



**Universitat Ramon Llull**

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

Title	<b>WORK-FAMILY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE</b>
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## Table of Contents

<b>1 Thesis Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Relevance of Research on Work-family Culture.....	1
1.2 Research on Work-family Culture .....	3
1.3 Main Research Question and Purpose of Study .....	6
1.4 Organisation of thesis .....	7
<b>2 The role of work-family practices in females' career advancement.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 General Introduction to Research Paper I.....	8
2.2 Research Paper I: A comparative analysis of the use of work-life balance practices in Europe. Do practices enhance female's career advancement?.....	10
2.3 General Conclusion of Research Paper I.....	36
<b>3 The role of top managers in creating work-family cultures: a theoretical     framework .....</b>	<b>38</b>
3.1 General Introduction to Research Paper II.....	38
3.2 Research Paper II: Explaining and predicting females behaviour in top management teams: Applying Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour .....	40
<b>4 The role of female managers in creating work-family cultures: an     empirical analysis.....</b>	<b>65</b>
4.1 General Introduction to Research Paper III.....	65
4.2 Research Paper III: Creating work-family cultures: the role of female managers as change agents .....	66
<b>5 Thesis Conclusion.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>6 General References .....</b>	<b>117</b>

# **1 Thesis Introduction**

## **1.1 Relevance of Research on Work-family Culture**

Work-family issues are attracting increasing attention at both the public and the private level. The European Union promotes matters such as parental leave, childcare, work-life balance, flexible working hours, and encourages changes in the environment, structure and organisation of work (European Commission, 2004 - 2006). Along similar lines, growing public pressure has led to interest from leading companies to improve the work-life balance of their employees. Nowadays, many companies highlight life concerns as a priority social issue (Riedmann, 2006).

But what initiated this increased awareness of governments and companies to invest in improving the work-life balance of their citizens and employees? The origins of this augmented responsiveness are mainly consequences of socio-demographic changes. In the last decades females have entered the labour force on a massive scale. Motivated by the women's movement, which successfully expanded females' claim to equality in educational and employment opportunities, females are now engaged in all kinds of activities outside the home. On average, females across Europe hold 40% of full-time jobs and 32% of management positions (European Commission, 2007). Economic pressure, in the form of wage reductions for males, required a large number of females to enter the workplace on a part-time basis, and forced both males and females to increase their overall working hours in order to maintain their living standards (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). Dual-earning has become an economic necessity for an increasing number of families. In addition, there are a growing number of single parents, dual-career couples, and fathers heavily involved in parenting. For these individuals and for others interested in both work and family, balancing the two arenas has become a major life issue.

A consequence of these socio-demographic changes is that work and family which have previously been more independent, have turned into a problematic interdependence (Joplin et al., 2003). Today individuals are confronted with juggling the multiple demands of family and work. The traditional male earner/female carer model

does not hold anymore, and has been replaced by a dual earner/female part-time carer model or even a dual earner/dual carer model.

Demographic changes in the workforce have increasingly challenged employers, employees and policy makers to develop strategies and tactics to balance competing demands of work and family lives. Without effective strategies in place, that respond to demographic changes, high levels of conflict between competing work and family demands can have negative effects in the workplace, on the individual and on society. Companies are beginning to understand that not responding to work-life balance issues bears a cost in terms of high absenteeism (Goff et al., 1992), lack of employee satisfaction, accidents and loss of productivity (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991), and high turnover (Grover & Crocker, 1995). In addition, there are important implications of work and family stress for wider society. Stress in the work place can spill over to the family (Cartwright & Cooper, 1994). A result may be poor parent-child interaction, which in turn affects children's behaviour, performance at school, and illnesses etc. (McEwen & Barling, 1991). These stress-related consequences can be costly for society in terms of health service costs, assistance in child rearing and high costs for insurances.

Strategies adopted by companies to overcome these problems enact policies and programs aimed at providing employees with resources to help them manage their work-family lives. Typical practices include flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, childcare services and special maternity leave arrangements to help workers meet family and personal needs. Practices have been found to raise employee satisfaction; work ethics and motivation (Friedman, 1992); reduce absenteeism and staff turnover rates (Galinsky & Stein, 1990); elevate satisfaction with the balance between work and family (Ezra & Deckman, 1996); and diminish related stress (Johnson, 1995) and work-family conflict (Goff et al., 1990).

However, several studies also found either nonexistent or weak relationships between benefits offered or used by employees and work-family conflict (Anderson, et al. 2002, Batt & Valcour, 2003, Haar & Spell, 2004). For example, Thompson et al. (2005) found the number of organisational practices offered was positively related to an employee's commitment toward their employer, but had no impact on family-to-

work conflict. Similarly, Thompson et al. (2005) found that the formal availability of work-family practices alone had modest relationships with outcomes of value to both individuals and organisations. They rather propose that other factors are more important for reducing work-family conflict or stress, such as having supportive colleagues and supervisors, as well as the perception that employees can use these policies without fearing negative job or career consequences.

Therefore researchers and practitioners point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of work-life practices to a change in organisational culture (Allen, 2001; Anderson et al., 2002; Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002, Lewis, 1997, 2001, Thompson et al., 1999). The development of a work-family culture which supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives becomes a necessity for reducing work-family mismatch (Thompson et al., 2005). Future research should begin focussing on what contributes to a supportive culture and what constrains an organisation's ability to create a work-family culture for its employees.

## **1.2 Research on Work-family Culture**

Recently, a new concept, work-family culture, has gained attention in the work-family literature (Campbell Clark, 2001; Kinnunen et al. 2005; Lewis, 2001; Lewis & Smithson, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999, Wang et al., 2007). Generally, work-family culture refers to an organisation's supportiveness or responsiveness towards employees' family-related needs. The growing interest in studying work-family culture is based on the assumption that organisational culture may affect employee's uptake of work-family practices in organisations negatively and positively (Allen, 2001; Campbell Clark, 2001; Lyness et al., 1999; Starrels, 1992; Thompson et al., 1999). Scholars believe that the existence of a work-family culture may act as a powerful symbol that indicates to employees that the organisation cares about them and their concerns (Anderson et al., 2002; J. T. Bond et al., 2003; Casper, Martin, Buffardi, & Erdwins, 2002; O'Driscoll et al., 2003; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Allen, 2001), and in turn makes them feel comfortable to use work-family practices. In fact, some studies pro-

vide empirical evidence that a supportive work-family culture increases the uptake of work-family practices such as flexitime arrangements, part-time work, a compressed working week, and family care leave (Allen, 2001; Dikkers et al., 2005; Haas et al., 2002; Thompson et al., 1999).

The concept of work-family culture is primarily based on a definition of organisational culture, which refers to the assumptions, values, beliefs, meanings and expectations that the employees of a particular organisation hold in common (Schein, 1990, 1999). Lewis (1997), for example, used Schein's levels of organisational culture (artifacts, values, and assumptions) to describe family-friendly work cultures. She argues that values and assumptions on how work is done, underlie work-life practices (artefacts). Only if underlying assumptions and values are re-examined, workplace cultures can become more family-friendly.

Researchers operationalized the construct of work-family culture in different ways. Campbell Clark (2001), for example, uses a three-dimensional definition of work culture: flexibility of working hours available in the organisation, flexibility of the work itself (job control, decision latitude) and supportive supervision. Allen (2001) measures work-family culture via family supportive organisation perceptions (FSOP). Her measure includes items related to psychological and time related commitment, flexibility and to what extent family life is allowed to be visible in the organisation. Kossek et al. (2001), for example, prefers the term climate to culture. She proposes two dimensions of work climate: (1) a work climate for sharing concerns that encourages employees to share family issues with supervisors, and (2) a work climate for sacrifices that asks employees to make sacrifices in their private life for the sake of work. The most recent measure of work-family culture was created by Haas et al. (2002). It includes items at the company level and at the work group level. The measure focuses on organisational culture in general, rather than on work-family culture in particular. However, some items relevant for work-family issues reflect an organisation's masculine ethic, caring ethic and equal opportunity ethic.

