avenues of escape from work, but are only a temporary form of relief. The employees who remain within the company continue to experience high levels of stress, fatigue, and burnout. The 9-to-5 work schedule does not exist today. Economic changes throughout the decades have changed this traditional work schedule, and today many employees spend more hours on the job. A typical workday may range from 9 to 12 hours, which leaves less time for the care of children and other family members. Outside the United States, the United Kingdom has adopted a new policy, enacted in 2005, known as the "soft touch" (Levin-Epstein, 2005, p. 3). The soft touch gives employees the right to ask their employers for a change in



work schedule, which may include a change in start or stop time or a change from full-time to part-time (Levin-Epstein, 2005).

Work and family conflict has two forms. Frone, Yardley, and Markel (1997) studied the association between work to family conflict and family to work conflict. Work to family conflict includes work stressors the individual takes home, a form of conflict also known as *spillover theory* (Frone et al., 1997). An employee coming home from work with added stress can cause relationship issues, which can produce more stress for the individual.

Family to work conflict is quite similar; however, conflict at home such as marital stress can create issues in the workplace when the individual takes the stress from home into the workplace. The effects can lead to higher levels of absenteeism and tardiness (Frone et al., 1997). Employees experience overload, which is increasing demands on time and energy that are too great to perform normal everyday tasks (Higgins et al., 2000).

Researchers Chen et al. (2009) reviewed previous studies of work to family conflict and family to work conflict. They focused the research on work to family time, based on the conflict of difficulty in balancing work hours and demands from the family. Rather than focusing on the negative approach of the spillover theory, Chen et al. focused on affective and instrumental positive spillover. This positive spillover theory occurs when employees transfer the work domain to the family domain (Chen et al., 2009).

## **Part-Time Employment**

Organizations can save money using part-time employment as an AWA, first by providing lower wages and second by eliminating benefits that may include sick leave and vacation pay (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008). Barker (1993) found that women who worked part time experienced improvement in both their mood and emotions while at home, including increased satisfaction levels, compared to women who worked full time. To test this further, Higgins et al. (2000) surveyed 22,836 people who worked part time in various positions across diverse organizations in Canada and found associations of part-time work with lower role overload among the participants. Offering part-time employment can help parents to better manage a demanding household, increasing the time spent at the home (Barker, 1993). Higgins et al. (2000) noted organizations should not simply offer part-time employment to employees, but the companies should make it desirable and rewarding.

In a 2001 study by Houseman, only 7% of the participants in the manufacturing industry utilized part-time work as a form of AWA. Houseman reported 550 employees participated in telephone survey interviews. Participants were in various industries, including agriculture, mining, manufacturing, transportation, trade, and the service sector. The organizations chosen represented a random sample to provide participants who were representative of private sector employment. While the manufacturing industry apparently both utilized part-time workers and hired individuals through employment agencies, according to Houseman (2001), “The incidence of agency temporaries was particularly high in manufacturing relative to other industries” (p. 151). Currently, no

law requires employers to offer benefits to employees, and many organizations have found that hiring temporary employees through an agency can help to reduce the risk of legal action from terminated employees (Houseman, 2001). The strategy used by the manufacturing industry can help to minimize cost, not only by reducing the quantity of labor hired but also by having the ability to adjust staffing levels to fluctuating workloads (Houseman, 2001).

Hughes and Parkes (2007) studied work and life interference in 292 women who worked in two public sectors in the United Kingdom. After gathering and interpreting the data, the researchers found a strong correlation between work hours and family satisfaction, which meant that working longer hours created an increased spillover effect from work to family. The spillover effect increased stress levels in the participants, which increased strain in their home life. Hughes and Parkes determined some participants who worked longer hours were satisfied with their jobs and felt they did not experience work and family conflict. The researchers concluded such workers had control over the amount of hours they worked and had a higher level of work-time control, which helped to control stress levels on the job (Hughes & Parkes, 2007).

For many years, researchers based their studies on the spillover theory when conducting research on work and family balance. In contrast to this method of study, Valcour (2007) stated,

Satisfaction with work-family balance is an overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of how successfully one is handling the sum of demands emanating from work and family roles, rather than an appraisal of how work-demand factors affect the family role and vice versa. (p. 1513)

Valcour (2007) also studied the effects of job complexity on maintaining a balance between work and family life. Higher job complexity reflects a higher level of skill, which can help people develop a number of skills to manage the work-family interface (Valcour, 2007). The skills learned in the workplace could help employees with planning and organizing, while increasing the demand of handling multiple tasks. After mailing out 1,119 surveys to employees within a telecommunications company in the United States and receiving over 643 completed surveys, Valcour concluded job complexity had significant and positive relationships to satisfaction with work family balance.

In addition to focusing on job complexity in his research, Valcour (2007) studied the effects of an employee's control over his/her work time in helping to control work life balance. Having a choice in how much to work and when to schedule work can help employees respond to family demands. Such choice can reduce stress people feel in situations when they find it difficult to attend to family matters (Valcour, 2007).

### **Telecommuting**

Telecommuting has been a popular concept since its inception in the early 1970s (Lomo-David & Griffin; 2001; Lucas & Heady, 2002; Pearlson & Saunders, 2001). Telecommuting is also commonly known by terms such as *teleworking*, *flexplace*, and *the virtual office*. According to Pearlson and Saunders, "Telecommuting includes workers who regularly work at home for some portion of their work and use the Internet, dial-up lines, or other forms of telecommunication as a link into their business offices" (2001, p. 117). The concept was originally an incentive for employees to save energy and reduce

stress from long commutes, while reducing the cost of office space (Pearlson & Saunders, 2001). Although the technology in the 1970s did not include the personal computer, many employees found other ways to continue to do their primary job duties while at home, rather than commuting to the workplace (Lomo-David & Griffin, 2001).

Computers have allowed companies to link individuals to the office electronically, which has become a major benefit of telecommuting. Because technology is the enabler that makes telecommuting possible, an effective telecommuting program would require organizations to build ongoing support in managing their information technology (Siha & Monroe, 2006). In addition to building support, firms must invest in appropriate equipment to provide employees with a connection between the central office and the employees' virtual offices (Siha & Monroe, 2006).

A study by the Employment Policy Foundation estimated in 2003 that over 65% of all jobs are capable of utilizing a telecommuting work schedule on at least a part-time basis (Potter, 2003). Research in 2005 found that 9.9 million workers telecommuted each day, an increase of 2.5 million from 2001. Findings of a survey in 2006 indicated that over 12.4 million workers telecommuted at least once per week (Fitzpatrick & Fishman, 2008). According to a recent study by World at Work, organizations can expect to see an increase in the demand for telecommuters in 2011, exceeding 90 million (WorldatWork, 2006).

Mayo, Pastor, Gomez-Mejia, and Cruz (2009) stated, "Telecommuting offers much greater employee autonomy than other types of family-friendly plans such as flexible work hours, parental leave, and on-site child care facilities" (p. 918). Over the

years, several *Fortune* 500 companies, such as AT&T, Coca-Cola, Ford Motor Company, and United Airlines, have embraced telecommuting as an AWA (Lomo-David & Griffin, 2001). In 2006, *Fortune* magazine found 79 of the 100 best companies to work for allowed employees to work from home at least 20% of the time (Fitzpatrick & Fishman, 2008).

Much of the literature on telecommuting suggested many positive outcomes of a telecommuting work arrangement. A major benefit was the ability to better balance work and personal life (Huang et al., 2004; Lucas & Heady, 2002; Potter, 2003).

Telecommuting has additional benefits, including increased flexibility in terms of the work environment. Telecommuters can save money on wardrobe, gas, and vehicle maintenance. A study by the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA; 2007) reported an estimated 3.9 million full time telecommuters in the United States reduced gas consumption by about 840,000,000 gallons yearly.

The increase in flexibility offered to employees provides the chance to work at their own pace and in the convenience of their own home. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) developed a voluntary national standard of excellence to help people save money and to help the environment by reducing gas emissions (Potter, 2003). The reduction in gas emissions emerged from the reduced number of cars on the road when people worked from home. Major arteries into cities could ultimately see a reduction in commuting time (Potter, 2003). A study by the Families and Work Institute in 2001 reported 70% of employees were willing to change employers to find flexible work arrangements, while 81% were

willing to sacrifice advancements (Families & Work Institute, 2010). Employees could the money they would spend on gas in traveling to work each day and put it toward other uses (Fitzpatrick & Fishman, 2008).

The question arises as to why more organizations have not adopted this work arrangement, because it has been so effective. Many constraints trace back to the size and age of the company (Mayo et al., 2009). Because many new businesses lack the financial resources to build large offices and pay high wages, they are more likely to adopt telecommuting as a way to save costs. As companies begin to grow out of their current space, telecommuting offers the advantage of allowing more of the employees to work from home while the company maintains the current building location (Mayo et al., 2009). Due to the physical nature of work, many manufacturing jobs may make telecommuting impossible (CEA, 2010), although other forms of AWAs are not out of the question and may be feasible for the manufacturing sector.

A research study by Robert and Borjesson in 2006 included surveys distributed to 460 employees in a telecommunications company, with 260 completed surveys returned. Robert and Borjesson determined a motivating factor for implementing a telecommuting work schedule included monetary compensation. The monetary compensation had a significant impact on the employees' susceptibility of adopting a flexible office. The additional compensation employers offered helped to pay electrical costs, Internet usage, and various office supply expenses (Robert & Borjesson, 2006).

Not only does telecommuting allow an organization to overcome distance and grow outside its domestic region, but it also helps to improve the workforce with a

diverse group of people. Thompson and Aspinwall (2009) discovered telecommuting eased transitions between roles and allowed individuals to enact non-work roles while in the work domain. The Telework Coalition (2006) reported Dow Chemical's administrative costs dropped 50% and its productivity increased 32.5% while absenteeism and stressful commutes declined. The review of the literature on telecommuting suggested a strong corporate culture that fosters a changing environment while offering alternative work schedules such as telecommuting had positive effects on employee commitment and job satisfaction (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lee, 1994; Kalleberg, 2001; Lomo-David & Griffin, 2001; Lucas & Heady, 2002; Potter, 2003).

While most employees view telecommuting as a benefit, others view telecommuting as "being out of sight, out of mind" (Frank & Lowe, 2003, p. 139). This belief results in employees feeling superiors will pass them over for promotions and they will miss growth opportunities within the company (Potter, 2003). The literature suggested the presence of many more advantages than disadvantages to utilizing telecommuting as an alternative to the workplace (Higgins et al., 1994; Huang et al., 2004; Kalleberg, 2001; Potter, 2003).

While working at home, some teleworkers have difficulties in separating their work and their personal life. People who work from home may spend additional hours working, compared to how long they normally would work in the workplace. This opportunity can promote conditions such as overworking, which can create increased levels of stress in the individuals and their families.



In a study of 583 employees in San Diego, Mokhtarian and Bagley (1998) tested many variables, including telecommuters who had children home while working and gender preferences of accepting telecommuting as an AWA. Telecommuting could be beneficial for those working from home if their work area is separate from family living areas and free of distractions from other members of the family (Mokhtarian & Bagley, 1998). Distractions at home may include teleworkers running family errands and doing household activities rather than performing their normal work tasks. Study results indicated the motivation to adopt telecommuting varied among various segments of society (Mokhtarian & Bagley, 1998).

Through their research, Mokhtarian and Bagley (1998) found women, on average, rated the advantages of telecommuting more highly than men did, although men also enjoyed the benefits. In addition to being a solution for women, Mokhtarian and Bagley discovered clerk coworkers were more likely than managers or professionals to see that telecommuting could help reduce stress while increasing family interaction. The researcher determined managers and professionals were more likely to get their work done while at home compared to others who were not at home. They suggested that this could be because managers have many distractions in the workplace when interacting with and assisting their employees (Mokhtarian & Bagley, 1998).

Companies have many considerations to address before they decide to utilize telecommuting as a solution to balance work and family. One of the challenges an employee might encounter is the ability to successfully balance the demands of work and family. Lomo-David and Griffin (2001) suggested individuals must have appropriate

personal attributes to allow them to balance work and family activities while working from home.

Offering telecommuting to everyone in the workplace would not be feasible and could ultimately cause many problems. Managers must be able to choose workers not only on their desire to work from home, but also on their strengths and work habits (Lomo-David & Griffin, 2001). Managers must work closely with their employees on a personal level to attain a better understanding of their work and home life. Allowing an employee who has a troubled home environment to work from home could cause the employee to reduce productive capacity (Feldman & Gainey, 1997). Employees must not only have the emotional stability to work from home, but their personality traits must fit well with working from home. Human resource managers, in addition to various divisional managers, must examine the personality traits of employees so that they can better understand if working in a socially isolated environment would affect the worker's productivity (Feldman & Gainey, 1997).

### **Compressed Work Schedules**

In addition to various alternative work arrangements discussed thus far, many organizations have focused on a compressed workweek. As the cost of gasoline has risen over the past decade, in addition to the cost of renting office space, companies have sought other ways to save money. Some companies offer employees the opportunity to work 10 hours a day for four days, so the employees can have every Friday off. While this seems to be a great concept, other companies follow a 90/80 philosophy (Loudoun, 2008). This idea uses a two-week work schedule.

During the first week of a 90/80 schedule, employees work nine hours a day for five days, which adds five hours of employee work in the week (Loudoun, 2008). During the second week, employees work nine hours a day for four days. The 90/80 concept offers employees the opportunity to take every other Friday off. Hot Topic, an organization with a focus on trendy clothing for teenagers and young adults, has been very successful with this philosophy (Loudoun, 2008).

In 2008, Loudoun developed a longitudinal controlled design to examine the relationship between work shift length and work/non-work conflict. The purpose of the study was to compare the workers' responses from working eight-hour shifts to changing their shifts to 12-hour workdays. A total of 186 machine operators from two manufacturing plants volunteered to participate in the study. Results of a regression analysis of the data revealed greater work/non-work conflict associated with higher mental strain on eight-hour shifts and 12-hour shifts (Loudon, 2008). The results of the study indicated shift length did not affect work/non-work conflict.

In the state of Utah, all government employees shifted to a four-day workweek (Travis, 2010). Reducing the days per week an employee comes into work has saved Utah an average of \$1.8 million in electricity, in addition to saving over 6000 metric tons of carbon dioxide from reduced commuting and building operation (Travis, 2010). Several other researchers have found that increasing the workload from eight hours a day to 10 hours a day could help to reduce work/family conflict, because the employee gained a three-day weekend to catch up on personal chores (Grzywacz, et al., 2008; Shen & Dicker, 2008; Swanberg, James, Werner, & McKechnie, 2008).

A recent study of the effects of shift work on employees had a case study as the method. Offering alternative work arrangements in organizations can help to reduce absenteeism and boost morale (Shen & Dicker, 2008). Shen and Dicker found shift work could have negative effects on employees that could result in “increased absenteeism rather than reduced absenteeism, while also increasing employee turnover” (p. 392). To better understand this phenomenon, Shen and Dicker conducted interviews with 10 managers and 14 shift workers at a major food distributor in Australia. Their findings yielded major implications for leaders in organizations, as results showed organizations that offered shift work as an alternative to a traditional workday must develop effective communication processes, including on-the-job training and work stress management (Shen & Dicker, 2008).