The most elaborated constructs for empirical testing is the construct by Thompson et al. (1999). According to Thompson et al. (1999), a work-family culture is defined as the “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to

which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees work and family lives” (Thompson et al. 1999, p.394). A work-family culture consists of three components: managerial support, time demands, and career consequences. Time demands refer to employees’ perceptions of the underlying norms dictating the organisation's expectations to work long hours and put job priorities before personal lives, in order to be viewed favourably by management. Career consequences represent the extent to which employees believe that using work-family practices are associated with negative career consequences. Managerial support refers to the extent to which management in the organisation is perceived to be sensitive to employees' work-family demands.

Empirical studies on work-family culture confirm that the existence of a work-family culture is associated with several positive outcomes. Employees, who perceive their organisation as supportive, reported lower levels of distress (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006; Kossek et al., 2001; Mauno et al., 2005, Allen, 2001; Behson, 2002; Campbell Clark, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999) and work-family conflict (Dikkers et al., 2005; Mauno et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 1999). Regarding work attitudes, it has been found that a supportive work-family culture fostered job satisfaction (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2002; Mauno et al., 2005), organisational commitment (Dikkers et al., 2005), and lowered turnover intentions even after controlling for the effects of work-family benefits (Allen, 2001).

As stated by Thompson et al., 1999, one component of work-family culture is supervisor or managerial support. Research suggests that supervisor and managerial support plays an important role in how employees can integrate work and family. Thomas & Ganster (1995) define a supportive supervisor as one who “empathizes with the employee’s desire to seek balance between work and family responsibilities” (p. 7). Galinsky & Stein (1990) define a supportive supervisor as someone who believes that solving family issues of their subordinates is part of their role, and is knowledgeable about company policies. Employees who have supportive supervisors are less likely to experience work distress (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997), have lower levels of absenteeism (Goff et al., 1990), less intention to quit (Thompson et al., 1999), and higher job satisfaction (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Moreover, su-

pervisory family support was found to be positively related to affective commitment and negatively related to job search behaviour, even after controlling for work-family practices offered (Thompson et al., 2005).

Supervisor support has also been shown to be related to work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Goff et al., 1990; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Batt & Valcour, 2003). Employees who have supportive supervisors are more likely to perceive their organisation as family supportive (Allen, 2001) and perceive they have more control over work and family (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), which in turn are related to lower levels of work-family conflict. Whereas a lack of work-related social support (including low supervisor support), increased work-family conflict, which, in turn, resulted in increased psychosomatic symptoms (anxiety, depression, somatic complaints) (Snow et al., 2003).

### **1.3 Main Research Question and Purpose of Study**

Taken together these findings, the role of work-family culture becomes an important aspect in the work-family debate. Results highlight the importance of creating a more supportive organisational culture. Nevertheless, the knowledge of what creates and maintains a supportive work-family culture is quite limited (Thompson, et al., 2005). Therefore, future research should begin by focusing on what contributes to a supportive work-family culture (Thompson et al., 2005). Some scholars suggest that senior management support is an important factor to establish work-family cultures (Wang, 2007). Because senior managers are the key actors in implementing new organisational cultures (Schein, 1985; Smirnich & Morgan, 1982; Tichy & Ulrich, 1984), it becomes important to consider how they view the promotion of a work-family culture (Thompson et al., 2005). Attitudes of decision makers surely affect the degree to which an organisation has a supportive work-family culture. Top managers can promote work-family cultures and communicate this vision throughout their own behaviour, in top management meetings, newsletters etc.

Although leadership can potentially play an important role (Frye & Breugh, 2004; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999), prior research has made limited effort to theoretically and empirically integrate work-family culture and leadership. This thesis tries to overcome this lack of research by providing insights on the conditions under which leadership support creates work-family cultures. Circumstances, factors and the cognitive structure that influence managers to promote a work-family culture will be discussed.

#### **1.4 Organisation of thesis**

The thesis follows a three-paper approach in which the three papers show the evolution of the dissertation process. The first paper sets the dissertation background. Findings and conclusion of this paper lead to the actual dissertation project and set the foundation of the research question. The second paper develops the theoretical framework for answering the research question. It concentrates on the development of a conceptual model that explains female top manager's behaviour towards promoting work-family cultures. Preliminary propositions are formulated. The third paper comes up with a revised version of the conceptual model. It tests the proposed hypotheses using a structural equation modelling approach.

## **Overview of research papers**

<b>Research Paper</b>	<b>Conferences (peer reviewed) and Publication (peer reviewed)</b>
<u>Research Paper I:</u> Straub, C. (2006). A comparative analysis of the use of work life balance practices in Europe: Do practices enhance female's career advancement?	<u>Published in:</u> (2007) Women in Management Review, Vol. 22, (4).  <u>Presented at:</u> European Academy of Management Conference, Oslo 2006
<u>Research Paper II:</u> Straub, C. (2006) Explaining and predicting female's behaviour in top management teams: Applying Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour	<u>Presented at:</u> Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Philadelphia 2007  European Academy of Management Conference, Paris 2007
Research Paper III: Straub, C. (2008). "Creating Family-Friendly Work Cultures: The Role of Female Managers as Change Agents"	Presented at: European Academy of Management Conference, Ljubljana 2008

## **2 The role of work-family practices in females' career advancement**

### **2.1 General Introduction to Research Paper I**

Implementing work-family practices is one component in creating organisations that are work-family-friendly. Over the last decade, an increasing number of companies have implemented work-family practices. Companies with such programmes adopted practices such as flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, childcare services and special maternity leave arrangements. Studies have shown that these practices increased employee satisfaction; work ethic and motivation (Friedman, 1992); reduced absenteeism and staff turnover rates (Galinsky & Stein, 1990); raised satisfaction with the balance between work and family (Ezra & Deckman, 1996); and diminished work-family conflict (Goff, et al., 1990) and related stress (Johnson, 1995).

Interesting to know is whether these work-family practices also support and develop managerial and professional females' career advancement (McCracken, 2002). Some studies found practices such as flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, childcare services and special maternity leave arrangements to be supportive to females' career advancement (Mattis, 2002; Spinks & Tombari, 2002; Jafri & Isbister, 2002; Mays et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2005; Giscombe, 2005; Hammond, 2002). Companies reported an increase in the number of females participating in key training and development activities, an increase in the number of females in the pipeline for promotions, and an increase in the number of females achieving more senior positions. Females being supported by organisational work-family practices also indicated more job and career satisfaction and higher levels of psychological well-being (Burke et al., 2006).

Research paper I looks at the role of work-family practices and their impact on female-s' career advancement. The objectives were: (1) to identify and compare companies' involvement with work-family practices and policies in 14 European countries, and (2) to test whether these practices actually create a work-family culture that enhances the career advancement of females to senior management positions.

Research paper I is based on standardized information extrapolated from the "Great Place to Work®-Europe" data bank. The Great Place to Work® Institute, Inc. has developed a methodology (standardized instruments and data collection procedures) over the years, enabling the choice of "best companies to work for" in each country. The data bank includes information provided by employees and managers in hundreds of companies in 14 EU member states, compiled during the period of 2003-2005. Permission on the use of data was obtained from the Institute for Labor Studies, ESADE.

Research paper I was presented at the European Academy of Management Conference, Oslo 2006. This conference is a peer reviewed conference. The full paper has to be sent. Research paper I is published in *Women in Management Review*, Vol.22 No. 4, 2007. *Women in Management Review* is a blind review journal.

## 2.2 Research Paper I: A comparative analysis of the use of work-life balance practices in Europe. Do practices enhance female's career advancement?

### Abstract

**Purpose** The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify and compare companies' involvement with work-life balance practices and policies in 14 European countries, and (2) to test whether these practices actually enhance the career advancement of women to senior management positions.