Facer and Wadsworth (2008) reported positive work and family effects from introducing a compressed work schedule for city government workers. From their analysis, the researchers suggested a compressed workweek would be a partial solution to the multi-faceted sources of work and family conflict. Other researchers revealed compressed workweeks could improve communication, improve morale, and reduce absences or sickness (Shen & Dicker, 2008).

However, Moen and Sweet (2004) discovered workers who worked fewer days each week, such as a compressed workweek, lost track of the interpersonal relationships with their workplace, resulting in the feeling of alienation from their organization. An additional negative association with compressed schedules was that employees had little opportunity to control when and how they worked, because working hours were dictated

by production schedules (Grzywacz et al., 2008). Amid much debate about the issue, Yang and Zheng (2011) observed compressed workweeks and other alternative work arrangements had given employees the opportunity to remove themselves from their job, and as a result, to reduce tension, stress, and fatigue.

As with many AWAs, a compressed workweek has its downfalls. Working 10-12 hours per day can complicate the ability of parents to attend school functions. A study by Baker, Roach, Ferguson, and Dawson (2004) showed shift workers suffered from additional stress caused by missing social and family life activities when working a compressed workweek schedule. The additional hours worked could increase fatigue, causing workers to have insufficient time to recover from their work (Baker et al., 2004). Employees suffering from fatigue have experienced digestive problems and high blood pressure (Shen & Dicker, 2008). One study concluded employees who worked a compressed work schedule reported poorer psychological well-being and reduced sleep quality, compared to a standard work schedule (Butler, Grzywacz, Ettner, & Liu, 2009).

As a single income has become an outdated concept, many dual-income families have struggled to pay for mortgages, car payments, and even necessities such as food. The economic crisis of 2008 caused many employees to look for additional part-time positions to make ends meet. Utilizing compressed workweeks has helped employees meet their financial obligations (Shen & Dicker, 2008). With two parents working and no one home to take care of elderly parents or children, the cost of child and elder care per month can cost over \$1,000. Reducing childcare to four days per week can save employees hundreds of dollars (Shen & Dicker, 2008). Butler et al. (2009) identified

practical implications of utilizing compressed workweeks to help boost an employee's overall well-being. Healthcare cost has increased 87% since 2000, and many organizations can save money by promoting AWAs to their employees (Butler et al., 2009).

### **Generation Cohort Acceptance of AWAs**

In the last 25 years, employees have become less convinced that working hard makes one a better person (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Organizations face the need to develop strategies to help motivate the workforce. Developing such strategies can be quite difficult because of the many generational groups that make up the workforce. A generational group includes those who share similar values and social life experiences and is sometimes referred to as a work cohort (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Within the work cohorts, groups of people not only share different life experiences, but different values as well.

The three generational groups prevalent in today's workforce are the baby boomers (boomers), generation Xers, and the generation Y (Yu & Miller, 2005). The baby boomer generation was born between the years 1945 and 1964 (Smola & Sutton, 2002). They make up the largest work cohort in the United States today, and due to the current economic crisis, many of the baby boomers are still working. From a statistical standpoint, 78 million boomers are working today, compared to 45 million generation Xers. The generation Xers were born between 1965 and 1980. This generation enjoys

working in teams and solving problems. In addition, they are very comfortable with diversity and change (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The next generation is the Y generation and they were born after 1980 (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Each generation has different values: for example, the baby boomer generation is very loyal to their organizations, compared to the Y generation, who seek financial success and may move from organization to organization. Understanding the work cohorts is crucial for building a productive workforce. With two parents working in today's society, generation Yers are particularly attracted to flexible work arrangements to balance their work and family life (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Generation Yers have seen their parents struggle with downsizing and other issues in the workplace and now hold little to no trust in organizations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). This quality of the generation Yers can be troubling for organizations, as they have to work hard to build trust in their employees. Companies must be able to accommodate the employees' desire to better balance their work and family life (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Developing more cafeteria benefits, flexible work schedules, and even on-site day care and elder care could produce positive results (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Many organizations use personality tests to help provide possible avenues to better understand their employees (Feldman & Gainey, 1997). Without understanding, testing employees' personality traits can become a major challenge for organizations, as the social isolation of telecommuting may alternately affect the employees' ability to satisfy their needs for affiliation (Feldman & Gainey, 1997). After investigating personality traits further, Feldman and Gainey found, "Employers should expect

successful telecommuters to possess primary personality traits that include the ability to work independently with little supervision, along with honesty and dependability” (p. 261). To qualify for a successful telecommuting work schedule, employees would first need to pass a basic personality test to see if they were both mentally and physically capable of working independently while at home. The researchers concluded that when recruiting employees and preparing them for telecommuting, management should utilize a personality test to determine which employees will best fit the telecommuter work schedule (Feldman & Gainey, 1997).

Many human resource managers have adopted AWAs, because they help to meet the needs of disabled workers (Tan-Solano & Kleiner, 2001). Companies can help to meet the needs of the Americans with Disabilities Act by allowing employees time to take care of loved ones who are sick or injured. Using AWAs, such employees can have the opportunity to work from home rather than taking an unpaid leave of absence. According to Tan-Solano and Kleiner (2001), “By allowing these employees to work from home, employers may be able to retain some of these skilled, trained employees and cut personnel costs” (p. 123).

A study in 1997 by the National Alliance for Caregiving and MetLife established that over 60% of workers who took care of their elderly parents went to work late or left early because of caregiving responsibilities. The results of the study suggested 20% of the people who needed to leave work due to caregiving responsibilities could not make up lost time (National Alliance for Caregiving, n.d). In a response to this issue, many



businesses began to allow their employees to telecommute or to have flexible schedules (National Alliance for Caregiving, n.d).

Recent academic research has demonstrated strong positive outcomes of adopting a flexible work schedule. However, the focus has primarily been on management and professional workers and little research has focused on blue-collar employees (Bond & Galinsky, 2006). Because a large percentage of the workforce is lower wage employees, the adoption of AWAs for all could provide positive outcomes. Pay for these workers is either by the hour or by piece rate and the workers are not always represented as being the core of the business. In the manufacturing industry, such workers assist on the assembly line, putting parts together by hand or using portable power tools. This form of manual labor can be exhausting, and AWAs can assist the workers in reducing stress and fatigue as well as improving production and motivation (Bond & Galinsky, 2006).

When work extends into family time, stress can appear and can spill over into the workplace. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) explained role-related stress in a current position as directly related to emotional exhaustion. A review of the literature suggested a negative relationship between work, family conflict, and job satisfaction (Almer & Kaplan, 2002; Fang & Baba, 1993; Wallace, 2004). The study by Fang and Baba (1993) revealed a positive relationship between perceived stress and intention to quit. As workers began to experience high levels of stress in the workplace, they began to withdraw from the workplace, as exhibited by symptoms of absenteeism and turnover (Fang & Baba, 1993).

Fang and Baba (1993) identified both internal and external factors employees use in a decision to stay with or leave the company. The external factors included availability outside of the present organization, while the internal factors included social support and personal experience. Results of a recent study by Lee and Shin (2010) supported Fang and Baba, citing internal factors of poor working conditions such as inadequate sanitation for workers and poor lighting. Long working hours without breaks and no moments of rest as well as cramped working spaces are additional forms of internal factors affecting an employee's overall satisfaction level in a job (Lee & Shin, 2010).

Since the Industrial Revolution, many factories have made advancements to create a safer workplace for their employees, but other factories continue to have deplorable conditions for workers (Lee & Shin, 2010). Working conditions have drastically improved in the years since the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was developed in 1971 (Lee & Shin, 2010). The current economic crisis may cause many employees to stay in their current jobs, even though they are unhappy, out of fear of finding no other opportunities.

### **Effects of Stress on Employees**

Researchers have wondered why men and women react differently to stress. Research has suggested the different hormone levels in the body as the reason men and women react differently to stress (Almer & Kaplan, 2002; Bergman, Ahmad, & Stewart, 2008; Fang & Baba, 1993; Kim & Stoner, 2008). Three hormones of importance in the body are cortisol, epinephrine, and oxytocin (Bergman et al., 2008; Fang & Baba, 1993).

When a stressful situation occurs, glands above the kidneys, known as adrenal glands, release cortisol and adrenaline, which raises blood pressure and blood sugar levels. The third hormone of interest released in the body is oxytocin (Fang & Baba, 1993), a hormone that helps to calm the body down and bring it back to normal levels. Women secrete more oxytocin than men do, which is what researchers have determined as the reason women recover from stress faster than men do (Almer & Kaplan, 2002; Bergman et al., 2008; Kim & Stoner, 2008).

Several studies have indicated stress as associated with consequences such as job satisfaction and absenteeism (Kim & Stoner, 2008; Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). In addition to increasing absenteeism in the workplace, growing numbers of study results have linked job stress to poor health (Mann, 2006). Increased stress in the workplace reduces productivity and slows economic growth (Mann, 2006). Bohlen and Viveros-Long (1981) conducted a study on family management stress and identified a reduction in stress levels when employees opted to utilize flextime.

Kim and Stoner (2008) reported workers who experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion were more likely to experience lack of personal accomplishment at work. Kim and Stoner focused on burnout, the availability of social support, and promoting autonomy in the workplace. Researchers have linked burnout to both physical and psychological health problems (Grzywacz et al., 2008). Managers are highly concerned about stress and burnout, because these two issues contribute to both turnover and organizational performance. According to Kim and Stoner (2008), "Lack of job autonomy and social support increases turnover intention" (p. 20). Employees with

greater control over their work time were less likely to feel obligated to come to work when they were sick. Kim and Stoner showed that improving individual control over time at work could improve sleep quality and increase energy while reducing stress among employees. The research helped to provide support that even though workers experience high levels of stress; a supportive working environment can help employees maintain their attachment to the organization (Kim & Stoner, 2008).

A recent study by Grzywacz et al. (2008) sampled over 85,936 workers and nine distinct companies. Of the nine companies, the manufacturing industry accounted for 3,437 participants. In the quantitative survey questionnaire, participants replied to questions asking if they took part in a flexible work arrangement. The participants had the option to select the programs in which they participated. The goal of the study was to determine which flexible arrangement reported less stress and burnout (Grzywacz et al., 2008).

Consistent with their hypothesis, Grzywacz et al. (2008) established that formal flexible work arrangements such as flextime and telecommuting had the lowest stress and burnout levels, followed by compressed workweek schedules. The results of the study provided clear evidence that workers engaged in formal AWAs reported less stress and burnout, compared to workers who did not choose to participate in the arrangements. Grzywacz et al. suggested that testing the overall household employment profile would be beneficial in future research, as results of such a study could determine if both partners in a household took part in AWAs.

## **Effects of AWAs on Productivity**

An important question is whether AWAs increase employee productivity. Many researchers have theorized that AWAs produce performance benefits for organizations, and in return, enhance recruitment while reducing turnover (Cohany, 1996; Kelliher & Anderson, 2008; Valcour, 2007). Because not all companies utilize work-life programs, a company's work-life program can provide an incentive to remain in the firm (Konrad & Mangel, 2000). As job security has declined over the years due to the struggling economy, the desire to stay with the current firm can motivate employees to perform to the best of their abilities.

To investigate the overall effectiveness of AWAs on productivity, Konrad and Mangel (2000) disbursed survey questionnaires to over 3000 organizations. The businesses varied in industries, representing agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, financial services, and the public sector. The survey listed 19 distinct work-life activities and asked respondents to select which their organization currently offered. Some of the work-life activities included on-site daycare, paternity leave, adoption leave, parental leave, spouse placement, supervisory training in work-family sensitivity, flextime, job sharing, and a part-time workforce.

From the study, Konrad and Mangel (2000) concluded productivity was directly related to work-life programs, but was contingent on the type of workers employed by the firm. Firms with a higher percentage of professionals and women showed a relationship between work-life benefits and productivity. The research results supported studies on

which women appeared to achieve more productivity gains from work-life programs than men did (Valcour, 2007).

### **Work-Family Balance in the Manufacturing Sector**

A manufacturing organization's performance success inherently springs from the ability of leadership, the organizational culture, and morale. To achieve top performance, a manufacturing organization must find ways to maintain a high level of worker satisfaction, and to measure the satisfaction according to clearly defined performance expectations. Research has highlighted the necessity of such a system, with Lalla et al. (2003) reporting, "A viable manufacturing strategy (MS) is recognized as a plan to achieve corporate objectives, whilst a sound performance measurement (PM) system helps measure, monitor, and reward the performances of an organization" (p. 414). Within the scope of these definitions is the assertion that the relationship established between personnel and the organization largely facilitates the manufacturing process (Lalla et al., 2003).

As the discussion has highlighted to this point, the degree to which the employing organization facilitates a healthy balance between work life and family life has particular impact on the personnel-organization relationship. By recognizing the economic implications of higher worker satisfaction levels, a manufacturing company may decide to implement certain policies to prioritize time for family, friends, and socializing outside of the workplace. Available research has endorsed this tactic as a more effective way of yielding positive employee performance than through micromanagement, individual

production quotas, or aggressive overtime policies. Aryee et al. (2005) contended the latter strategies tended to produce negative emotional and psychological experiences for the employee. Researchers stated, “*Role overload* describes a perception of having too many things to do and not enough time to do them (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau, 1975). Work overload has been found to be positively related to work-family and family-work conflict” (Aryee et al., 2005, p. 134).

Aryee et al. (2005) believed too great an intrusion upon the worker’s personal time will cause the invasion of negative feelings and distractive resentment during work hours. To an extent, this belief reinforces the findings in the research by Hall and Richter (1989), which remarked that employers had begun to reconsider the implications of the work-family balance. In the past, organizations have frequently attempted to redress what they viewed as the predominance of work-life by creating family functions within the workplace, including such practices as company picnics, spousal social clubs, and onsite daycare services. However, as Hall and Richter reported, organizational theory has caused reconsideration of the approach. Aryee et al. indicated,

While many current organizational and personal methods of coping with work/home tensions entail greater integration of the two domains, Hall and Richter find that what employees really need is to have clear boundaries and some degree of separation between their work and home lives. (2005, p. 213)

Evidence has suggested manufacturing operations need to create programs to specifically encourage and enable greater dedication and attention to family life. Pilot programs have emphasized certain modes of greater flexibility with respect to work hours and work days, allowing individuals to create somewhat more personalized schedules based on their needs outside of work. Discussion of such a program appeared in the

research by Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weltzman (2004), which identified job flexibility as a feature improving both family life and the morale an employee brought to work.

Research results indicated both features connected to positive work role performance.