**Design/ methodology/ approach** A comparative descriptive analysis shows differences in work-life balance practices and policies and women's participation in the workforce between countries. In order to test whether work-life balance practices and policies enhance the career advancement of women to senior management positions a multiple regression analysis is performed.

**Findings** There are certain differences in the provision of work-life balance practices and women's participation in the labour force among European companies. A positive influence of work-life balance policies and practices on women's career advancement into senior management positions was confirmed in only one case - the payment of an additional amount for maternity leave. All other practices were shown to have no significant impact or a significant negative relationship.

**Originality/ value** An interesting issue is whether work-life balance practices and policies help remove the glass ceiling. There has been little research on the impact of work-life balance practices and policies on women's career advancement. This study attempts to redress this dearth by examining the role of work-life balance practices and policies on women's career advancement.

**Paper type** Research paper

**Keywords** Work-life Balance, Gender Diversity, Career Advancement

## Introduction

Women's participation in the paid workforce is one of the most significant social changes of the last century. Women have made noteworthy advances in management, which used to be a largely male preserve (Powell, 1999, Helfat et al, 2006). Even so, women have not made inroads into the higher levels of corporate power (Davidson & Burke, 2000; McGregor, 2002; Vinnicombe, 2000). Studies in various countries such as Norway (Hoel, 2002), the US (Catalyst 2000, 2003, 2004), Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Burke & Mattis, 2000) and the UK (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2003) monitor the presence of women in executive positions and reveal that the lack of women at the top of large companies is a global phenomenon. Surveys indicate that gender is still a common barrier to women's career advancement in many international contexts. It seems that their progression to the senior executive level is blocked by an invisible barrier - the so-called "glass ceiling" (Powell & Butterfield, 1994).

Over the last decade, European companies have shown greater interest in removing the glass ceiling. Due to increased public pressure and the realisation of the competitive advantage that may result from having women in management positions (Burke, 1994a, 1994b, Cassell, 1997), companies have launched numerous work-life balance programmes to promote women's career advancement. Companies with such programmes adopt practices such as flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, child care services and special maternity leave arrangements. Studies have shown that these practices increase employee satisfaction; work ethic and motivation (Friedman, 1992); reduce absenteeism and staff turnover rates (Galinsky & Stein, 1990); raise satisfaction with the balance between work and family (Ezra & Deckman, 1996); and diminish work-family conflict (Goff, et al., 1990) and related stress (Johnson, 1995).

A range of factors favour the presence of work-life balance initiatives in companies. It has been suggested that the size of the company is influential in determining companies' involvement with work-life balance (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Osterman, 1995). Other factors affecting companies' involvement in-

clude sector or industry pressure and a company's level of dependence on female labour (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995).

On a European level, corporate implementation of work-life balance practices may vary depending on the welfare state system, family formation policies, legislation and the gender ideologies found in each country (Riedmann, 2006). An interesting issue is whether these approaches help remove the glass ceiling. Some studies have examined barriers to women's advancement (Oakley, 2000, Kottke et al., 2005) whereas there are only a few studies that looked at the impact of work-life balance practices on women's concrete career advancement (Mattis, 2002). Thus, the objectives of this study are: (1) to identify and compare companies' involvement with work-life balance practices and policies in 14 European countries, and (2) to test whether these practices actually enhance the career advancement of women to senior management positions.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **A framework for dismantling the glass ceiling**

Companies may undertake various approaches to foster a gender-equitable workplace. Drawing on existing research on gender in the workplace, Kolb et al. (1998) developed a framework for understanding how companies promote gender equity and organisational change. According to Kolb et al. (1998), the way companies implement work-life balance policies and practices depends largely on underlying gender ideologies. Companies can be placed in one of four groups according to the strategies they adopt for fostering women's career advancement.

#### *Eliminate Gender Differences*

The first group involves those companies that translate gender into biological sexes. These companies assume that success is dependent upon an individual's own merit regardless of sex.. The reason for women's slow career advancement in comparison to men's career advancement is due to the former not being socially

trained to succeed in a male-dominated business. Such firms consider that women were brought up in a way that stopped them from learning the rules of business, which include highly masculine traits such as assertiveness, authority, autonomy, aggression, dominance and achievement. These companies therefore try to eliminate gender differences so that women can compete as equals. They typically encourage women to learn to survive in a male-dominated environment by adopting more masculine attributes.

Thus, HR departments offer executive development programmes to train women in assertive leadership and presentation and negotiation styles. Nevertheless, Kolb et al. (1998) believe that these programmes do little to change the underlying factors within organisations that create an uneven playing field for women.

### *Celebrate Gender Differences*

The second group involves those companies that accept that there are differences between men and women. Early in childhood, different gender models are imposed on boys and girls. These gender roles ascribe different characteristics, values and behaviours to both sexes that can result in: different work styles (Helgesen, 1990, Powell, 1993, Rosner, 1990); ethical reasoning (Gilligan, 1982), communication / interaction styles (Stets & Burke, 1996, Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 1992, Tannen, 1995); and leadership behaviour (Rosener, 1990, 1995; Powell, 1993; Eagle and Johnson, 1990; Harriman, 1996).

Women in these companies can be disadvantaged because their work styles are not valued in a male-dominated work environment (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000). To overcome these disadvantages, these companies attempt to value the differences between men and women. They initiate cultural awareness and diversity training to foster tolerance and better understand the strengths of each gender. Furthermore, they demonstrate that using women's skills and experiences yields competitive advantages for the business (Cassell, 1997). Consequently, this approach creates awareness and thus fosters more tolerant and flexible work contexts favouring women's advancement. However, celebrating the differences between men and

women can also reinforce gender stereotypes and, in the process, limit women's progress (Kolb et. al., 1998).

### *Remove Gender-biased Structures*

The third group involves those companies that accept that there are social constructed differences between men and women. However, these companies tend to focus on eliminating structural barriers on women's advancement. Companies adopting this approach realise that hiring, evaluation and promotion processes are highly biased against women. In order to overcome structural disadvantages, companies implement affirmative action measures, sexual harassment guidelines and fair gender-neutral selection and promotion procedures. Other organisations offer work-family practices such as: flexitime; shorter working hours; job sharing; tele-working; child care services; and special maternity leave arrangements.

According to Kolb et. al. (1998) these structural and policy-based measures have contributed to improving women's opportunities as demonstrated by the increasing number of women in management positions. Despite this, such programmes have little impact on the informal rules and practices governing workplace behaviour (Kolb et. al., 1998). For example, selection processes can follow affirmative action policies but the final selection criteria can still be highly biased by underlying gender stereotypes. In fact, studies that examine the process of selecting executives show that a mayor reason for women's under-representation lies in invisible gender stereotypes, which in turn discriminate against women (Kanter, 1977). In order to minimise risk in filling positions, male managers prefer to select other men who, they believe, are likely to make decisions similar to the decisions they themselves make (Kanter, 1977).

### *Review Organisational Cultures*

The fourth group involves those companies that assume that gender inequity is rooted in our cultural patterns and therefore is also in our organisational systems. In fact, scholars argue that understanding women's under-representation in certain jobs

requires work organisations to be studied and reviewed (Bielby & Baron, 1984; Baron et al., 1991). Studies have shown that levels of inequality in companies are affected by organisational demography and the degree to which personnel practices such as recruitment methods are formalised. Furthermore, as Reskin (2000) points out, inequality at work occurs through the decisions made by those people who run and work for companies. The sex composition of management affects women's representation in management as it affects hiring, remuneration, evaluation, and promotion practices (Pfeffer, 1983, 1991). It is therefore important to analyse the demographic make-up of decision makers and how they design organisational policies and procedures.