Accordingly, Hill et al. (2004) reported,

Perceived job flexibility is related to improved work-family balance after controlling for paid work hours, unpaid domestic labor hours, gender, marital status, and occupational level. Perceived job flexibility appears to be beneficial both to individuals and to businesses. Given the same workload, individuals with perceived job flexibility have more favorable work-family balance. Likewise, employees with perceived job flexibility are able to work longer hours before workload negatively impacts their work-family balance. (p. 49)

To this end, Hill et al. (2004) made the case that job flexibility does not bear a direct relationship to a reduction in workload—a concern identified as chief among those impacting manufacturing plant policies. In production settings, where speed and efficiency of output are equivalent to profitability, finding ways to offset the imbalance between work and family without impeding the labor needs of the operation is important. Therefore, work hour and workday flexibility emerges as a sensible counterpoint to the concerns raised by Aryee et al (2005) regarding overload without compromising the ability of an organization to maintain its expected production and output rates.

The dominant finding in the research across the manufacturing sector indicated productivity during the hours in use was directly impacted by a greater sense of satisfaction with personal life outside of work. In the study by Fagnani and Letablier (2004), a pilot program requiring a five-hour cut in the workweek among manufacturing firms resulted in largely positive experiences for personnel, both with respect to their familial obligations and in connection to their work-role attitudes and performance.



Fagnani and Letbalier reported of their survey, “Six out of ten respondents reported a positive impact of the reduction on their work/family balance. Their judgment is dependent on the organization of work, whether it is regular and based on standard working hours or irregular schedules” (Fagnani & Letablier, 2004, p. 551).

Such a result suggests that almost universally, workers benefit in their respective workplaces from a reduction rather an increase in the amount of work necessary to complete expected tasks. The degree to which such measures allow individuals to address core concerns in maintaining healthy marriages, providing adequate parenting, maintaining a household, and possessing some satisfying social life is instrumental to their focus on responsibilities when on the job.

Due to the socialization of family roles and home-life responsibilities, Higgins et al. (1994) stated, “Significant differences were found for gender and life cycle” (p. 144). For all components of work-family conflict, an interaction between gender and life cycle was present. For men, levels of work-family conflict were moderately lower in each successive life-cycle stage. “For women, levels were similar in the two early life-cycle stages but were significantly lower in the later life-cycle stage” (Higgins et al., 1994, p. 144). Based on the correlation of gender and life-cycle features with different responsibilities and roles at home, manufacturing firms would be well served to create flexibility programs revolving on such individual-specific factors as maternity, marital status, and health or well-being.

## **Conclusion**

The literature review provided a foundation of prior research studies on the topic of the benefits of alternative work arrangements in increasing motivation and job satisfaction, while helping to reduce stress and helping to balance both work and family obligations. A review of the literature showed a direct correlation between increased job satisfaction and reduced family conflict when an organization used alternative work arrangements. Despite the vast amount of literature available on the benefits of alternative work arrangements, consensus that a connection exists between improving job satisfaction and balancing work and family life remains elusive.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

### **Overview**

While scholars have conducted considerable research into this area, special attention has focused on other sectors, excluding the manufacturing industry. The purpose of the study was to provide an initial exploration to determine the preferences of a work-life balance policy within a manufacturing firm. In the attempt to meet these exploratory goals, the views of frontline and assembly line employees, as well as those of their frontline, middle-level, and senior level managers emerged from in-depth interviews. Specifically, purposively chosen respondents participated in in-depth interviews. The data gathered as well as the data collected from secondary sources such as published articles and various textbooks underwent analysis and interpretation to derive comprehensive results.

The research processes selected for the study examined how and why various employees within a manufacturing firm considered particular work/life balance policies helpful. Three different areas concerning family-friendly work-life balance policies were the targets of the study: (a) employee perspectives for specific components of family-friendly work-life balance benefits, (b) supervisor and organizational support for utilization of such benefits, and (c) intent to stay (retention outcomes) within the organization. This chapter contains descriptions of the research design and methodology, the population and sample of the study, instrumentation, the data collection process, and the data analysis.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

Qualitative research arises from the assumption that reality has multiple and varied meanings (Mason, 1996). The objective of this exploratory study was to understand employee perspectives regarding various family-friendly and work-life balance policies. The central phenomena studied included employee perceptions and company use of AWA participants at a manufacturing firm located in the Northeastern part of the United States. The study included in-depth interviews with various department managers, including frontline employees and senior level managers. The goal of the research was to listen to participants and build an understanding of work/life balance preferences.

The qualitative research method was appropriate in this study because qualitative research captured the richness of human interactions through face-to-face communication (Uwe, 2009), and the participants were able to provide data in their own words and in their own way through the use of open-ended questions and probing (Mason, 1996). Qualitative data collection offered the opportunity to add rich detail and nuance to document existing knowledge of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Face-to-face interviews involved synchronous communication that offered the ability take advantage of social cues (Seidman, 1991). Social cues included voice, intonation, and non-verbal communication, which provided the interviewer additional information to supplement the verbal answers (Seidman, 1991). Kvale (1983) explained that using interviews in qualitative research could help explore an existing phenomenon in detail, which may provide additional information for future research.

Another benefit of utilizing a qualitative method was the flexibility to develop open-ended questions. With quantitative methods study, such as surveys and questionnaires, the questions are close-ended or fixed and leave no room for flexibility (Swanson & Holton, 2005). In a qualitative study, participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods (Swanson & Holton, 2005).

Results of a study on workplace stress and downsizing by Maki, Moore, Grunberg, and Greenberg (2005) suggested that open-ended questions were a useful tool in gathering more information about the participants. The study took place in an interview format with 19 managers in a large manufacturing organization. During the interviews, the researchers were able to ask questions concerning the participants' behaviors and job stress (Maki et al., 2005). The researchers immersed themselves in the manufacturing business, observing the experience of both male and female managers as they dealt with a stressful environment. Upon completion of the observation, the researchers conducted interviews lasting, on average, about one to two and half hours (Maki et al., 2005). Because of the large amount of time required to conduct the interviews, the researchers offered an incentive of \$40 for each participant.

The qualitative questions in the study included structured questions to identify common themes evolving from the interviews with the study sample. The questions solicited the respondents' feedback on the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. The research design was suitable

for studying alternative work arrangements because it included the ability to list the participants' experiences and perceptions of the problem under exploration.

### **Sampling Design**

A form of non-probability sampling that did not involve the random selection of participants for the study was the sampling method chosen. By utilizing purposive sampling, those participants who had actually had experiences relating to the phenomenon researched were those chosen to participate. The advantages of purposive sampling included that selection of the people for the sample involved a particular purpose already in mind (Stenbacka, 2001). An in-depth interview session was appropriate for a study of this magnitude because it lent credence in the understanding of employee perceptions and utilization of alternative work arrangements by participants at a manufacturing firm.

### **Setting**

The research participants for this study were men and women working at a manufacturing firm located in the Northeastern part of the United States. The organization was a member of the chemical preparations and fabricated metal division of the manufacturing industry. The firm offered a wide range of products to the community it served. In addition to the Northeastern manufacturing site studied, the organization had many manufacturing sites around the world that worked with producing quality products used in controlling emissions from both mobile and stationary sources. The organization

provided contract research and development for the pharmaceutical industry in addition to selling and refining precious metals for jewelers. Their Northeastern site currently employed over 200 full and part-time workers.

### **Sample Size**

A purposive sample of 27 employees from a manufacturing firm comprised of frontline employees, middle-level, and senior level managers were interview participants. The interview process in this study took place through face-to-face interaction. The sample had three groups with nine participants in each group. The 27 participants were from the following departments: (a) accounting, (b) finance, (c) sales, (d) marketing, (e) public relations, (f) operations, (g) legal, (g) information technology, (h) training and development, (i) research/development, and (j) and human resources.

The participants were of various ages, genders, and marital status. The target groups were frontline and assembly line employees and frontline, middle-level, and senior level managers. The data collected from the frontline and assembly line employees were in a separate category from the managers' collected data, which enabled assessment of the low-ranking employees separately from their seniors. Because this research required a great deal of coordination and cooperation and because the participants were from varying backgrounds, ethical values such as non-disclosure of sensitive information about an individual in order to promote trust, collaborative effort, accountability, fairness, and mutual respect was of utmost importance.

## **Instrumentation**

For the purpose of this study, the use of a structured interview guide ensured that the same general areas of information were collected from each interviewee (Seidman, 1991). This approach provided more focus than the conversational approach while allowing the interviewer some adaptability for obtaining information from the interviewee (Seidman, 1991). The interview guide had the questions arranged in an orderly and logical manner to help ensure that each participant had the opportunity to respond to the same questions (Patton, 2002).

The questions used in the research study were open-ended. The advantage of open-ended questions was to allow for a wide range of responses and to allow the person answering to include more information than a simple yes or no answer. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to include more information, including feelings, attitudes, and understanding of the subject (Denzin, 2005).

## **Validity and Reliability**

Validity is a priority concern in qualitative research. When comparing validity from quantitative to qualitative methods, researchers who follow the qualitative framework reject the use of validity (Huberman & Miles, 2002). For a qualitative researcher, one strategy to gather unbiased results is to not overestimate or underestimate (Yin, 2009). Researchers should be able to gather information from various sources using different methods to obtain a full picture while also minimizing bias. Establishing validity in qualitative research may be a rather difficult and challenging process.



Quantitative researchers have concerns with internal validity in their research, where qualitative researchers focus on the credibility of their participants (Huberman & Miles, 2002). The credibility of participants is crucial in order to have a successful study with valid results (Kirk & Miller, 1986). In addition to ensuring credibility, a qualitative researcher must also focus on dependability rather than reliability (Kirk & Miller, 1986). In a qualitative study, measuring the same thing twice is impossible; if it were to occur, the concept would have two different meanings (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Qualitative research is suitable to explain a current situation or event and can only describe that situation for a particular group (Huberman & Miles, 2002), which is the reason many qualitative researchers have trouble generalizing their results to a population.

Triangulation is an important technique in facilitating data validation, as it enables the cross-verification of two or more sources. This study involved the combination and application of various methodological analyses while studying the effects of the alternative work arrangements on life-work balance. Through the combination of multiple observations, empirical materials, and qualitative methods, the problems and intrinsic biases that may result from using a single observation, theory, and method in a study may be overcome. Broadly speaking, triangulation is feasible in both qualitative and quantitative (validation) studies. But the term appears more commonly in reference to qualitative studies. In research works, triangulation has emerged as a suitable alternative to other traditional procedures (Allan, 2003).

As with quantitative research, those who use the qualitative approach face challenges with bias in the data. For both methods, bias can affect the validity and

reliability of the findings and distort truth (Kirk & Miller, 1986). A concern for quantitative researchers is to find bias and eliminate it, while qualitative researchers acknowledge it and understand that it will happen (Huberman & Miles, 2002). While some research bias is inevitable, a researcher must be able to show understanding of the dilemma while having tried everything possible to reduce the impact.

Reliability is concerned with estimates of the degree to which a measurement is free of random influences and the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the instrument was a structured interview guide that had been tested with a focus group. The interview guide was tested to ensure stability and to allow for consistent results (Creswell, 2009).

### **Field Test**

The field test for the interview questions involved the use of a focus group to detect any form of weakness in the research design and instrumentation. The use of a focus group enhanced face validity of the interview guide while testing to ensure the questions were understandable and followed a logical flow. Five participants selected from a population outside of the target population, but with similar credentials, formed the focus group to test the structured interview guide. The participants selected for the focus group included two frontline employees, two supervisors, and one senior level manager. The focus group reviewed the two interview guides (Appendix E and G). After conducting the test, the focus group participants provided feedback about the questions and the overall flow of the interview. The focus group suggested rewording

some of the questions to improve understanding and to group the interview questions according to the research questions investigated. All changes made appear in an updated interview guide (Appendix F and H).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

An interview guide was the instrument used to collect data through face-to-face interviews with the participants. In February 2012, participants received a letter asking for their participation in the research study (Appendix B). The letter contained the mandatory informed consent form (Appendix C) as well as the option to not participate and to simply return the envelope. Interviews took place over a 30-day period and each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. Obtaining the participant's verbal and written consent was necessary before proceeding with the interview. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. Upon completion of transcription, the recordings were destroyed. The transcripts will remain secure in a fireproof safe in the researcher's home. For the protection of the participants, only the researcher will have the key to the safe.

The sample selection, sampling, data collection procedures, and rationale are components of these steps. The steps outlined below provided a guide to conduct the research (see Appendix D).

1. Schedule a detailed meeting with the human resource manager to provide an overview of the study process. Discuss what is required from participants and the time involved in the study.

2. With the help of the human resource manager, initiate contact with volunteer participants and distribute a letter of introduction to the potential volunteers.
3. From replies received, select 27 volunteers who meet the selection criteria for the study. Nine volunteers will be from those who work in frontline positions, nine from front-line supervisors to middle management positions, and nine from senior level management positions.
4. Schedule an informed consent meeting with volunteers. Meetings and interviews will occur in accordance with counselor availability.
5. Provide the interview guide to all participants.
6. Schedule a meeting with each individual participant at the manufacturing plant. Meetings will take place in a private conference room in the human resource department.
7. At the meeting, review the purpose of the study and discuss the consent form with the participant.
8. Obtain participant signature on the consent form and obtain permission to audio tape during the interview process.
9. Leave a copy of the signed consent form with the volunteer.
10. Conduct the interview with each participant.
11. Transcribe and code audio files.
12. Give copies of the final report to participants who request them.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Coding**

The procedure for analyzing data is to break up and separate research data into pieces (Charmaz, 2006). The data at first may appear to be a large collection of unrelated accounts, but the process of coding can help to create order (Charmaz, 2006). In addition

to helping create order, the process of coding during data analysis facilitated searching the data and making comparisons to identify any patterns requiring additional investigation (Yin, 2009). The list of codes helped to identify the issues contained in the data set. A master list of all codes developed and used for the study contributed to identifying data categories.

Recording and transcribing all interviews helped to maintain data quality as the transcribed information underwent review and labeling. The information was then categorized and clustered into themes, based on the responses to the interview questions. All interviewees received an assigned respondent number to maintain confidentiality, and only the researcher saw the names of the respondents.

The tool, CDC EZ-Text version 3.06 assisted in creating, managing, and analyzing semi-structured qualitative questions. This software program helped to solve the problems of consistency across interview write-ups. To ensure validity of the data collected via survey from participants and then transcribed, a crosscheck took place. This process assisted in ensuring appropriate organization of all responses.

### **Summarizing Data**

To assist during data analysis, a process known as memoing was useful. This process involved recording reflective notes about information learned from the data (Yin, 2009). Memoing will provide an opportunity to reflect on initial ideas from the research gathered. When needed, quotations will illustrate the themes in the data. By utilizing memoing, a researcher can look across the various summaries and synthesize findings across multiple data sources.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Researchers spend long hours gathering and analyzing data, and following ethical values were crucial for the success of the study. Adhering to ethical standards in research is important for several reasons. First, some of the ethical norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error, while other of the ethical norms help to ensure the research can be held accountable to the public (Creswell, 2009). Second, without the quality and integrity of a research project, people or organizations are less likely to fund the research (Creswell, 2009). Ethics is clearly more than distinguishing between right and wrong, and is more about norms for conduct that help to define what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior (Creswell, 2009). The original purpose of the IRB organization was to help distinguish acceptable behavior by researchers. In order to protect the identity of the participants, all employees received a consent form.