Heilman et al. (1995), Eagly et al. (1992) and Powell (1993) claim that as a result of male over-representation in management positions, organisational practices are highly male biased. Scholars argue that these male-biased practices are responsible for the different career opportunities for men and women at senior levels of management (Cockburn, 1991; Connell, 1987, 1995). Once organisational practices designed by men have become rooted in formal structures and informal traditions, they resist change (Baron (1991)). In the process, establishments and workers become accustomed to gender-based job segregation (Bielby and Baron, 1984; Carington & Troske, 1994, 1998; Petersen & Morgan, 1995; Tomaskovic & Devey, 1993). For this reason, practices enhancing gender equality such as equal employment opportunity, corporate affirmative action programmes and work-family policies have often failed in the past (Bacchi, 1996). In an attempt to reverse this trend, companies try to build practices that are more robust and gender equitable. They offer work experience programmes that discriminate in women's favour and also review their organisational cultures to try and make them less gender-biased.

### **Work-life Balance Practices and Women's Career Advancement**

Different gender roles are imposed on males and females from early childhood. These social gender roles ascribe different norms, characteristics, values and behaviours to both sexes. Girls are expected to reflect nurturing, caring and listening skills that are associated with the mothering role (Maddock & Parkin, 1993). Boys are expected to demonstrate authority, autonomy, aggression, dominance and

achievement that are associated with the bread-winner's role. As a result, although family responsibilities are now more balanced between men and women, women are still mainly responsible for caring for the children, the elderly, and carrying out household chores while men largely remain in charge of work matters (Fredrikson-Goldsen & Schlarlach 2001; Cinamon & Rich, 2002). In fact, Plantenga & Hansen (1999) found that women in European countries on average spend about four times as much time as men on caring tasks.

However, economic pressures also force women to form part of the work force. Many women are thus forced to juggle multiple family and work demands. While men deal with work matters, often at the cost of family life, women often have to deal with family issues, even when it interferes with their jobs (Pleck, 1977, Newell, 1993). In fact, scholars found that women tended to devote more hours to family activities than men (Eby et al., 2005; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000) but that hours devoted to work activities were identical for men and women (Gutek, 1991). Accordingly, women often experience role overload. The total time and energy devoted to family and work are too great for women to perform both roles well or comfortably (Duxbury et. al., 1994).

Considering the implications of differences in work and family life, it is reasonable to assume that men and women have unequal career opportunities. In fact, scholars believe that a constraint for women in achieving management positions is the disproportionate responsibility they still bear for raising children and performing household tasks (Wirth, 1998). Indeed, a study on the views of Europeans reveals that European women give family responsibility as the main reason for less advancement in their careers (Eurobarometer, 1996). Given that women undergo pregnancy and childbirth, they cannot actively benefit from career progression policies which are designed to emphasise the period between the ages of 30 and 40. Moreover, traditional performance evaluations based on hours worked rather than on productivity put women with families at a big disadvantage (Kolb et. al., 1998).

Work-life balance practices and policies focus on removing gender-based structural barriers to women's advancement. Practices such as flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, child care services and special maternity

leave arrangements help women to reconcile family and work-life. Consequently it can be assumed that work-life balance practices and policies designed to acknowledge and support the multiple demands of family and work should foster women's career advancement. A recent study confirms that women are taking advantage of flexible work arrangements in order to meet their career goals and manage the complexity of their lives (Shapiro et al. 2007). Based on the above the following hypothesis is tested:

Hypothesis:

*The extent to which companies offer work-life balance practices and policies is related to the percentage of women in senior management positions.*

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Sample**

In total fourteen European countries took part in the survey study conducted in 2004 by Great Place to Work<sup>1</sup>. A questionnaire was sent to senior human resource managers asking them to indicate corporate practices and policies linked to human resources and work-life balance. The questionnaire was sent only to companies that had previously voluntarily taken part in a best companies or best workplace selection process. In total, 854 companies took part in the survey, from which 547 were nominated as the best companies to work for. This study analyses findings for the 547 companies listed as the best companies to work for in each European country. Data was reviewed and cleaned up prior to analysis and 33 observations were found to

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<sup>1</sup> This study is based on standardized information extrapolated from the "Great Place to Work@-Europe" data bank. The Great Place to Work® Institute, Inc. has developed a methodology (standardized instruments and data collection procedures) over the years enabling the choice of "best companies to work for" in each country. The data bank includes information provided by employees and managers in hundreds of companies in 14 EU member states, compiled during the period of 2003-2005. Permission on the use of data was obtained from the Institute for Labor Studies, ESADE.

include many missing or incomplete answers and were thus eliminated, reducing the sample to 514 companies.

## **Methods and Procedures**

A comparative descriptive analysis was conducted to show differences in work-life balance practices and policies between countries. Women's participation in the workforce of companies within each country and their hierarchical representation is demonstrated. In order to test the hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was employed with the following independent and dependent variables.

*Dependent variable:* The questionnaire asked the senior HR manager to indicate the number of management and executive positions held by men and women at their workplace in 2004. A percentage score was calculated for women executives in each company.

*Independent variable:* HR managers were asked to indicate whether their company offers the following practices and policies related to work-life balance: flexi-time; paid sabbaticals; home/tele-working; job protected maternity and paternity leave arrangements above the statutory minimum; extra pay for maternity and paternity leave arrangements in addition to the statutory minimum; the appointment of someone to combat discrimination and promote diversity; and the promulgation of a code of conduct setting out the company's commitment to combat discrimination of gender.

## **RESULTS**

### **Work-life Balance Practices and Policies in European Companies**

Results show that European companies implement numerous work-life balance practices in order to overcome structural disadvantages for women employees. On average, 74% of the companies had implemented a code of conduct or policy combating discrimination on gender grounds, and 58% of companies had appointed

diversity managers to actively combat discrimination and to foster diversity. Companies prefer to offer work practices such as flexitime (95%) and working from home (79%). Regarding leaves of absence, 23% of companies give their employees the opportunity to take a paid sabbatical. Relatively few companies place any emphasis on child care services (34%), special maternity/paternity leave arrangements such as extra leave for mothers (15%) and fathers (34%), and extra pay for mothers (46%) and fathers (48%).

Findings show that companies promulgate codes of conduct to combat discrimination (74%). Nevertheless, they do little to actively implement these codes. On average, only 58% of the companies appoint a diversity manager. The Netherlands ranks first for codes of conducts, followed closely by Sweden, Spain and Ireland. Spain ranks first for the appointment of diversity managers.

Within the group of work benefits, flexitime is the most frequently offered benefit (95%), followed by home working (79%). Findings show that Dutch, Irish, Danish, Portuguese and Belgian companies in particular offer flexitime arrangements for their employees. Working from home is the second most frequently offered benefit (it comes first in the case of Irish, Belgian and Danish companies).

Surprisingly, companies generally make very little contribution to childcare benefits over and above the statutory minimum such as those companies that pay part of childcare expenses, company nurseries, etc. (34%). One explanation might be that many companies still consider the State responsible for the provision of childcare services. In fact, findings show that company contribution is low in countries where the State plays an active role as care provider, whereas company contribution is high in countries with little public childcare coverage.

Findings for Germany, Austria and Ireland confirm this phenomenon. All three countries show relatively high company involvement in the provision of childcare benefits. In fact, in these countries the State has done little in the field of childcare provision. Because children are seen as the private responsibility of the parents

comprising a working father and a caring mother, the family shoulders the task alone. As a result, there is a lack of public, subsidised private childcare provision.

Denmark, Finland, Belgium, France and Sweden are well-known for their relatively well-developed childcare provision. One might reasonably assume that companies make little contribution in countries with good State childcare provision. However, although this is the case for the first four countries, it does not hold true for Sweden. Although the State is an active provider, company involvement is very high. It seems that Swedish companies have recognised that they also have an important role to play in the provision of childcare in order to overcome work-family-related problems at work.

Countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal, the UK, Greece and the Netherlands also suggest that this assumption is false. Neither companies nor the State offer much in the way of childcare. This may be because the family plays an important role in providing care facilities in these countries. Neither the State nor the companies have changed their views of this underlying cultural assumption.

In the case of special maternity leave arrangements (e.g. extra leave and pay above the statutory minimum), findings reveal that companies are generally more willing to pay an extra amount for maternity leave than to offer more time. Findings regarding paternity leave show that fostering increased participation by men in family care is a popular theme in European companies. This is particularly true of Swedish, Austrian, German and Irish companies, which promote job-protected paternity leave arrangements.