Among the important ethical considerations applied in the study were confidentiality and consent. Prior to securing the participants' consent, they learned every detail of the study. All potential respondents are entitled to know what a researcher is doing, including the purpose and aims of the study, before participating (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000). This strategy facilitated the understanding of the important details under evaluation as well as the vital positions they held for the research to be successful.

Ensuring confidentiality is an important component in research. An additional ethical concern is the issue of privacy and anonymity of respondents. According to Orb et al. (2000), researchers must keep the identity of the respondents and their responses anonymous and confidential. Every researcher has the duty to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality to respondents. If a researcher fails to provide anonymity and build trust among respondents, low response rates and biased answers can be a result.

Andreassen, Ursin, and Eriksen (2007) tested the relationship between motivation to work, *workaholism*, and health, but were unsuccessful in gaining a high response rate from their participants. Of 500 participants who received a survey, only 235 completed the survey, yielding a 47% response rate (Andreassen et al., 2007). The failure of the researchers to enforce the use of confidentiality among the respondents was the cause of the low response rate. The participants received a return envelope to provide anonymity, but had to mail the letter to the trade union chairperson within the organization where they worked, who then forwarded the surveys to the University of Bergen. The response rate might have been greater if participants had been able to send the results directly to the university research team.

Participation in the current study was voluntary. All participants received clear and specific information indicating they could remove themselves from the study without notice or explanation to the researcher. The participants signed a confidentiality agreement outlining the measures applied to ensure the confidentiality of both the participants and their responses.

Data collected in the study will be stored on the researcher's personal laptop for a period of seven years following completion of the research. This time frame will enable the researcher to address future queries that might arise with respect to the completed research. Computer files will be deleted from the researcher's personal laptop after a period of seven years. The researcher will use the protection protocols of Microsoft Office Excel 2007 to further restrict access to participant contact information while such data is on the personal laptop. All data, including notes and digital hard drives from the study, will remain secured in a fireproof and tamper-resistant safe. The researcher is the only person who has access to the key and safe. Seven years following completion and publication of the dissertation, all hard copy documents and electronic files will be destroyed.

Researchers must not probe into areas an interviewee would prefer to keep private (Allmark et al., 2009). A common threat that can become an ethical issue is the use of quotes while not disclosing a person's full name (Allmark et al., 2009). The use of pseudonyms in this study will avoid that issue. To maintain the highest level of ethical standards, during in-depth interviews, a statement will include the following: "Is it alright if we talk a little more about...?" In addition to the above ethical issues, during the interview, sensitive material could be part of a discussion, which has the potential to make the interviewee emotionally tense (Allmark et al., 2009). Procedures in the research study protected and supported the participants during all stages of the study.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The purpose of this study was to provide an initial exploration to determine the preferences of a work-life balance policy within a manufacturing firm. The central phenomenon studied included employee and leader perceptions about the utilization of AWA at a manufacturing firm located in the Northeastern part of the United States. This chapter contains the presentation of the results of the analysis.

The results of the analysis of the staff sample produced several thematic categories: (a) perception about work-home balance, (b) changes in priorities, (c) abuse of privileges, (d) opinions about customized policies, (e) perceived effect of work-home balance on efficiency, (f) ways in which management help employees on work-home balance, and (g) perceived support from the entire organization.

The results of the analysis of the management sample produced several thematic categories: (a) support given to employees during conflict, (b) availability of formal written policies, (c) opinions on using flexibility to retain employees, (d) perceived effect of flexibility on employees, and (e) personal use of flexibility during tenure.

The discussion in this chapter will be divided based on the following topics: (a) description of the demographic data of the participants, (b) data analysis procedure, and (c) presentation of findings. The chapter ends with a summary of the key findings of the study.

## Demographic Data

Twenty-seven participants comprised the sample of the study. Table 1-5 contains the demographic information of the 27 participants. All participants work in a single manufacturing company, either as a staff member or part of the management team. Eighteen of the participants came from the management positions including supervisors, where nine came from the employee staff. Twenty-one were non-union members, whereas six were union members. Table 1 contains the participant information for position in the company and their union status.

Table 1

<i>Position and Union Status</i>			
Position	n=27	Union Status	n=27
Staff	9	Non-union	21
Management	18	Union	6

Most of the participants were within the 45-54 age range. In the staff sample, four were men and five were women. In the management sample, 13 were men and five were women. Table 2 contains a summary of the participants in terms of age and gender.

Table 2

<i>Age and Gender</i>			
Staff	n=9	Management	n=18
Men	4	Men	13
Women	5	Women	5
Over 54	1	Over 54	3
45-54	3	45-54	7
35-44	4	35-44	6
25-34	1	25-34	2

In the management sample, most of the participants (9 out of 18) had tenure of more than 20 years in the manufacturing company, whereas in the staff sample, the tenure ranged from 1-20 years. Most of the participants had only high school education in the staff sample (6 participants), whereas most of the participants in the management sample had graduate degrees (6 participants). Table 3 contains a summary of the tenure and educational level of the 27 participants.

Table 3

*Tenure and Educational Level*

Staff	n=9	Management	n=18
Over 20	2	Over 20	9
11-20	3	11-20	6
1-5	4	6-10	1
		1-5	2
High school	6	High school	4
Some college	2	Some college	2
Associate degree	1	Associate degree	1
		Undergraduate degree	5
		Graduate degree	6

A majority of the participants were married (22 participants) for both the staff and management samples. The participants for both samples had children, which ranged from 1-3 children. Table 4 contains the demographic data for marital status and number of children.

Table 4

<i>Marital Status and Number of Children</i>			
Staff	n=9	Management	n=18
Married	8	Married	14
Single	1	Single	3
		Divorce	1
1 child	3		
2 children	2	None	3
3 children	4	1 child	5
		2 children	6
		3 children	4

Most of the participants' yearly salary ranged from \$50,000-75,000 (7 participants) in the staff sample, whereas more than \$100,000 was the yearly salary for most of the participants in the management sample. In terms of race, most were European American for both samples. Table 5 contains the participant information for salary and race.

Table 5

<i>Salary Range and Race</i>			
Staff	n=9	Management	n=18
50,000-75,000	7	More than \$100,000	8
30,000-50,000	2	75,000-100,000	5
		50,000-75,000	5
European American	6		
African American	1	European American	14
American Indian	2	African American	2
		Asian	2

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

Interviews were held in the company's conference room between 11:00am and 4:00pm., a time convenient for both first and second shift employees; the interviews took place on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday over a two-week period.

After the data collection process was completed, all data were transcribed verbatim. Recording and transcribing all interviews helped in the maintenance of the quality of data as the transcribed information underwent review and labeling. All interviewees received an assigned respondent number to maintain confidentiality and only the researcher had access to the names of the respondents.

During the data analysis phase, the data for the employee and managerial staff were separated because two different instruments were used for the two groups. Moreover, the separation of the data analysis between the two groups allowed for an understanding of the phenomenon from two different perspectives. Separate codes and themes were analyzed for the two groups.

The information was categorized and clustered into themes, based on the responses to the interview questions. Data were broken down and separated into units of pieces, which is called coding. The coding process helped create order and organization for the large amount of data collected. In addition to helping create order, the process of coding during data analysis facilitated searching the data and making comparisons to identify any patterns requiring additional investigation. The list of codes aided in the identification of issues contained in the data set. A master list of all codes developed and used contributed to the identification of the data categories.

The tool, CDC EZ-Text version 3.06, assisted in creating, managing, and analyzing semi-structured qualitative questions. This software program aided in solving the problems of consistency across interview write-ups. To ensure validity of the data

collected via survey from participants and then transcribed, a crosscheck was conducted. This process assisted in ensuring appropriate organization of all responses. If any discrepancies surface during data analysis, a second face-to-face or phone interview was conducted.

## **Findings**

Because two separate interview tools were used for the staff employees and for the management personnel, the findings will be presented in two sub-sections: (a) staff and (b) management. The presentation of results includes table and direct quotes from the participants to demonstrate how the results were generated.

### **Results from the Staff Sample**

**Perception about work-home balance.** Most of the participants (5 out of 8 participants, 63%) perceived to have balanced work-home lives. This perception is consistent with the literature in manufacturing industry, indicating that workers would respond positively with policies that allow workers to balance their home and their work. The results indicate that the efforts made by manufacturing leaders are successful in communicating to their workers that they are given flexibility in their schedule to accommodate their outside work obligations and activities. Table 6 contains all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, perception about work-home balance.

Table 6

*Codes for Perceptions About Work-Home Balance*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Balanced	5	63%
Normal	1	13%
Lives independently	1	13%
Wants more time with family	1	13%

The general perception among the participants was that they had balanced work-home lives, providing support that manufacturing companies are forwarding efforts that support work-home balance. Participant 6 explained that employees are provided with enough flexibility with their schedule, allowing them to balance work and home.

Participant 6 said,

A majority of the time, they work to watch for us what we need, so we can be flexible. For example, we can have a doctor's visit to take care of ourselves or other people; they're flexible with the scheduling. We can do those things without it impacting us too much, So, it's been a very good balance.

Other participants had other perceptions, Participant 4 spoke about wanting to spend more time with family, reporting that work takes up majority of their time, There are times when I feel like work takes up a majority of my time. Many weeks go by where my kids are in daycare all day and I only see them from 4:30-8, so you only get four hours of them, but I feel like I have a good balance there.

For Participant 3, balance was not a priority because Participant 3 lives independently, having no responsibilities as a result of having no children or parents to take care of,

Luckily my kids are grown, they have their own kids and so, I really don't have anything other than maybe my own things I have to take care of. My parents have passed so, I have nobody that I have to tend to, but myself.

**Changes in priorities over the years regarding work-home balance.** Half of the participants reported not having any changes in their priorities regarding work-home balance. The other half cited stability, educational aspirations, and less work as changes that occurred over the years regarding work-home balance. The results of the study seem to indicate that the desire to have a balanced life is relatively stable all throughout one's work, which could explain why companies are making efforts to fulfill this need. Some employees however showed some changes in priority, which are primarily geared towards climbing the work ladder or being contented with the status quo. Table 7 contains all the codes that emerged from the thematic category.

Table 7

*Codes on Changes in Priorities*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
No changes in priorities	4	50%
Educational aspirations	1	13%
Stability	1	13%
No response	1	13%
Less work	1	13%

Half of the participants reported not having any changes in their priorities regarding work-home balance, suggesting that workers value a balanced life whether



early or in their more experienced years. Participant 8 said: “I’m a go-getter, I love to work, I need to work, whether it would be here or at home I work.”

Some participants experienced changes over the years regarding work-home balance. Participant 4 cited stability as a change, reporting that work has become steadier because of the renewed focus on home life,

I was single and working, it didn't matter. I could do whatever I wanted every night and weekend. But then you get married and your priorities change. You start having kids and they become your priority. You just have less and less time for other hobbies and things. Work for me has been pretty steady, five days a week. It's always 7:00 to 4:00. About 96% of the time I don't have to stay later than 4:00.

Participant 7 spoke about relying less on work as a motivating aspect of life, eventually regarding work as a source of livelihood, “Well, you know, as you get older not working is not as important, I mean, but now I just want to do my eight hours and go.”

**Abuse of privileges.** Most of the participants reported hearing gossips when somebody from the company abuses the privileges regarding flexibility (5 out of 8 participants, 38%). This finding suggests that within the staff, there seems to be an informal discourse happening that may possibly influence a worker’s decision to take advantage of the flexibility privileges. Knowing that gossips may be occurring as a result of a perceived abuse of privileges, the behaviors of workers may be affected. The dynamics of flexibility privileges may have a sociological implication that is not known

to the management. Table 8 contains all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, abuse of privileges.

Table 8

*Abuse of Privileges*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Gossip	5	38%
No response	2	25%
Not discussed	1	13%
Not happening	1	13%

Hearing gossips emerged as an experience regarding the perceived abuse of privileges by employees. Participant 2 explained not being bothered by gossips because there was a perception that gossips do not affect them. I don't get bothered by any of that, but I hear other people talk about it and I don't get in on that. I guess people have to gossip about something. They find that important to do.

Participant 8 also spoke about gossip, speaking about how gossip at work cannot be avoided, but should never be taken seriously. This particular response suggest that taking advantage of flexibility privileges have ramifications in their relationship with other workers,

You get some people that always had something to say and then you get some people that just really don't care. I have to take care of me because I have a lot of other people in my family that I have to take care. So, I just can't listen to a bunch of cry babies.

Participant 3 reported that when somebody was perceived to be abusing the privileges offered by the company, there was no discussion among the employees. Participant 3 believed that even though there might be opinions about abuse of privileges, they were not discussed with each other, “I don’t think anybody really talks about union coworkers. I don't think they really talk amongst each other. Everybody just sees it and they would all have their own thoughts about it.”

Participant 4 simply said that no abuse of privileges occurred in the company. Participant 4 believed that employees who were able to use their privileges regarding flexibility were justified,

It's a lot harder to do that if you didn't have kids, a family and you are able to work those hours. It's a lot easier than somebody who asked to do everything, get their kids ready, get them on the bus at 8 o'clock and then work later. But you may need to stay later at work and then go home and start it all over again.

**Opinions about customized policies.** Three participants believed that the current policies on work-life balance was adequate, whereas three participants believed that customization might be necessary. The current policies of most manufacturing companies are usually implicit and general, lacking in specificity and formality (Lalla et al., 2003). The individualized nature of the situations of workers might be handled differently at the discretion of the leaders, which was reported by some of the participant leaders. This however might lead to conflict because there are no clear guidelines to what should be done in specific situations. There is clearly an advantage and disadvantage to customized policies, as reflected by the responses of the participants.

Table 9 contains all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, opinions about customized policies.

Table 9

*Opinions about Customized Policies*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Satisfied with current policies	3	38%
Supports customization	3	38%
Formalization of policy is needed	1	13%
Not possible	1	13%

Participant 4 believed that formal policies are needed regarding the work-home balance because formal policies were perceived as a way that could avoid gossiping and confusion as to the extent of how privileges can be used, Participant 4 explained:

If there was a policy, it could be very general. The first line is working it out with your manager. If work-life flexible schedules were accepted by the company, you can come in when you need to work it out with your supervisor, just as long as you put in these many hours or you get your job done. There would probably be less gossip if there was a formal policy.

Participant 2 spoke about the possibility of employees taking advantage of these privileges if there is an official policy because employees can circumvent these policies to their advantage, Participant 2 said:

It would be great to have an overall policy, but I think when it gets to be like that, some individuals might take advantage of it. Some people might still not work through their lunch, and still may take extra breaks.