In sum, countries can be classified into low, medium and high performers in the field of work-life balance practices. The low performers are Italy, Portugal and Belgium, the medium performers are Germany, Finland, Greece, Austria and France, and the high performers are Denmark, Ireland, the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. The findings show that Denmark, Ireland and Sweden play a major role in the adoption of work-life balance practices and policies. These findings confirm earlier studies which found that Denmark and Sweden have highly-developed social ser-

vices facilitating work and family life (Julkunen, 1992, Nordic Council of Minister, 1994).

### **Women's participation in the workforce in European companies**

On average, women in all countries hold 40% of full-time jobs, 32% of management positions and 20% of executive positions. These findings follow similar studies, which indicate that women hold nearly half of all jobs. While women have increased their numbers in management positions, they have made only few inroads into senior executive positions (Davidson & Burke, 2000; McGregor, 2002; Vinnicombe, 2000; Singh & Vinnicombe, 2003; Catalyst 2000, 2003, 2004; Stroh et al. 1992).

The findings reveal (1) national differences for women's participation in the work force and (2) national differences for the degree of vertical segregation by gender. Scholars consider various contextual factors are responsible for these national differences. They claim that the extent to which a country is committed to a welfare state system has implications for female and male role models and hence for the gender division of labour (Julkunen, 1992). They classify nations into countries with a conservative social structure (Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria), the Mediterranean group of countries (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Southern Italy, Ireland), modern Nordic welfare states (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) and countries with a liberal social structure (UK).

Crompton et. al. (1999) and Lewis (1992) derive distinct family and gender roles from these welfare state models. Accordingly, southern and western European countries are primary based on men as breadwinners and women as carers. Thus, women's participation in the labour force should be low. Our findings confirm this assumption – women's participation in the workforce is below average in these countries, with Germany and Italy ranking lowest in this respect. The traditional role model of women as homemakers seems to have lingered within these countries.

However, findings for Spain and Portugal contradict this assumption, showing an above-average proportion of women in the workforce. An explanation for this phenomenon might be that the traditional family model in some southern and western European countries has been replaced by a dual earner/female part-time carer model. Given that men's incomes are now insufficient to support a family may indicate that many women are now forced to work on a part-time basis (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). Women have little choice but to join the workforce in low-wage earning countries such as Spain and Portugal.

In contrast, Nordic countries such as Finland, Sweden and Denmark have a high proportion of women in the workforce. A reason for this might lie in the fact that Nordic countries adopt a dual earner/dual carer or State carer model (Crompton et al, 1999). They do not build on the assumption that women act only as mothers. There are also policies in place to actively involve and encourage women to work in order to redress chronic labour shortages (Melkas & Anker, 1997). Furthermore, the combination of a strong public child care sector and policies that encourage fathers to take over the carer role might help women to take jobs.

### **Vertical Segregation by Gender in European Companies**

Findings show that women have made great strides in the job market. Nevertheless, their increased employment has not reduced vertical gender segregation within organisational hierarchy. There is a strong tendency for men and women to be employed in different hierarchical positions. On average women, for all countries, hold 32% of manager positions and only 20% of executive positions.

Countries ranking above the average for women managers are France, Austria, Spain, Sweden, UK, Ireland and Finland, whereas countries ranking below the average are Germany, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal. The proportion of executive positions filled by women is also above average in Finland, the UK, Ireland, France, Greece and Italy and below average for Portugal, Denmark, Spain, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

Nearly all countries show normal differences between management positions and executive positions held by women. Except for Austria, UK, Ireland and Germany, there was a big gap between the percentage of female managers and female executives. In the case of Austria, women hold 39% of manager positions but only 15% of the executive positions. This might indicate a strong male-biased corporate culture hindering women's advancement. Another explanation might be that well-educated women do not stay long enough in the pipeline to be selected for executive positions in these countries.

Although Italy and Greece are traditionally based on the model of men as breadwinners and women as carers, they show high percentages of women executives. This may be explained by the fact that these countries lack well-educated employees. Therefore well-qualified women are in high demand. In addition, these countries are known for their strong family structure and cheap domestic services, both of which lighten the burden of childcare and household tasks. This in turn may make it easier for women to spend more time on their jobs and strive harder for career success.

Even though Germany, Austria and the Netherlands have high rates of women university graduates, they have the lowest share of women in executive positions. It seems that these countries still retain the traditional gender roles in which men are expected to be the breadwinners and women to be housewives. This suggests that stereotyping based on gender may be higher in these countries, affecting selection, performance evaluation, training procedures and overall corporate cultures. As a result, women are put in less strategic positions. Moreover, these countries are known for their lack of State support in child caring which can penalise women in their careers.

In comparison to other European countries, Nordic countries such as Finland, Sweden and Denmark do not, contrary to expectations, possess significantly higher percentages of management and executive positions filled by women. Even though they serve as an example to other European countries in implementing gender equality policies, study findings do not show women to be much better represented in management and executive positions. Melkas & Anker, (1997) consider gender-

based occupational segregation in Nordic countries to be responsible for women's low presence in management. According to them, women in Nordic countries normally work in typical female-dominated occupations, which lack the potential to promote them into higher management positions.

Findings for France show a high percentage of women managers and a high percentage of women executives in companies. In fact, France ranks first for the proportion of women in executive positions (34%). Hence, one might conclude that France's strong public child care sector and its long school days seem to be extremely successful in promoting women's career advancement.

### **Do Work-life Balance Practices and Policies Enhance Women's Progression into Senior Management?**

A multiple regression analysis was performed to verify the hypothesis. Based on a correlation analysis, two independent variables (paternity leave and childcare benefits) were excluded from the multiple regression analysis in advance. Some work-life balance practices clearly show significant results. These are additional pay for maternity and paternity leave, flexitime and the existence of a code of conduct. Nevertheless, the hypothesis was only confirmed for the offering of additional pay for maternity leave. All other practices are negatively related to the percentage of women in senior executive positions.

## **DISCUSSION**

The first part of this study has shown that there are certain differences in the provision of work-life balance practices and women's participation in the labour force among European companies. On an overall European level companies' involvement with work-life balance initiatives seems to be quite high. Most of the companies are celebrating gender differences emphasizing cultural awareness and diversity training in order to foster increased tolerance. In an attempt to eliminate structural barriers on women's advancement they launched work-family practices such as: flexitime; shorter working hours; job sharing; tele-working; child care services; and special maternity

leave arrangements. On the country level, involvement differs based on a country's gender equality policies, its welfare state system, family formation policies, a State's support on public child care and gender ideologies.

In terms of females' participation in the work force findings reveal (1) national differences for women's participation in the work force and (2) national differences for the degree of vertical segregation by gender. Various contextual factors are responsible for these national differences. Some countries are still following typical female and male role models whereas other countries, due to economical pressures in wage decline, challenge typical gender roles. In some countries it seems that strong gender stereotypes are still holding females back from senior management positions. In others, females are still working in typically female-dominated occupations, which lack the potential to promote women into higher management positions.

The second part of this study attempted to analyse the influence of work-life balance policies and practices on women's career advancement into senior management positions. Findings show that the hypothesis was confirmed in only one case - the payment of an additional amount for maternity leave. All other practices were shown to have no significant impact or a significant negative relationship. What do these findings tell us? First of all, they raise doubts concerning the effectiveness of practices within these organisations given that they seem to do very little to advance women's careers. What might be the reason for the ineffectiveness of such measures? Are they ineffective *per se* or because they are implemented in an organisational environment that discourages women from availing themselves of such practices?