Participant 4 was open to the idea of customization of policies on work-home balance because of the belief that every individual's situation is unique. Participant 4 also said that manufacturing industry may not be compatible with flexibility privileges because of the nature of the work wherein employees need to work within a fixed environment,

I honestly think it depends on each individual and how it relates to them because some people will work better under a structured environment, whereas other people are okay with flexibility. So, it doesn't necessarily fit with most. Because of the manufacturing environment that we have, I think it would be hard to have flexibility. The way we run the equipment is not always at the same time in an assembly line environment. Although it would be nice to have that, I don't really think it would work for the business because of the large product lines that we have.

**Perceived effect of work-home balance on efficiency.** A majority of the participants perceived that a balanced work-home could lead to organizational success. Previous researchers (e.g., Aryee et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2004) found that policies that promote work and home flexibility could increase the company's efficiency. The results may be counter-intuitive in that lesser hours do not necessarily lead to inefficiency because when workers are fulfilled and have positive attitudes, they are more likely to

perform their jobs well. The results of the study suggest that flexibility benefits both the company and the workers. Table 10 contains all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, perceived effect of work-home balance on efficiency.

Table 10

*Perceived Effect of Work-Home Balance on Efficiency*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
organizational success	6	75%
limited effect	1	13%
no response	1	13%

Participant 2 explained why having a good balance between work and home could increase the organization’s efficiency, which was the belief that a balanced life makes employees feel good about themselves. Positive feeling was believed to translate to work performance,

If you have a good balanced life outside of work you are going to feel better coming in here. However, I don't think it's something that a company can fix. You can't fix somebody's life when they walk out this door. Some people just can't get that home life together no matter what they do.

Participant 4 explained that a home life that is properly taken care of leads to job performance that is more manageable, “It helps us tremendously because I don't have to find somebody else to take my kids to daycare. Come in a little later, stay a little later and still get my job done.”

**Ways in which management help employees on work-home balance. A**

Majority of the participants showed positive perceptions about the presence of flexibility

polices, allowing employees to balance work and home. Consistent with the literature, workers respond positively to efforts made by companies to accommodate their schedules. This brings not only efficiency, but also a positive working environment. Table 11 shows all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, ways in which management help employees on work-home balance.

Table 11

*Ways in which Management Help Employees on Work-Home Balance*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Availability	3	38%
Flexibility	2	25%
No response	2	25%
Compassion	1	13%

Participant 3 spoke about how the management provides help when needed, providing flexibility in schedule when there is a need, “I do know that I do see shift changes for certain things, I see a leave of absences for certain things, so I think the company does help them when they need to be helped.” Participant 2 spoke about the compassion that the management was able to show in times of emergencies, considering the situations of the employees at home, “Now my boss has a child and I think he realizes, I got to take days off because my kid is sick you know.”

**Perceived support from the entire organization.** Participant 6 spoke about how the support is available from the management, but Participant 6 believed that the support can be improved. Participant 6 spoke about the difficulty of broaching personal issues to

the management, suggesting that leaders should take the initiative to reach out to the employees,

They're usually pretty flexible and understanding. Obviously, there has to be a cut-off point. When there are so many issues it becomes a pattern where it's creating a problem for them to operate the business.

Participant 7 believed that the support of the management was inconsistent, which was attributed to the negative experiences regarding employees abusing flexibility privileges, "I would like to go back like it was, but it's not because there's people who have had abused it."

### **Results from the Management Sample**

**Support given to employees during conflict.** According to the sample of management personnel, flexible shifts (15 out of 19 participants, 79%) were given to the employees in times of conflicts. Other support provided to employees included vacation, daycare, employees assistance program, working from home, and performance improvement plan. The results indicate that the nature of support provided by manufacturing companies can be varied. Workers are not only allowed to avail privileges that involve emergencies at home, they can also avail opportunities to have vacations. The results suggest that the manufacturing company supports a balanced work and home in their workers. Table 12 contains all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, support given to employees during conflict.



Table 12

*Support Given to Employees During Conflict*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Shift Changes	15	79%
Vacation	2	11%
Daycare	2	11%
Employee Assistance Program	1	5%
Working from home	1	5%
Performance improvement plan	1	5%
Availability of information	1	5%
Personal communication	1	5%
Emergency	1	5%

Participant 26 spoke about flexible working hours as a way of helping employees cope with conflicts at home, giving employees enough flexibility to fix problems or matters at home that need to be addressed immediately,

It really depends on what the conflict is. If it's a short term personal family conflict like someone has passed away, normally we give the employee the time needed for grievance. We would adjust their work hours. They could work at lunch and leave early or work half days.

Participant 9 spoke about providing employee with formal assistance, which gives employees formal advice as to how the company can help cope with issues a home,

Besides offering them flexible hours we have an "Employee Assistance Program" (EAP). I currently have one of my supervisors in Employee Assistance. I would

ask if they needed help giving away some other work. I am very flexible with my employees.

Participant 11 spoke about giving employees performance evaluation plan that would help improve their performance,

Accommodations are offered to assist them, what we try to do is to mentor all of the productive employees so they can do better, have a better output with the position that they're in. If I see that they are struggling, I will sit down with them and come up with a performance improvement plan.

Participant 18 spoke about vacation and information as ways in which managers help employees cope with conflicts between work and home, "If possible, we will try to grant vacation or make sure that information is available as a possible option. We make sure that they are informed in what their choices are."

Participant 27 spoke about accommodating emergency situations, as long as the situation warrants some form of accommodation. Participant 27 noted that the accommodations given were based on the severity of the situation.

It depends on the situation. Emergency type situations we would accommodate.

If we have employees here who have sick wives or wives that have gone through breast cancer certainly that's something we are going to do. Especially if he is a good employee we would want to keep him onboard. We want to keep them happy.

**Availability of formal written policies.** Eight participants (42%) reported not encountering any formal written policies intended to give guidelines for flexibility

policies. Other participants reported encountering formal written policies. The discrepancy in the results does not provide a definite answer to the availability of formal written policies. There is a possibility that a formal policy exists; however, some managers may not be aware of their existence. Table 13 shows all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, availability of formal written policies.

Table 13

*Availability of Formal Written Policies*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Not Available	8	42%
Available	3	16%
Individualized	2	11%
Own discretion	2	11%
Training	1	5%
Not comprehensive	1	5%
Not aware	1	5%
Common sense	1	5%

Many participants reported not encountering any formal written policies intended to give guidelines for flexibility policies. Participant 10 said: “They give me whatever flexibility that I need. They leave it to my discretion as how to manage it.” Participant 9 added:

As long as the work is getting done and we are being productive and making our goals, it shouldn’t bother anybody how we are doing it.

Participant 19 echoed the same report, noting that no written document or policy was available regarding how flexibility issues should be dealt with,

I can't say that I have seen anything written and I haven't been through any kind of class or anything. I was already here for about twelve, thirteen years so I sort of, had sort of like "grown up" in the system. So, I was already aware of things when I became a manager so I haven't seen anything formal.

Participant 11 emphasized that work-home balance policies are generally individualized; hence, no formal written policies are necessary,

I get plenty of advice and I probably look at the individual situation. If the individual situation dictates where this person has to be there, then I will go ahead. I would let that person do what they need to know to make sure they're there.

Participant 13 encountered the policies on flexibility of hours of employees through training but not in any written format,

Overall, I think it's more based on what I've learned with direct contact with my managers. We've had some training courses. The senior level managers that the company considers someone they feel that will succeed in the organization, they do send them to outside courses.

Participant 14 spoke about the availability of forms that need to be filled out when employees need to change their shift, "The employee goes to their supervisor and says hey, look I need to do this, there are forms and it's called a shift change form."

For Participant 21, the written policies exist; however, there was a perception that the policies were not comprehensive. Participant 21 reported that the written policies that exist focus on medical-related situations, but not in any other pertinent situations,

The only thing that we have would be family medical leave and in order to receive that, they would have to qualify according to the guidelines of family medical leave. If someone is having a baby or they're adopting a child they're allowed to apply for family medical leave. The law now is on their side and they can be granted it for that purpose.

Participant 25 described the policies on flexibility as largely discretionary, Participant 25 explained that managers are able to decide based on the situations presented to them,

Actually it's a flexible thing, it's discretionary. We do have these cases implemented where we use them, but it's discretionary. Being able to accommodate the people in my work requirements is in my control.

Participant 27 emphasized common sense in dealing with the employees in terms of work-home balance policies, more than the need for written policies. Participant 27 contended that having a sense of what is right and wrong usually guides the decision of managers,

Not that I am aware of, I would think I would be aware, but no I think its common sense. It's your knowledge and it's what you've done, and what seems right. We do have to abide by certain rules because when you are going to have employees and if you do it for one you do it for other employees; you try to be consistent and fair.

**Opinion on using flexibility to retain employees.** Most of the participants believed that flexibility is an advantageous policy that could influence retention of

employees, which is supported by the literature. Flexibility is a way to make employees happy and efficient; hence, it is rationale for managers to promote policies that support flexibility. There were other participants who believed that flexibility was not compatible with the nature of the company. Table 14 shows all the codes that emerged from the thematic category.

Table 14

*Opinions on Using Flexibility to Retain Employees*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Advantage	12	63%
Attractive to employees	4	21%
Not compatible	2	11%
Apprehensive	1	5%
Not used as a retention tool	1	5%

Several participants believed that flexibility is an advantageous policy, which could influence retention of employees. Participant 10 explained that flexibility privileges is an advantage that companies can advertise to attract employees,

I think it’s definitely an advantage to have that flexibility. But in the industry that we are working, it’s not something that that we are able to advertise this thing, you have these options because everybody here as to work with in conjunction with what’s happening on the shop floor with the union. Most of the time, you just have to fall in to the time where manufacturing is taking place on the floor.

Participant 11 echoed the same sentiment, noting that flexibility in schedule is a significant factor in employees,

I believe the flex schedule is a plus. There are times that I know that I have to be there to pick my kids up or take my daughter to the doctor. I know that it's got to be within a certain realm and it's got to be some kind of measures to take forward if you will allow to do it.

Participant 18 explained why flexibility is an important policy in the company because it influences job satisfaction among employees. Participant 18 also stressed that despite the job market not doing well, employees still need to be taken care of,

I think it's very important, very important. Today's job market might not be as good as it was, but we all still have lives. We are all here to pay for our lifestyle in one fashion or another whether it's putting the kids through school, a car or house. Another portion of that is job satisfaction. Balancing your lifestyle, job satisfaction and getting products out of the door, is what the company needs.

Participant 21 also provided an explanation about the utility of flexibility policies in the company, stating that employees are given time to have free time for themselves,

It is important and we do it often, this company is very generous with the time that they allow people off, people coming in late in the morning, not requiring them to stay an hour or two late in the afternoon. We have a bank of time that we call PTO (Personal Time Off) in the salaried workforce. Depending on your years of service dictates how many days you get. If you have a bank of 25 days, those 25 days are mostly yours to do whatever you want to do with.

Participant 23 spoke about the importance of flexibility policies in today's world because people have to take care of various issues outside work,

I think in today's workforce it's important. The economic for my parents who were stay at home moms and single parent families. Today to make ends meet with the cost of education for your kids, cost of housing and everything else, it's necessary to have two incomes. If you have a family with two people working, it becomes more important to be more flexible.

Participant 25 explained how satisfied employees translate to retention, stating that when employees are satisfied with their job, the company becomes a positive environment to be in for everybody,

I think it's very important, because you know as long as they're happy and they're being taken care of and accommodated by what they need done at their end, it makes all of us happier and they work better.

Participant 26 reported low turnover rate, suggesting the possible influence of flexibility policies in the trend,

Life in society has been just going a faster pace. I think we could offer alternative flex time of some sort. I know personally in my life, I drive an hour back and forth to work, so for me to come in and work for 10 hour days and have a longer weekend, it's a lot of time for me that I can be doing other things.

Participant 27 explained how flexibility policies affect employees, noting that flexibility brings positive morale at the work place,

I think it's very important, as long as somebody is not taking advantage of it. I think it's very important because you want to also consider that they have other



situations, we've all had them where you need some kind of flexibility to take care of your personal problems.

One participant was apprehensive at first about flexibility policies, but eventually saw the usefulness of the policy, Participant 13 explained:

I would say in my early years, they might have questioned it, because I'm a tough manager. I expect the job to be done. We are deadline driven and we have a lot of requirements. I would say over time, the employees felt more comfortable when I allow this.

Participant 14 believed that flexibility policies are not compatible with the manufacturing company, arguing that the nature of the business needs consistency in schedule,

I don't think that's great for this business. It's not a great idea because if we only ran for four days, it means the place wouldn't run for three days and it's important. There is something unique about this business because we work with so much value, it's important to keep it moving. I don't think fits for this business.

**Perceived effect of flexibility on employees.** Most of the participants believed that flexibility has positive effects on employees (11 out of 19 participants, 58%). The observed positive effects could be the reason why manufacturing managers continue to grant flexibility privileges to the workers. Some participants had less positive perceptions, indicating that the incompatibility of flexibility policies on the manufacturing company and mixed perceptions from the employees regarding flexibility

policies. Table 15 shows all the codes that emerged from the thematic category, perceived effect of flexibility on employees.

Table 15

*Perceived Effect of Flexibility on Employees*

Codes	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Positive	11	58%
Appreciative employees	3	16%
Can be abused sometimes	2	11%
Mixed	2	11%
Do not know	1	5%

Many participants believed that flexibility are generally received well by the employees, stimulating loyalty and positive perception about the company. Participant 9 said: “The ones who have actually utilized it, they are the most loyal employees that I have. They go above and beyond.” Participant 10 and 26 believed that employees are generally appreciative of flexibility policies. Participant 10 said: “They certainly appreciate the fact that we can be flexible enough to make this happen.” Participant 26 added that when the home life is organized, this translates to the work place as well,

My personal opinion is if your home life is in order then the rest of your life falls in order. There are always exceptions to everything, but I find that when my house is clean and everything is together at home, things fall in place at work.

Some participants broached the possibility of flexibility polices being abused by employees. Participant 11 explained:

I’ve seen it happen in another division where this person was abusing it where the manager actually had to sit them down and discuss the issue. Employees need to

make arrangements for their extracurricular activities. If an employee cannot make the hours, then we have a problem.

Participant 13 added that flexibility policies are good, but can be misused when employees abuse it or when their jobs become unsatisfactory. Participant 13 argued that flexibility privileges regarding their schedule depends on case to case basis,

I think it's good. At the end of the day it's a good thing. But you know what I've seen in the past is you have to find employees that care. I've had situations where I've been taking advantage of where they'll work these hours but they're not getting their job done. I think you need to get a feel for your employees.

Participant 27 reported that some participants feel supported by the flexibility policies, whereas others do not,

There are people a chip on their shoulder and think that you are out to get them if they need that. There are some employees that appreciate it and don't abuse it.

**Personal use of flexibility during tenure.** Most of the participants used flexibility privileges during their tenure. The following responses contain a description of how the participants used the privileges during their tenure:

Participant 9: I did it for a year and once we made alternative arrangements, then I went back to my normal life. And it helped me tremendously and as a result I don't carry on when things happen that I don't particularly like.

Participant 18: I've been in three different buildings with three different managers and everyone has been accommodating. I feel my obligation is to make sure there are no

issues in my absence. I send emails and make phone calls when I'm going to be out. I make sure that nobody is left in the dark.

Participant 19: There have been situations where I have come in early and left early for a week because of something that went on at home.

Participant 21: I'd probably say within the last seven years or so here I have used it a few times. I would get a phone call from my daughter to pick up my grandson and because I live in the Chester County area and she lives in Montgomery County I would be the one to leave and go pick him up and then just go home from there. So, I have utilized it in that way.

Participant 25: As far as that one being in a salary ranks now, management, they're very flexible. I get to go see my mom everyday during my lunch break. There are times when I stay longer than my lunch break to visit her and my workplace is flexible.

Other participants did not use flexibility privileges during their tenure. The following responses show descriptions why the participants did not use their flexibility privileges:

Participant 10: I haven't no. I try to be as flexible as I can with employees that report to me. I am strict on the manufacturing side and I think with an environment like what we have here, flex time would be difficult to. It would be too complex for managers to handle.

Participant 13: No, I've never actually. I've always been in a typical 8:00 to 5:00, usually more than that, but standard hours, 8:00 to 5:00, I usually don't have any.

## **Summary and Integration**

The results were presented in this chapter based on the semi-structured interview responses of 27 participants. Nine of the participants were staff members, whereas 18 were from the management team. Data were analyzed for content analysis, resulting in themes and patterns. The presentation of data was organized based on two groups: (a) staff members and (b) management personnel.

The results of the analysis of the staff sample produced several thematic categories: (a) perception about work-home balance, (b) changes in priorities, (c) abuse of privileges, (d) opinions about customized policies, (e) perceived effect of work-home balance on efficiency, (f) ways in which management help employees on work-home balance, and (g) perceived support from the entire organization. The results of the analysis of the management sample produced several thematic categories: (a) support given to employees during conflict, (b) availability of formal written policies, (c) opinions on using flexibility to retain employees, (d) perceived effect of flexibility on employees, and (e) personal use of flexibility during tenure. The themes and patterns that emerged from the data are used as resources to answer the three research questions of the study.

### **Research Question 1**

What are employees' perspectives for various family-friendly/work-life balance policies, based on demographic characteristics such as gender, tenure with organization, educational level, marital status, number of children, and elder dependents? How do employees react to work/life balance policies?

From the perspectives of the staff, the results indicated that work-life balanced policies are received positively. Participants support the policies because the policies allow employees to balance work and home obligations without one area being sacrificed. Despite the general positive perceptions towards the implementation of work-home balance policies, improvements can still be made such as consistency and improved relationship between the staff and management.

In examining several demographic variables of the staff sample, there seems to be no trends that emerged from the data. There seems to be no emergent themes relating to gender, tenure with organization, educational level, marital status, number of children, and elder dependents. Because the staff sample only consisted of nine participants, making definitive statements about the role of demographic data in the role cannot be made.

From the perspective of the management, work-life balance is perceived as a positive strategy to increase job satisfaction without sacrificing efficiency. The management sample believed that because employees are not conflicted about their work and home lives, employees are able to work with more efficiency and effectiveness. Some doubts were present regarding the appropriateness of work-home balance policies in manufacturing firms because of the need for continuous operations; however, managers recognize the need to provide employees with privileges that allow them to balance work and home.

## **Research Question 2**

To what extent do supervisors support the utilization of family-friendly/work-life balance policies? Are the formal written policies public to all employees on work/balance programs offered by the company? How are managers trained on work/life balance policies?

The results of the study indicated that managers recognize the utility of implementing policies that promote work-home balance. The results seem to indicate that the extent of assistance provided to employees is wide in range. Some of the assistance provided by leaders to employees included flexible working hours to accommodate emergencies, daycare, option to work from home, access to employee assistance programs, and personal communication with managers.

Regarding the availability of formal written policies about work home balance, the results were not definitive. Some of the participants believed the existence of written policies about work-home balance, whereas some participants were not aware about such written policies. The results may suggest that policies on work-home balance are primarily informal, allowing managers to decide on a case to case basis.

The results indicate that managers are not trained to manage policies on work-home balance. The management sample noted that most of the decisions regarding work-home balance are based on the managers' discretion and on the unique situations of the employees. Based on the results, there seems to be no programs that assist managers in the implementation of work-home balance.

### **Research Question 3**

To what extent does the organization at large support family-friendly work-life initiatives? Does this include senior level management support? How is the culture organized to be a supportive workplace on work/life policies?

The results of the study indicated that the support for family-friendly work-life initiatives is wide in scope. Both the staff and management support work-home balance policies because of the mutual benefits of job satisfaction and organizational efficiency. The support and assistance provided to employees reached the senior level management, as reflected by the organization-wide policies that promote work-home balance.

Regarding the organizational culture on work-home balance, there was indication that policies that allow employees to balance work and home are supported. One salient issue that emerged from the data, pertinent to organizational culture, is the role of gossip. There was indication in the results that gossips about the perceived abuses of privileges were part of the organizational culture. Another issue that emerged as being part of the organizational culture was the lack of formal written policies on work-home balance, resulting in managers using their discretion to decide situations involving employees.

The findings that emerged from the data will be further discussed in the next chapter. The next chapter involves the discussions of results as they relate to the theoretical framework and the literature review. The next chapter contains the recommendations and conclusions of the study.



## **Chapter 5: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to provide an initial exploration to determine the preferences of employees and managers regarding work-life balance policies within a manufacturing firm. In this chapter, the results will be discussed as they relate to the existing literature on work-home balance policies, with emphasis on manufacturing firms. Chapter 5 is organized based on the following sections: (a) summary of results, (b) relating the results to literature, (c) implications to leadership, (d) recommendations for future research, and (e) conclusions.

### **Summary of Results**

The results were based on the responses of 27 participants on semi-structured interviews. Nine of the participants were staff members, whereas 18 were from the management team. Data were analyzed for content analysis, resulting in themes and patterns. The presentation of data was organized based on two groups: (a) staff members and (b) management personnel.

The results of the analysis of the staff sample produced several thematic categories: (a) perception about work-home balance, (b) changes in priorities, (c) abuse of privileges, (d) opinions about customized policies, (e) perceived effect of work-home balance on efficiency, (f) ways in which management help employees on work-home balance, and (g) perceived support from the entire organization. The results of the analysis of the management sample produced several thematic categories: (a) support given to employees during conflict, (b) availability of formal written policies, (c)

opinions on using flexibility to retain employees, (d) perceived effect of flexibility on employees, and (e) personal use of flexibility during tenure.

### **Relating the Results to Literature**

The discussion of results will be organized in this section by focusing on the three main research questions of the study. The three research questions reflect the purpose of this study. This section involves the use of the literature to contextualize the results within a framework of existing literature.

#### **Research Question 1**

What are employees' perspectives for various family-friendly/work-life balance policies, based on demographic characteristics such as gender, tenure with organization, educational level, marital status, number of children, and elder dependents? How do employees react to work/life balance policies?

The priorities of individual lives are different, which suggests that how employees value work and private life might be different for different people (Valcour, 2007). Priorities usually manifest in terms of professional achievement or life enjoyment (Matuska & Charles, 2009). The results indicated that employees may change with their priorities as they grow older, which may include less emphasis on work or more emphasis on educational aspirations. However, the results also showed that priorities may remain stable over time with regard to balancing work and home life.

In a manufacturing firm such as in this study, work-home balance is generally perceived positively. The results of the study suggest that the general perception of the

staff about work-home balance is positive, both for the staff and the management. This finding is consistent with literature indicating that employees, managers (supervisors), and senior level management see the utility in maintaining balance between work and family life for workers (Grzywacz et al., 2008; Lucas & Heady, 2002; Potter, 2003; Valcour, 2007).

### **Research Question 2**

To what extent do supervisors support the utilization of family-friendly/work-life balance policies? Are the formal written policies public to all employees on work/balance programs offered by the company? How are managers trained on work/life balance policies?

Even though the management sample generally supported granting flexible working schedule to employees, some doubts remain about the appropriateness and effectiveness of such practices. Ambivalence about the utility of policies that promote flexible schedule is understandable given the relative novelty of granting employees flexible schedule options (Hill et al., 2008). Another explanation for the doubts about flexible schedule policies is the difficulty in managing a manufacturing environment wherein operations are continuous and equipment is not always at the same time in an assembly line environment.

Some of the concerns that management leaders noted included the possibility of abusing the privileges available to employees. This seems to be consistent with the findings from the staff sample, wherein gossip was identified as part of organizational culture when there is a perception among the staff that privileges pertaining to flexible

working hours are being abused. The results did not show apparent measures that leaders use to detect and monitor abuses with regard to work-home balance.

The literature generally suggests that policies that involve work life balance lead to job satisfaction and organizational efficiency (Clayton, 2005; Matuska & Charles, 2009). Stress is generally associated with decreased job satisfaction and absenteeism, which could affect organizational efficiency (Kim & Stoner, 2008; Mann, 2006). Managers are concerned about stress and burnout in employees because these two issues contribute to both turnover and organizational performance (Grzywacz et al., 2008; Kim & Stoner, 2008).

Job satisfaction and efficiency is achieved in flexible working schedule because the same number of working hours is retained, but accomplished at a flexible schedule (Rogier & Padgett, 2004). Torun (2007) contended that work-life balance is indispensable across all sectors and industries, irrespective of the business environment and prevailing market conditions. The results of the study were consistent with the literature, indicating the relevance and appropriateness of work-home balance policies in a manufacturing firm. Even though telecommuting is a form of alternative work schedule that has shown positive effects, such practices may not be appropriate in a manufacturing company (Chomiak, 1998; Travis, 2010).

The basic premise of work and family life balance is to help employees achieve professional commitments while enjoying the opportunity to attend to other life or social commitments (Torun, 2007). This basic premise of work-life balance manifest in various ways, depending on the policies of the company. The results of the study

indicated that management leaders in a manufacturing company help employees achieve work-home balance in varied ways.

Conflicts at home or outside work has been found to potentially affect work performance, which is called the spillover effect (Chen et al., 2009). The results indicated that management leaders are generally supportive of employees particularly in times of conflicts. Some of the assistance provided by leaders to employees included flexible working hours to accommodate emergencies, daycare, option to work from home, access to employee assistance programs, and personal communication with managers.

Formalization of policies is a way to make the policies standardized and predictable (Grzywacz et al., 2008). Most of the participants believed that written policies about work-home balance are not existent, but some participants believed that written policies exist in the company. The results also indicated that many participants decide situations on a case to case basis, often using their own discretion. This practice suggests the lack of formalization of work-home balance, which might have implications in leadership.

### **Research Question 3**

To what extent does the organization at large support family-friendly work-life initiatives? Does this include senior level management support? How is the culture organized to be a supportive workplace on work/life policies?

Supervisors and upper-level managers recognize the benefits of family-friendly benefits such as flextime (Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). When employees have control

of their working schedule, they are more likely to retain in their existing jobs (Cabrera, 2009; Valcour, 2007). Having a choice in how much to work and when to schedule work can help employees respond to family demands (Valcour, 2007). Policies involving prioritize time for family, friends, and socializing outside of the workplace is more effective in eliciting positive employee performance than micromanagement, individual production quotas, or aggressive overtime policies (Aryee et al., 2005).

The literature indicates that people with a genuine need to have flexibility in their working hours are less likely to move to another company that did not offer flexible work hours (Hau-siu & Keng-Howe, 2006). Because not all companies utilize work-life programs, a company's work-life program can provide an incentive to remain in the firm (Konrad & Mangel, 2000). Consistent with the literature, the results of the study indicated that within a manufacturing company, offering flexible schedule options is a way to retain employees.

### **Limitations of the Results**

Several limitations are identified to contextualize the results presented in this study. First, the use of interviews as a method of qualitative research had limitations. For instance, interviews do not employ the rule of random sampling and the sample size is relatively smaller, posing the question of credibility and objectivity of the findings (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Because of these limitations, the result should not be generalized to a larger sample than the one used in this study. The results however may be used to inform the design of future studies on manufacturing companies.

Another limitation is the unequal number of participants among the employee and supervisor/manager samples. Even though some comparisons were made about the different samples involved in the study, the comparisons cannot be substituted for a more balanced representation of different samples in future research studies. The differences in the results from the different samples do not reflect a definitive similarities or differences because of the lack of balance in the number of participants in each of the sample groups.

Finally, because the topic can be considered somewhat sensitive and can have perceived implications in the working environment, the participants may have felt some reservations in revealing their true opinions and perceptions. To address this limitation, the participants were assured that anonymity will be practiced in the presentation of the results to protect their identities. Moreover, the participants were assured that data will be protected from being accessed by other third-party people.

### **Implications to Leadership**

Based on the results of the analysis, several implications about leadership emerged. The implications of the results of the study are intended to give leaders in manufacturing companies to be exposed to ideas and practices that might improve leadership. The suggestions proposed in this section might improve the implementation of policies on work-home balance.

First, the formalization of policies regarding work-home balance, in the form of written format, might be beneficial in clarifying the scope of privileges available.

Formalization of policies is one way of making the operations of the company predictable to employees (Grzywacz et al., 2008). Deciding on a case to case basis based on the discretion of managers may result in unnecessary conflicts when perceptions of unfairness begin to emerge. When policies are institutionalized, both employees and managers are aware of what to expect when certain situations arise.

Second, the results indicated that flexibility is an advantageous policy that could influence retention of employees. Workers who have flexible working schedule are more likely to remain in their jobs compared to workers who do not have flexible working schedule (Hau-siu & Keng-Howe, 2006). Policies that involve work life balance lead to job satisfaction among employees (Matuska & Charles, 2009). Flexibility is a way to make employees happy and efficient; hence, it is rationale for managers to promote policies that support flexibility. During recruitment, leaders can highlight the availability of policies in the company that promote work-home balance. Among existing employees, improving the options available to maintain work-home balance can be a strategy used by leaders to retain employees.

Third, abuse of privileges relating to work-home balance emerged as a concern both for employees and managers. There seems to be no literature that examines how perceived abuse of privileges and gossiping can affect policies relating to work-home balance. There seems to be no formal methods wherein abuses are monitored and controlled, as reflected by the case to case basis decisions of leaders. It might be beneficial to address abuses of policy privileges relating to work-home balance that are



both fair and efficient. The presence of such measures can prevent conflicts and further abuses of work-home balance policies.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the results of the analysis, several recommendations for future research are proposed. The proposed recommendations are based on the identified gaps that were established as a result of the data. The recommendations for future research are intended to expand the literature on work-home balance and to further illuminate issues that have been developed in this study.

First, the results of the study did not provide definitive argument about the advantages of using customized policies with regard to work-home balance. Future research can examine if customized policies are effective in addressing the needs of employees regarding flexible schedule. A quantitative study can be used to examine if there is a significant difference between the presence or absence of customized policies in manufacturing companies.