Earlier studies have shown that the implementation of policies and practices does not guarantee people make use of them (Allen, 2001). A reason might be that workplaces still inherit underlying work assumptions that are strongly male-biased (Lewis, 2001) and career advancement still follows a typical male career model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Consequently women are afraid of using work-life balance practices because they fear they may lose credibility and be forced back into a purely mothering role (Schwartz, F.N., 1989) with all the negative career consequences (such as slow promotion and financial penalties) this entails (Swiss &

Walker, 1993). Indeed, women executives pointed to an exclusionary corporate culture as the primary barrier to women's advancement (Ragins et al., 1998; Schwartz, 1996; Kolb, 1998).

Even though some studies have shown that women take advantage of work-family initiatives (Burke, 2001; Shapiro & Blake-Beard, 2007), in practice initiatives often fail because organisations have not given enough attention to underlying social processes at work (Kottke & Agars, 2005). It seems that the success of work-family policies is dependent on how they are perceived by organisational members of both men and women (Kottke & Agars, 2005).

Hence, offering work-family policies alone does not necessarily change informal social practices and traditional corporate values. In order to do so an increasing number of scholars point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of policies to a change in the actual organisational culture (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002, Lewis, 1997, 2001, Thompson et al, 1999). The development of a family-friendly organisational culture which supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives becomes a necessity for reducing work-family mismatch (Thompson et al, 2005). In order to create a work-family friendly culture which fosters females career advancement, companies have to re-examine the definition of the ideal worker, the definition of commitment, and challenging norms around when work gets done (Shapiro & Blake-Beard, 2007).

New approaches for companies committed to the advancement and retention of women include: redesign of work and reward systems, making top management accountable for the advancement and turnover rates of women, and providing family-friendly practices in a family-friendly work environment (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Crucial in this sense is the transition from typical male career models towards the acceptance of alternative career paths, including opportunities to "opt out" and "opt-back-in" after career interruption for all employees (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

## CONCLUSION

There has been little research on the impact of work-life balance practices and policies on women's career advancement. This study attempts to redress this dearth by examining the role of work-life balance practices on women's career advancement. It reveals European companies' efforts to enhance a gender-equitable workplace by implementing work-life balance programmes. However, it also shows that European companies still need to review their organisational cultures in order to make these practices a successful tool for advancing women's careers.

The findings must be interpreted in the light of the study's limitations. First, one should bear in mind that the sample for this study is based on a best company competition where firms were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. The study analysed companies that were nominated as the best companies to work for in terms of work climate in each European country. Therefore conclusions should only be drawn for similar types of companies. A consequence of this sampling procedure is small variances in the independent and dependent variable; only a certain kind of company was selected. Nevertheless, companies in the sample differ in company size and represent different sectors.

A second limitation is the use of cross-sectional data, which limits the possibility of testing for causal linkages. The study did not assess when the practices were introduced and which women actually make use of them. This is essential if one is to correctly infer the role played by work-life balance practices in advancing women's careers. Future research should overcome this limitation by applying a longitudinal design. Moreover, a wider sample should be used for hypothesis testing.

In general, future research should not only measure work-life balance practices in drawing conclusions on women's career advancement. The study demonstrates the need to paint a complete picture that includes underlying work assumptions, corporate values and work-life balance practices in order to detect their impact on women's career advancement.

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## 2.3 General Conclusion of Research Paper I

Findings of research paper I question the effectiveness of work-family practices in helping females in their career advancement. European companies are offering numerous work-family practices but its effect on females' career advancement has been found rather limited. It seems that the formal availability of work-family practices alone has no impact without being embedded in a work-family culture. Therefore, future research should not only consider work-family practices in drawing conclusions on females' career advancement. Results demonstrate the need to paint a more complete picture that includes existing underlying work assumptions, corporate values and work-family practices, in order to detect an impact on a female's career advancement.

Generally, a focus should be put on an organisation's work-family culture. An increasing number of scholars point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of work-family practices to a change in the actual organisational culture (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Lewis, 1997, 2001; Thompson et al, 1999). According to Lewis (2001), work-family practices often do not become part of a central strategic policy, and hence do not change traditional male work values that are still deeply embedded in most organisations. In addition, they often stay highly gendered with the perception as being largely policies for females (Lewis & Cooper, 1996). This has the danger of reinforcing family obligations as a female responsibility, and minimizes the impact of work-family initiatives on female-'s' career advancement.

As traditional assumptions about the separation of work-life and personal life no longer hold, practitioners and researchers point out the importance of a change in organisational culture in order to make organisations more family-friendly. They urge companies to invest in awareness training that includes information about family-friendly measures and behaviour, and the beneficial effects of a family-friendly atmosphere. In addition, they advise companies to promote a work-family culture, in which HR strategies and policies are designed on a more long-term basis. HR practices still often have a short-term perspective, that are likely to have negative implications for an employee's well-being and family life. In addition, typical organisational

career patterns are linear and progressive and ignore individual life cycles, and assume that managers are male (Guillaume & Pochic, 2007). They require an intense working involvement between the ages of 25 to 35 when especially females are likely to have children and family constraints.

Companies should also try to change the long-working-hours' culture (the underlying norms and attitudes associated with working-time expectations). They should ask themselves whether hours spent visibly at the workplace are strictly necessary and are a real sign of commitment and productivity (Bailyn 1993; Lewis & Taylor, 1996, Schein, 1999).

In sum, raising awareness of the need for a change in organisational culture in which employees' well-being is emphasized (Goodman et al., 2002; Peterson & Wilson, 2002; Sparrow, 2001) should become a clear priority. In fact, evidence has shown that a work-family culture improves the psychosocial well-being of employees (Flynn & Chatman, 2001; Goodman et al., 2001; Van Vianen, 2000, Premeaux et al. 2007). With regards to females' career advancement, a poor work-family culture can discourage women from pursuing a management career. The non-existence of a work-family culture forces female managers, which do want to have a work-family balance, decide not to opt for a management career.

With regards to work-family practices the non existence of a work-family culture often remains a crucial factor in limiting the uptake and in turn the potential impact of work-family practices (Lewis, 1997). A study of fathers found that the existence of a work-family culture increased a male's likelihood of taking parental leave (Haas et al, 2002). When their work groups were perceived to be flexible and adaptive in responding to fathers' desire to take time off to care for children, they were more likely to take leave. In addition, fathers took more days of leave, when work groups evaluated employee-s' performance on results rather than time on task.

All this research demonstrates that the concept of work-family culture plays an important role in the work-family literature. Nevertheless, the knowledge of what creates and maintains a supportive work-family culture is quite limited (Thompson et al., 2005). Therefore, future research should begin focusing on what contributes to a supportive work-family culture.

### **3 The role of top managers in creating work-family cultures: a theoretical framework**

#### **3.1 General Introduction to Research Paper II**

A crucial element in making employees feel comfortable in taking advantage of work-family practices and improve work-family mismatch is the existence of a work-family culture. A work-family culture is defined as the “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees work and family lives” (Thompson et al., 1999, p.394). Companies can reinforce this culture through many ways. Scholars believe that it is a top-down approach in which powerful champions within the company (i.e., a high-ranking executive or CEO) raise awareness and state their responsibility toward employees’ families (Campbell Clark, 2001; Wang et al., 2007). Research by the Families and Work Institute suggests that the development of US company work-family programs depends on heavy support from top management (Galinsky et al., 1991).

In fact, managers as supervisors have been found to play an important and influential role in creating work-family cultures (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Managers with a family-friendly mindset can actively try to challenge existing underlying work assumptions. On an individual level they give managerial support to subordinates on family-related issues, and proactively eliminate negative career consequences associated with devoting time to family related needs. On an organisational level they promote the availability of benefits and raise work-life balance issues inside internal meetings etc. In addition, they can encourage employees to use work-family practices, and actively judge employees' performance on the basis of output and not just “face time”.

Considering the influential role of top managers and supervisors it becomes important to know how they view the promotion of a work-family culture (Thompson et al., 2005). Do they consider it an important aspect of strategically managing the organisation? What can be expected of these top managers? Do they perceive that

they have a role in advancing work-family issues? Do they speak up and take actions towards a more family-friendly work environment?