Second, the results indicated that employees are assisted to balance work and home in various ways, with flexible shifts as the most cited assistance provided to employees. A descriptive study with a larger sample can be conducted to explore the various ways managers assist employees to achieve work-home balance. Other researchers can examine which assistance proves to be most effective in balancing work and home obligations of employees.

Third, the general perception about policies that promote work-home balance is positive; however, some expressed concern about the appropriateness of flexible working schedules in a manufacturing company. Future researchers can further focus on the unique features of manufacturing industry that might make the industry not appropriate for policies that promote flexible working hours for employees. The proposed future study is significant because the results would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the manufacturing industry from the perspective of work-home balance policies.

Fourth, gossip emerged as an issue that might occur as a result of the perceived abuses of privileges available relating to work-home balance policies. Future researchers can explore the role of gossip in two perspectives. First, future researchers can explore how gossip affects the decision of employees to use privileges that would allow them to have flexible working hours. Second, future researchers can explore how gossip influences leaders in terms of their decisions and management practices.

Finally, the results of the study showed that some managers used policies that allowed them to have flexible working schedules, whereas other managers in the study did not use such policies. Future researchers can examine if there is a significant relationship between the perceptions of managers about flexible working hours and work home balance, and their own experiences in using privileges relating to work-home balance policies.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to provide an initial exploration to determine the preferences of employees and managers regarding work-life balance policies within a manufacturing firm. The results provided rich insights regarding how employees and managers perceive and experience work-home balance policies in a manufacturing firm. Based on the results of the study, several conclusions were reached.

First, work-home balance is a phenomenon that is important for both the staff and for the leaders. For the staff, work-home balance is significant because policies that allow employees to have flexible schedule brings job satisfaction and a more balanced life. From the perspective of company leaders, work-home balance leads to organizational efficiency because employees are more satisfied with their work and are less likely to experience stress from work schedule. Based on this finding, there is empirical support to continue policies that promote work-home balance in manufacturing companies. The advantages of work-home balance policies outweigh the few disadvantages cited by the participants in the study.

Second, the results indicated that employees experience support from the organization about work-home balance; however, improvements are still proposed by employees. Some of the issues raised by the staff sample were the difficulty of broaching personal issues to the management and inconsistent management. One way of improving policies involving work-home balance is formalization through written policies in order to avoid inconsistent management and gossips within the staff as a result of perceived abuses of privileges.

Third, most of the support and assistance provided to employees within work-home balance policies are geared towards flexible schedule such flexible shifts, the option to work from home, and emergency leaves. There is indication that efforts such as providing more vacation leaves, personal communication and access to employee assistance programs can also enhance work-home balance. Having fair and comprehensive work-home balance policies can help in improving the retention rate employees or use to attract new employees.

Fourth, more research should be conducted in the future to expand or validate the findings in this study. The results generated from this study contained findings that supported existing literature, particularly about the applicability of work-home balance policies in manufacturing firms. Some of the findings in this study were new, such as the possible benefits of formalization and customization of policies, and the role of gossips and abuses in the effectiveness of work-home balance policies, expanding the relevant issues in the literature of work-home balance.

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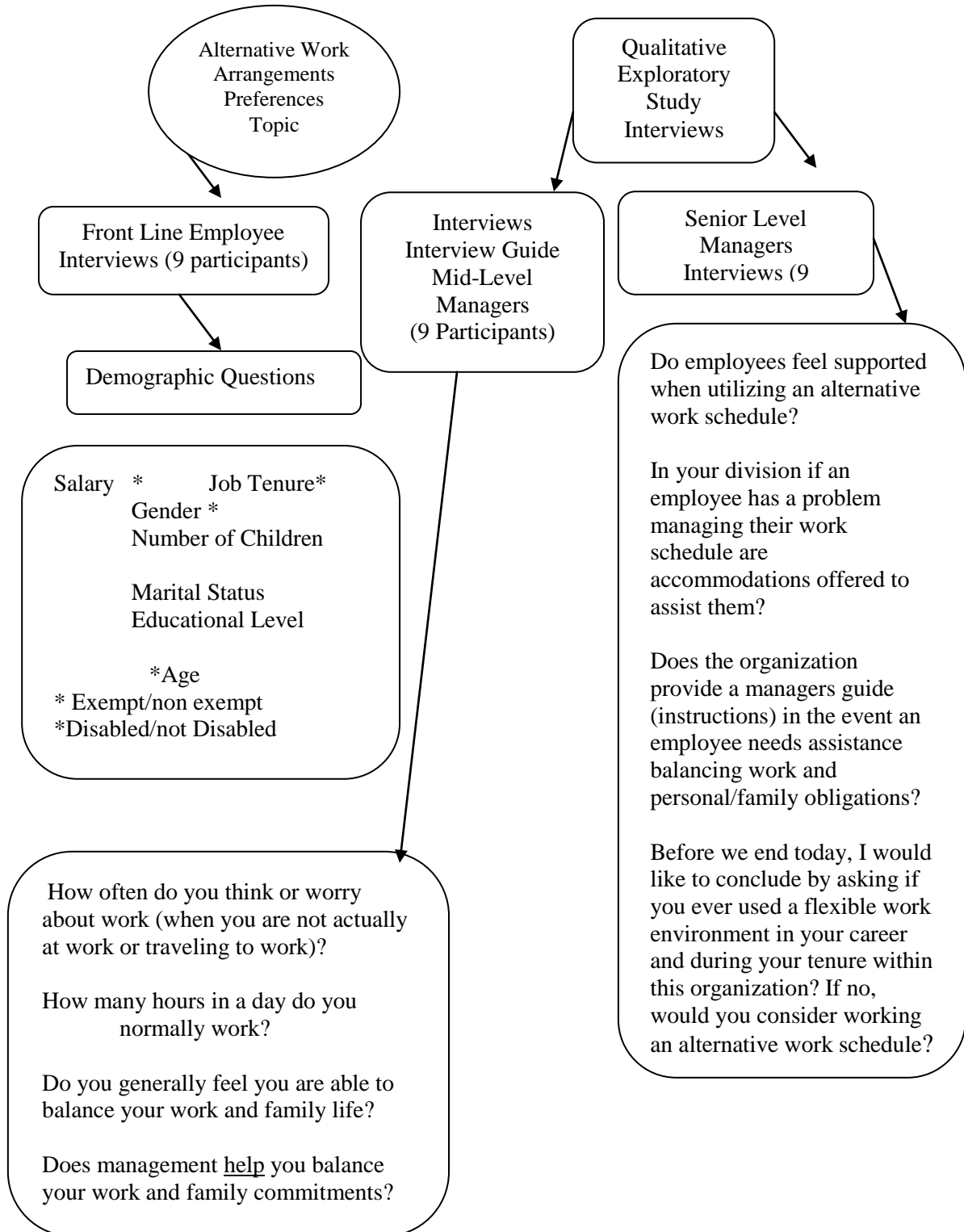
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## APPENDIX A. CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAME





## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW COVER LETTER

Dear participant,

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below.

You were selected to complete this employee face-to-face structured interview. You were selected because you are an employee with this firm and meet the criteria for this study. The criteria for being selected include the following: any employee who is over the age of 18 and currently works fulltime with this firm. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. While the research encourages you to respond to the interview questions in it's entirety, it will not adversely affect your job or position within the company if you choose not to answer all questions.

I am inviting you to participate in my research project as part of my PhD degree at Capella University. The goal of my interview is to find out the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. Because of the growing needs, organizations are developing a flexible work schedule to accommodate their employees. The main reason for the use of a flexible work schedule for organizations is that they are able to retain dedicated employees who meet the personal need conflict with traditional work hours.

The purpose of flexible work arrangements is to create flexible working conditions to help employees accomplish work more effectively. Your voluntary participation is requested so we may learn more about the benefits of alternative work arrangements. The interviews will be scheduled based on your availability. **The interviews will last approximately 25 minutes and not to exceed 30 minutes. During the interview I will be audio recording and taking notes to make an accurate record of what is said including your comments.**

We want you to feel comfortable while participating, you can let us know if you are uncomfortable and you don't have to answer any question that feels uncomfortable, and you can leave the interview if you need a break at any time. Refusal to answer a question or withdrawal from participation involves no penalty.

**There are no risks to you or to your privacy if you decide to participate in the interview.** If you choose to not participate, that is fine. Even if you decide not to respond, I would be happy to share my results with you. To get a copy of my results call me at 484-354-3602 or through email at [cmcgrath2@capellauniversity.edu](mailto:cmcgrath2@capellauniversity.edu). Your responses to these questions will remain anonymous and held in the strictest of confidence as data to complete a doctoral research study for Capella University.

If you have any questions about the survey, or about being in this study, you may contact me at 484-354-3602 or [cmcgrath2@capellauniversity.edu](mailto:cmcgrath2@capellauniversity.edu). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Capella University has approved this study.

Sincerely, Christopher B. McGrath -PhD Student -Capella University

## APPENDIX C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM



### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CAPELLA UNIVERSITY  
Institutional Review Board  
225 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

02/15/2012

Title of Research: Balancing Work And Family: A Qualitative Exploratory Study Of Alternative Work Arrangements And Employee Preferences In The Manufacturing Sector.

Investigator: Christopher B. McGrath, a doctoral learner at Capella University

**Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read the following explanation of this study.** This research is being supervised by Dr. Mary Evans Kasala.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. This statement describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts, and precautions of the program. Also described are the alternative procedures available to you, as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

Explanation of Procedures:

You are being asked to participate in a research project to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. The purpose of flexible work arrangements is to create flexible working conditions to help employees accomplish work more effectively. Your voluntary participation is requested so we may learn more about the benefits of alternative work arrangements. This study will contribute to the student's completion of his doctoral dissertation. By participating in this interview, you will be contributing to the research of alternative work arrangements and the effects of work-life and

family-life. This study will offer recommendations to organizations on how they might assist employees perform better by offering alternative work arrangements.

The approach of the research is through the use of structured face-to-face interviews. This interview will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire and your responses will be anonymous. I will only use a pseudonym ("false name") for reference.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. If for any reason you decide that you would like to discontinue your participation, simply tell the researcher that you wish to stop.

Confidentiality:

All information gathered for this study will be confidential. This means that only the researcher will have access to the information you provide. Participation will involve responding to a number of questions about alternative work arrangements. Your involvement is voluntary and your decision to participate or not participate will not influence the services you receive within your organization. You may choose to not answer any question during the interview and are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Refusal to answer a question or withdrawal from participation involves no penalty.

Audio Taped:

The interview will be audio-taped. The audiotape and the interview notes will be destroyed after seven years from the completion of the project. You can refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time.

Risks and Discomforts:

You will not be at physical or psychological risk and should experience no discomfort resulting from answering the interview questions.

Benefits of Participation:

We would like the participants to realize the benefit of contributing to a research study. By participating in the study, you may learn more about yourself, the research process, and the human condition. By participating in this research study, you will help me to find out the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. There is no guarantee you will receive any future benefits as a result of participating in this study.

Costs and/or Payments to Subject for Participation in Research:

There will be no costs for participating in the research. In addition you will not receive payment for your participation, nor will you pay to participate. However, all employees who take part in the survey will be entered into a random raffle drawing for a chance to win 1 of 3 VISA gift cards. 1<sup>st</sup> VISA gift card is valued at \$100.00, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$50.00, and 3<sup>rd</sup> \$25.00. Each employee will be given a ticket and upon completion of the study, I will randomly draw 3 numbers from the pool of participants

Questions:

If you have any questions about the survey, or about being in this study, you may contact me at 484-354-3602 or through email at **cmcgrath2@capellauniversity.edu**. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Capella University has approved this study.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, the Capella Human Research Protections Office is available to help. If you have any concerns about the research process or the researcher, please contact us at 1-888-227-3552, extension 4716. If there are any unexpected problems with the research please also be sure to contact us. Your identity, questions, and concerns will be kept confidential.

**Note: By signing below, you are telling the researcher “Yes,” you want to participate in this study. You may choose to withdraw this consent at any time. Please keep one copy of this form for your records.**

Your Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INVESTIGATOR’S STATEMENT**

I certify that this form includes all information concerning the study relevant to the protection of the rights of the participants, including the nature and purpose of this research, benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures.

I have described the rights and protections afforded to human research participants and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this person to participate. I am available to answer the participant’s questions and have encouraged him or her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of the interview.

Investigator’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter Your Name Here

Date: Enter Date Here

**Research Site(s) Approval**

The following institution(s)/organization(s) has/have granted the researcher access to their participants and/or facilities:

Name: Enter Information Here, Approval Date: Enter Information Here, Approval Code/Number: Enter Information Here,

**Capella’s IRB Approval**

This consent is not valid without the approval information below.

This research has been approved by Capella University's Institutional Review Board. Approval number: \_\_\_\_294839-2\_\_\_\_; Effective dates: From: \_\_1/31/2012\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_1/31/2013\_\_\_\_.

*(This information will be supplied by Capella University's IRB Office upon the approval of the IRB application.)*

## **APPENDIX D. PROTOCOL FOR STUDY INTERVIEW**

1. With the help of the Human Resource Manager, I will initiate contact with volunteer participants
2. Will setup a detailed meeting with Human Resource Manager to provide an overview of the study process. Discuss what is required from participants and the time involved in the study.
3. Distribute a letter of introduction to the potential volunteers.
4. From replies received, select 27 volunteers who meet the selection criteria for the study. 9 volunteers will be selected who work in front line position. 9 volunteers will be selected from front-line supervisors to middle management positions. 9 volunteers will be selected from senior level management positions.
5. Schedule an informed consent meeting. Meetings and interviews will occur in accordance with counselor availability.
6. Provide interview guide to all volunteers.
7. Schedule and meet each volunteer at the manufacturing plant. Meetings will take place in a private conference room at the Human Resource department.
8. At the meeting, re-visit the purpose of the study and discuss the consent form with the volunteer.
9. Obtain volunteer signature on the consent form as well as permission to audio tape during the interview process.
10. Will leave a copy of the signed consent form with the volunteer.
11. Conduct the interview with each participant.
12. Audio Files will be transcribed and coded.
13. Give copies of the final report to those volunteers who request.

## APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW GUIDE (DRAFT)

### FRONT LINE & ASSEMBLY LINE EMPLOYEES

#### Script

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to interview. I'm glad you've agreed to be interviewed. I would like to first explain how this interview will take place. My name is Chris and I am a doctoral student at Capella University doing a research case study on alternative work arrangements and employee preferences. I am inviting you to participate in my research project as part of my PhD degree at Capella University.

The goal of my study is to find out the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. Because of the growing needs, organizations are developing a flexible work schedule to accommodate their employees. The main reason for the use of a flexible work schedule for organizations is that they are able to retain dedicated employees who meet the personal need conflict with traditional work hours.

The following interview will last approximately 25 minutes. With your approval this interview will be tape recorded, transcribed, and then edited into something we call a "profile" that will include only your words, with my questions edited out. In addition to the 5 questions, I will also ask a series of background questions that will help me with my research.