Research paper II concentrates on the development of a conceptual model of female top managers' behaviour towards promoting work-family cultures. The model is inspired by Aizen's theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The decision to use the theory of planned behaviour is rooted in the fact that it constitutes an integrative model considering both the individual's attitude towards performing certain behaviour and the environment in which the action takes place. As female top manager's' behaviour is influenced not only by their attitudes but also by other top management team (TMT) members, the theory represents a useful tool explaining female's' behaviour in TMTs. First propositions are proposed.

Research paper II was presented at the European Academy of Management Conference, Paris 2007 and the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Philadelphia 2007. Both conferences are peer reviewed conferences. The full paper has to be sent.

### **3.2 Research Paper II: Explaining and predicting females behaviour in top management teams: Applying Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Companies implemented numerous practices in order to improve the work-life balance of their employees. Nevertheless, studies have shown that the implementation of these practices did not always guarantee success. Scholars point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of practices to the development of a family-friendly work culture. A question that arises relates to the role female top managers play regarding the promotion and creation of such family-friendly work cultures. Do they see themselves responsible for promoting family-friendly work environments? How do they articulate their attitude towards the promotion of a family-friendly work culture inside the top management team? This paper presents a conceptual model which explains the behaviour of females in top management teams, specifically their speaking up for work-family integration. Factors and the cognitive structure that influence female top managers to promote a family-friendly work culture will be discussed.

Keywords:

Females in Top Management Teams, Work-Family Culture, Work-Life Balance

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, companies have introduced numerous practices in order to improve the work-life balance of their employees. They adopted practices such as flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, childcare services and special maternity leave arrangements. The reasons for this stem not only from public pressure (Ingram & Simon, 1995), but also in the increased belief of companies that such practices raise employee satisfaction; the work ethics and motivation (Friedman, 1992); reduce absenteeism and staff turnover rates (Galinsky & Stein, 1990); elevate satisfaction with the balance between work and family (Ezra & Deckman, 1996); and diminish work-family conflict (Goff et al., 1990) and related stress (Johnson, 1995).

Nevertheless, other studies have shown that the implementation of practices does not guarantee that people make use of them (Allen, 2001). A reason might be that workplaces still inherit underlying work assumptions that are strongly male-biased (Lewis, 2001). Consequently, employees are afraid of using work-life balance practices because they fear they may lose credibility with all the negative career consequences (such as slow promotion and financial penalties) that this entails (Swiss & Walker, 1993). It seems offering work-life balance practices does not necessarily change informal practices and traditional corporate values. In order to do so, an increasing number of scholars point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of practices to a change in organisational culture (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002, Lewis, 1997, 2001, Thompson et al, 1999). The development of a family-friendly organisational culture that supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives becomes a necessity for reducing work-family mismatch (Thompson et al, 2005).

Because top managers are the key actors in implementing new organisational cultures (Schein, 1985; Smirnich & Morgan, 1982; Tichy & Ulrich, 1984), it becomes important to consider how they view the promotion of a family-friendly culture (Thompson et al., 2005). Do they consider it an important aspect of strategically managing the organisation? An especially interesting question that arises relates to the role female top managers play regarding the promotion and creation of a family-friendly

work culture. In the last decades more and more companies have added females to their top management teams (TMT) (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2003) in order to bring different and valuable perspectives to their decision-making process (Cox, Lobel & McLeod, 1991; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Studies have shown that these females have different views, values, and ways to express and to communicate their opinion (Burke, 1994, Mattis, 1993, McGregor et al., 1997).

Based on the process suggested by social contact theory (Kanter, 1977, Blau, 1977), as the percentage of women in top management increases, female managers should be better able to form coalitions and exert political influence. Hence, it is apparent to assume that new patterns are emerging in TMTs. But what can be expected of these female top managers? Do they perceive having a role to advance work-life balance issues in TMTs? Do they assume responsibility as change agents for other employees in the corporation? Do they speak up and take actions towards a more family-friendly work environment?

In order to answer these questions it becomes central to look at female top manager's' perceived importance of this topic. As members of TMTs shape and articulate their attitudes and values through an ongoing process of group interaction, it becomes also necessary to address the influence of group dynamics on female top manager's' behaviour. The fact that females in most TMTs hold a token status might influence their forming of attitudes and opinions and in turn their behaviour. So far, less attention has been dedicated to this topic. Explaining behaviour of females in TMTs in general and specifically their speaking up for work-family integration remains under-researched. Consequently, future research is necessary to better understand, predict and facilitate the circumstances in which women's support for work-life integration is likely to occur.

This paper tries to develop a model which describes female manager's taking action towards the promotion of a family-friendly work culture in TMTs. Although either male or female decision-makers can actively pursue work-family related issues, this paper studies only the role of female top managers. This is mainly rooted in the fact that women are expected to face work-life balance issues more often than men. Although family responsibilities are nowadays more balanced between females and

males, females are still the main person in charge of caring for children, the elderly, and carrying out household tasks (Fredrikson-Goldsen & Schlarlach 2001; Cinamon & Rich, 2002). European women were found to spend on average about four times as much time as men on caring tasks (Plantenga & Hansen, 1999). Many females are thus forced to juggle multiple family and work demands and have to deal with family issues, even when it interferes with their jobs (Hochschild, 1997, Pleck, 1977, Newell, 1993). Especially female top managers feel isolated at work and experience greater strain than their male counterparts (Davidson & Cooper, 1992). Therefore the research question goes as follow:

What are the factors and the cognitive structure that influence female top managers to promote a work-family culture?

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Research on females in top management teams**

Most of the research on female top managers is of a descriptive nature, monitoring women's under representation in TMTs in different countries (Burke & Mattis, 2000, McGregor, 2002; Singh & Vinnicombe, 2003, Heidrick & Struggles, 1993; Sheridan, 2001) and their demographic characteristics (Helfat et al, 2006, Mattis, 2000, 1993; Burgess & Tharenous, 2000). Studies on behavioural characteristics of females in TMTs focus mainly on their leadership styles (Rosener, 1990, 1995; Powell, 1993; Eagle & Johnson, 1990; Harriman, 1996), their motivation of networking and communication styles (Tannen, 1995) and their decision-making (Powell & Ansic, 1997, Carter et al., 1997).

Another research line focussed on studying the impact of females on organisational outcomes. A growing body of research started investigating the benefits that accrue to business through utilising the skills and experiences of females (Cassell, 1997, Blum et al, 1994). Researchers claim that being more open to the contribution of females at the top could add value through females' distinctive set of skills (Daily et

al. 1999, Green & Cassell, 1996, Thomas, 1990). Having both a gender and a personality mixture seemed to enable a group to come up with more innovative solutions (Bilimoria, 2000, Cox & Blake, 1991) because gender diverse work groups are more likely to consider a variety of different viewpoints, belief systems, and networks to work (Cox et al., 1991, Thomas & Ely, 1996).

A research stream yet relatively rare deals with female top managers' impact on a firm's involvement with activities related to corporate social responsibility. Research examined females' impact on different components of corporate social responsibility such as corporate philanthropy (Ibrahim, & Angelidis, 1994; Wang & Coffey, 1992; Williams, 2003) and women's issues (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003; Mattis, 1993; Burke, 1994, McGregor et al., 1997). Studies in Canada (Burke, 1994), the US (Maddock, 1999, Mattis, 1993) and in New Zealand (McGregor et al., 1997) demonstrated strong support that female managers are sensitive to equal opportunities issues acting as change agents.

However, in Canada and New Zealand there were fewer females who indicated that they had actively introduced women's issues for discussion in TMTs than those who only agreed that they feel responsible to address these issues. An even greater divergence existed between females who have opened discussion and those who believe that these issues are appropriate for TMTs' agendas. Contradictory, current investigation undertaken in Australia found that the majority of female top managers were not actively promoting changes themselves and therefore could not be considered as change agents (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003).