#### **Background Information**

Interviewee's name:

Interviewee's phone number:

Meeting place for interview:

Date/month/year:

Position Title:

Department:

Company Tenure:

#### **Overview of Alternative Work Arrangements**

<i>Compressed Work Week</i>	A work schedule that condenses one or more standard workweeks into fewer, longer days. 4/10 schedule is working 4 ten hour days a week having every Friday off. 9/80 schedule is when an employee works 9 hour days and has every other Friday off.
<i>Flextime</i>	Employees may choose their own starting and ending times from several preset schedules. Everyone usually works during a "core" time in the middle of the day. Some organizations allow workers to vary their start times—within a several-hour window.
<i>Part-time Work</i>	A work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time workweek.
<i>Telecommuting</i>	A work arrangement in which employees regularly work at

	home or at an alternative worksite during part or all of a work schedule.
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**Demographic information**

<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
<b>Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 45- 54 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 54 yrs.
<b>Tenure with Organization</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 yr. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 11- 20 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 20 yrs.
<b>Educational Level</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma or equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Some College/ Associate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Post Graduate
<b>Marital Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
<b># of Children</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b># of Elder Dependents</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b>Salary Range</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$30,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-\$50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001 -\$75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,001 - \$100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$100,000
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino
<b>Race</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Asian
<b>Type of Employment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Non Exempt
<b>Managerial/Staff</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor
<b>Union/Non Union</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Union <input type="checkbox"/> Non Union

1. How often do you think or worry about work (when you are not actually at work or traveling to work)? (Please explain)
  
2. How many hours in a day do you normally work? (Please explain)
  - Probe:** How many hours a day do you spend traveling to work?
  - Probe:** Do you ever feel emotionally drained when you get home from work (please explain)
  - Probe:** Do you often feel that you have enough time for yourself (please explain)
  - Probe:** Do you wish you had more time to do things with the family (please explain)



**Probe:** Is your commitment to my job inhibiting my leisure activities (please explain)

3. Do you generally feel you are able to balance your work and family life?

**Probe:** Are you currently using a flexible work arrangement at your workplace?

(Example: telecommuting, part time, compressed work week, and or flextime?)

**Probe:** My work performance is evaluated on the results I achieve, rather than the time I am at my desk.

4. Does management help you balance your work and family commitments?

**Probe:** How do they understand if someone has to leave early or arrive late due to a non-work Emergency? Please explain

**Probe:** Are employees encouraged to use 'work-life balance' policies at this organization?

**Probe:** Have you encountered a time when higher levels of leadership override your manager's support for taking advantage of work-life balance options?

**Probe:** In this organization it is frowned upon by management to take leave for family related matters? (Please explain)

**Probe:** In this organization is it frowned upon by coworkers to take leave for family related matters? (Please explain)

5. Do you feel work life balance policy in the organization should be customized to individual needs?

**Probe:** Do you think that if employees have good work-life balance the organization will be more effective and successful? If so how?

**Probe:** What could this organization do to help you balance your work and family life?

**Probe:** Do you think that if employees have good work-life balance the organization will be more effective and successful? If so how?

## APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW GUIDE

### FRONT LINE & ASSEMBLY LINE EMPLOYEES

Interview Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to interview. I'm glad you've agreed to be interviewed. I would like to first explain how this interview will take place. My name is Chris and I am a doctoral student at Capella University doing a research case study on alternative work arrangements and employee preferences. I am inviting you to participate in my research project as part of my PhD degree at Capella University.

The goal of my study is to find out the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. Because of the growing needs, organizations are developing a flexible work schedule to accommodate their employees. The main reason for the use of a flexible work schedule for organizations is that they are able to retain dedicated employees who meet the personal need conflict with traditional work hours.

Our discussion should not take more than 25 minutes. With your approval this interview will be tape recorded, transcribed, and then edited into something we call a "profile" that will include only your words, with my questions edited out. In addition to the 5 questions, I will also ask a series of background and demographic questions that will help me with my research.

#### Overview of Alternative Work Arrangements

<i>Compressed Work Week</i>	A work schedule that condenses one or more standard workweeks into fewer, longer days. 4/10 schedule is working 4 ten hour days a week having every Friday off . 9/80 schedule is when an employee works 9 hour days and has every other Friday off.
<i>Flextime</i>	Employees may choose their own starting and ending times from several preset schedules. Everyone usually works during a "core" time in the middle of the day. Some organizations allow workers to vary their start times—within a several-hour window.
<i>Part-time Work</i>	A work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time workweek.
<i>Telecommuting</i>	A work arrangement in which employees regularly work at home or at an alternative worksite during part or all of a work schedule.

**Do You have any questions before we begin? If not, I will turn the digital audio recorder on now.**

**BACKGROUND QUESTIONS**

Meeting place for interview:

Date/month/year:

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**

<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
<b>Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 45- 54 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 54 yrs.
<b>Tenure with Organization</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 yr. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 11- 20 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 20 yrs.
<b>Educational Level</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma or equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Some College/ Associate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Post Graduate
<b>Marital Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
<b># of Children</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b># of Elder Dependents</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b>Salary Range</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$30,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-\$50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001 -\$75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,001 - \$100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$100,000
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino
<b>Race</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Asian
<b>Type of Employment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Non Exempt
<b>Managerial/Staff</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor
<b>Union/Non Union</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Union <input type="checkbox"/> Non Union

**RESEARCH QUESTION #1: How often do you think or worry about work (when you are not actually at work or traveling to work)?**

**Probe:** How many hours a day do you spend traveling to work?

**RESEARCH QUESTION #2 : How many hours in a day do you normally work?**

**Probe:** Do you ever feel emotionally drained when you get home from work (please explain)

**Probe:** Do you often feel that you have enough time for yourself (please explain)

**Probe:** Do you wish you had more time to do things with the family (please explain)

**Probe:** Is your commitment to your job inhibiting your leisure activities (please explain)

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3: Do you generally feel you are able to balance your work and family life?**

- Probe:** How have your work/life priorities changed throughout your adult life?
- Probe:** Are you currently using a flexible work arrangement at your workplace? (Example: telecommuting, part time, compressed work week, and or flextime?)
- Probe:** Is your work performance evaluated on the results you achieve, rather than the time you are at your desk?

**RESEARCH QUESTION #4: Does management help you balance your work and family commitments?**

- Probe:** How do they understand if someone has to leave early or arrive late due to a non-work Emergency? Please explain
- Probe:** Are employees encouraged to use 'work-life balance' policies at this organization?
- Probe:** Have you encountered a time when higher levels of leadership override your manager's support for taking advantage of work-life balance options? (please elaborate)
- Probe:** In this organization, it is frowned upon by management to take leave for family related matters? (Please explain)
- Probe:** In this organization is it frowned upon by coworkers to take leave for family related matters? (Please explain)
- Probe:** In this organization employees who participate in available work-family programs (e.g. job sharing, part-time work) are viewed as less serious about their careers than those who do not participate in these programs?

**RESEARCH QUESTION #5: Do you feel work life balance policies in the organization should be customized to individual needs?**

- Probe:** Do you think that if employees have good work-life balance the organization will be more effective and successful? If so how?
- Probe:** What could this organization do to help you balance your work and family life?

*Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to be interviewed*

## APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW GUIDE (DRAFT)

### FRONT LINE SUPERVISORS, MID LEVEL & SENIOR LEVEL MANAGERS

#### Script

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to interview. I'm glad you've agreed to be interviewed. I would like to first explain how this interview will take place. My name is Chris and I am a doctoral student at Capella University doing a research case study on alternative work arrangements and employee preferences. I am inviting you to participate in my research project as part of my PhD degree at Capella University.

The goal of my study is to find out the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. Because of the growing needs, organizations are developing a flexible work schedule to accommodate their employees. The main reason for the use of a flexible work schedule for organizations is that they are able to retain dedicated employees who meet the personal need conflict with traditional work hours.

The following interview will last approximately 25 minutes. With your approval this interview will be tape recorded, transcribed, and then edited into something we call a "profile" that will include only your words, with my questions edited out. In addition to the 5 questions, I will also ask a series of background and demographic questions that will help me with my research.

#### Background Information

Interviewee's name:

Interviewee's phone number:

Meeting place for interview:

Date/month/year:

Position Title:

Department:

#### Overview of Alternative Work Arrangements

<b><i>Compressed Work Week</i></b>	A work schedule that condenses one or more standard workweeks into fewer, longer days. 4/10 schedule is working 4 ten hour days a week having every Friday off . 9/80 schedule is when an employee works 9 hour days and has every other Friday off.
<b><i>Flextime</i></b>	Employees may choose their own starting and ending times from several preset schedules. Everyone usually works during a "core" time in the middle of the day. Some organizations allow workers to vary their start times—within a several-hour window.
<b><i>Part-time Work</i></b>	A work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time workweek.
<b><i>Telecommuting</i></b>	A work arrangement in which employees regularly work at home or at an alternative worksite during part or all of a work schedule.

**Demographic information**

<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
<b>Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 45- 54 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 54 yrs.
<b>Tenure with Organization</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 yr. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 11- 20 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 20 yrs.
<b>Educational Level</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma or equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Some College/ Associate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Post Graduate
<b>Marital Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
<b># of Children</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b># of Elder Dependents</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b>Salary Range</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$30,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-\$50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001 -\$75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,001 - \$100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$100,000
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino
<b>Race</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Asian
<b>Type of Employment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Non Exempt
<b>Managerial/Staff</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor
<b>Union/Non Union</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Union <input type="checkbox"/> Non Union

**Interview Questions**

1. In your division if an employee has a problem managing their work schedule are accommodations offered to assist them?

**Probe:** How do you assist them during this conflict?

2. Does the organization provide a managers guide (instructions) in the event an employee needs assistance balancing work and personal/family obligations?

**Probe:** Has an employee ever requested working a different work schedule due to a personal or family conflict?

**Probe:** How important are time and flexibility as a way to retain employees?

**Probe:** How would you accommodate their needs to help balance their work and personal life?

**Probe:** Of the people in your department who adopted any one of the above alternative arrangements where they primarily male or female? Please explain.

4. Do employees feel supported when utilizing an alternative work schedule?

**Probe:** Would it be possible for an employee to work from home? If so how often could they use this benefit?

**Probe:** How do you offer support to your employees when they experience home-to-work conflict?

**Probe:** As a manager how would you help an employee handle time in unusual childcare situations such as a sick child who cannot go to daycare or an employee's need to take care of an elderly family member?

**Probe:** Are there any other ways that you can think of that home/personal obligations may intrude on people's paid work?

5. Before we end today I would like to conclude by asking if you ever used a flexible work environment in your career and during your tenure within this organization? If no, would you consider working an alternative work schedule?

**Probe:** How did (would) this balance your work/home obligations?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your overall Job satisfaction/commitment?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your ability to get work done?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your Advancement?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your relations with coworkers and senior managers

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to be interviewed

**APPENDIX H. INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**FRONT LINE SUPERVISORS, MID LEVEL & SENIOR LEVEL MANAGERS**

Interview Start Time:\_\_\_\_\_

Interview End Time:\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to interview. I'm glad you've agreed to be interviewed. I would like to first explain how this interview will take place. My name is Chris and I am a doctoral student at Capella University doing a research case study on alternative work arrangements and employee preferences. I am inviting you to participate in my research project as part of my PhD degree at Capella University.

The goal of my study is to find out the attitudes and perceptions of alternative work arrangements to help balance work-life and family-life. Because of the growing needs, organizations are developing a flexible work schedule to accommodate their employees. The main reason for the use of a flexible work schedule for organizations is that they are able to retain dedicated employees who meet the personal need conflict with traditional work hours.

Our discussion should not take more than 25 minutes. With your approval this interview will be tape recorded, transcribed, and then edited into something we call a "profile" that will include only your words, with my questions edited out. In addition to the 5 questions, I will also ask a series of background and demographic questions that will help me with my research.

**Background Information**

Meeting place for interview:

Date/month/year:

**Overview of Alternative Work Arrangements**

<i>Compressed Work Week</i>	A work schedule that condenses one or more standard workweeks into fewer, longer days. 4/10 schedule is working 4 ten hour days a week having every Friday off . 9/80 schedule is when an employee works 9 hour days and has every other Friday off.
<i>Flextime</i>	Employees may choose their own starting and ending times from several preset schedules. Everyone usually works during a “core” time in the middle of the day. Some organizations allow workers to vary their start times—within a several-hour window.
<i>Part-time Work</i>	A work schedule that is less than full-time but is at least half of the regularly scheduled full time workweek.
<i>Telecommuting</i>	A work arrangement in which employees regularly work at home or at an alternative worksite during part or all of a work schedule.

**Do You have any questions before we begin? If not, I will turn the digital audio recorder on now.**



**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
<b>Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 45- 54 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 54 yrs.
<b>Tenure with Organization</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 yr. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> 11- 20 yrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 20 yrs.
<b>Educational Level</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma or equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Some College/ Associate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Post Graduate
<b>Marital Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
<b># of Children</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b># of Elder Dependents</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more
<b>Salary Range</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$30,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-\$50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001 -\$75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,001 - \$100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$100,000
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino
<b>Race</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Asian
<b>Type of Employment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Non Exempt
<b>Managerial/Staff</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor
<b>Union/Non Union</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Union <input type="checkbox"/> Non Union

**RESEARCH QUESTION #1: In your division if an employee has a problem managing their work schedule are accommodations offered to assist them?**

**Probe:** Has an employee ever requested working a different work schedule due to a personal or family conflict?

**Probe:** How do you assist them during this conflict?

**RESEARCH QUESTION #2: Does the organization provide a managers guide (instructions) in the event an employee needs assistance balancing work and personal/family obligations?**

**Probe:** How important are time and flexibility as a way to retain employees?

**Probe:** How would you accommodate their needs to help balance their work and personal life?

**Probe:** Of the people in your department who adopted any one of the above alternative arrangements where they primarily male or female? Please explain.

**Probe:** From the above alternative arrangements mentioned, which one do employees request often?

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3: Do employees feel supported when utilizing an alternative work schedule?**

**Probe:** Would it be possible for an employee to work from home? If so how often could they use this benefit?

**Probe:** How do you offer support to your employees when they experience home-to-work conflict?

**Probe:** As a manager how would you help an employee handle time in unusual childcare situations such as a sick child who cannot go to daycare or an employee's need to take care of an elderly family member?

**Probe:** Are there any other ways that you can think of that home/personal obligations may intrude on people's paid work?

**RESEARCH QUESTION #4 Before we end today I would like to conclude by asking if you ever used a flexible work environment in your career and during your tenure within this organization? If no, would you consider working an alternative work schedule?**

**Probe:** How did (would) this balance your work/home obligations?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your overall Job satisfaction/commitment?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your ability to get work done?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your Advancement?

**Probe:** How did (would) this affect your relations with coworkers and senior managers

**Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to be interviewed**