The only studies which explain the contextual factors females attend to when considering raising gender issues are those by Dutton et al (2002) and Ashford et al. (1998). They analysed under what conditions female managers raise and promote gender equity issues in their work organisation. It was found that the most potent factor affecting willingness to sell gender equity issues was exclusiveness of organisational culture. In other words, in contexts where females experience less exclusion, females will expect to be more successful and will therefore be more encouraged to raise gender equity issues in their organisation.

Based on the process suggested by social contact theory (Kanter, 1977, Blau, 1977), as the percentage of women in lower and middle level management positions increases, female managers should be better able to form coalitions and exert political influence. As women become a more and more powerful group within a firm, they should be able to encourage the introduction of HR practices that will be useful in addressing work-life issues.

### **TOWARDS A MODEL OF FEMALES BEHAVIOUR IN TOP MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

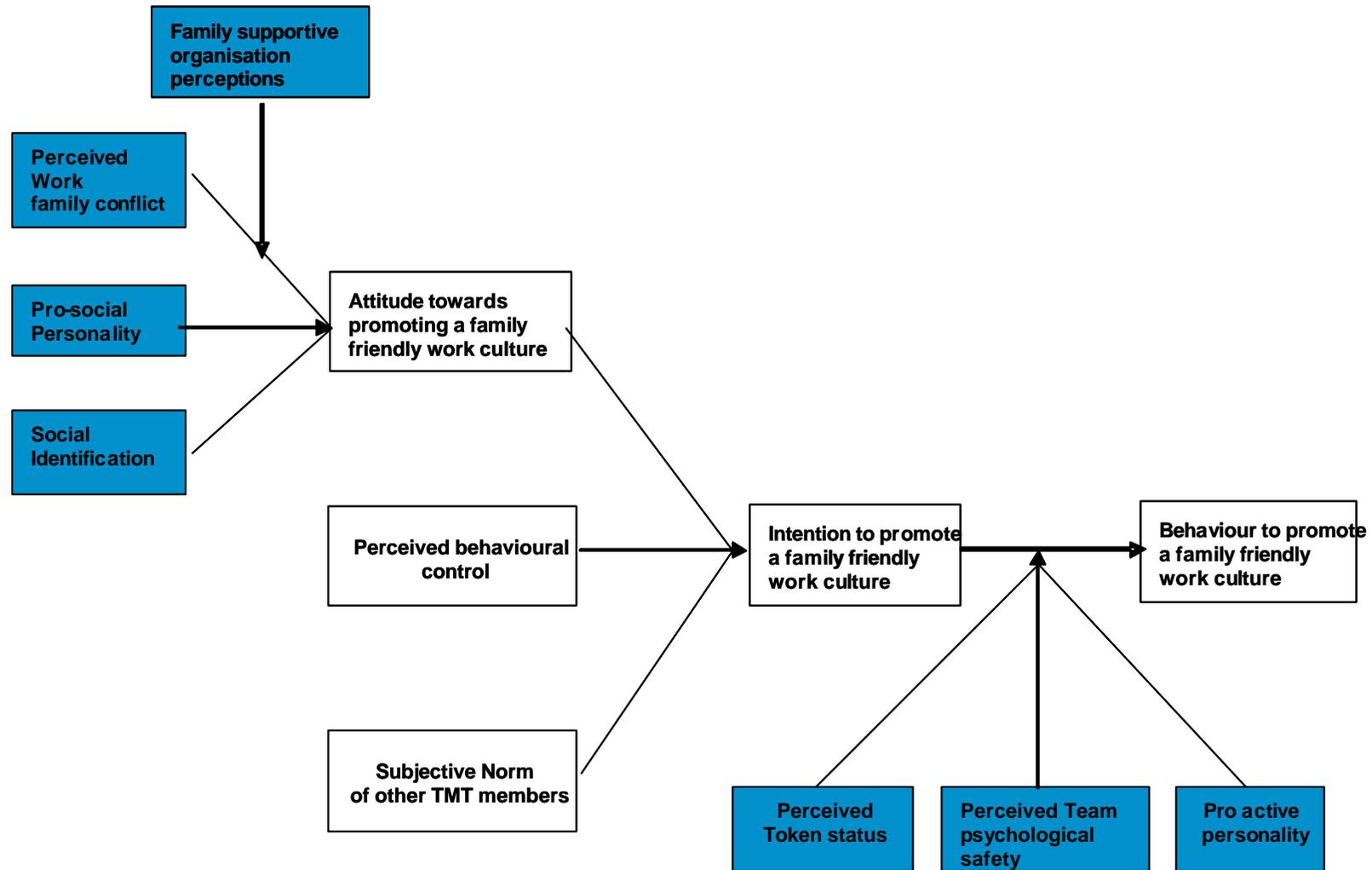
Various researchers believe that top managers play a key role in developing organisational culture and values (Schein, 1985, Smircich & Morgan, 1982, Tichy & Ulrich, 1984). Organisational outcomes such as strategic choices, a firm's innovativeness and performance were found to be influenced by managerial background characteristics such as age, tenure, race, socio-economic roots, functional and educational background (Hambrick & Mason's, 1984, Hambrick et al., 1996, Wiersema & Bantel, 1992, Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Nevertheless, studying the influence of top managers on organisational outcomes has to go beyond demographical variables (Priem et al., 1999) considering also their attitudes, values and beliefs. So far, only few studies measured top managers' attitudes and values and related them to organisational outcomes. These studies found top managers' attitudes and values to be the most important factors affecting their opinion towards the effectiveness of diversity management (Morrison, 1992) and taking action in the development of organisation's affirmative action programs (Blanchard, 1989).

Besides considering values, attitudes and beliefs in explaining top managers' impact on a firm's outcomes, it becomes also necessary to address the influence of the whole top management team. Members of TMTs shape and articulate their attitudes and values through an ongoing process of group interaction. Therefore studies also have to take TMT dynamics into account.

The following model explains women's behaviour in TMTs towards taking action in the promotion of a family-friendly work culture (Figure 1). The model has its origin in Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour and is adapted to the context of females in TMTs by adding new variables (Ajzen, 1991). According to the theory of planned behaviour, human action is guided by the attitude towards the behaviour, beliefs about the normative expectations of others and motivation to comply with these expectations, and control beliefs that may facilitate or impede performance of the behaviour. In combination, these components lead to a behavioural intention which is assumed to be the immediate antecedent of behaviour.

The decision using the theory of planned behaviour is rooted in the fact that it constitutes an integrative model considering both the individual's attitude towards performing certain behaviour and the environment in which the action takes place. As female top managers' behaviour is influenced not only by their attitudes but also by other TMTs members, the theory represents a useful tool to explain women's behaviour in TMTs. Moreover, by measuring the contribution of attitudes, subjective norms, perceptions of behavioural control and behavioural intention someone can gain insight into the underlying cognitive foundation in a given population at a given point in time.

**FIGURE 1: Factors and cognitive structure that influence female top managers to promote a family-friendly work culture**



## **BASIC MODEL COMPONENTS**

### **Attitudes as a determinant of women's behavioural intentions**

According to Ajzen a person's attitude determines his or her behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes in the literature are defined as an index to which a person favours or disfavours a particular entity (Olson & Zanna, 1993). A person's salient beliefs about the behaviour and the perceived expected outcomes determine his or her attitude (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). Thus, female top managers create an attitude in favour or disfavour of a family-friendly work culture depending on their beliefs, whether supporting work-life integration is important or not. This created attitude in turn influences their behavioural intention to take action in the promotion of a family-friendly work culture.

*Proposition 1a: The behavioural intention to promote a family-friendly work culture is determined by the attitude towards the promotion of a family-friendly work culture.*

### **Subjective norms and perceived behavioural control as determinants of women's behavioural intentions**

As individual decisions towards behaviour are not made in a social vacuum, it is also necessary to deal with the influence of the environment on a person's behavioural intention. Former studies have found that the cognitive activity of individuals is strongly affected by how they see the social environment in which they find themselves (Levine et al, 1993). The social environment consists of other individuals who exert social pressure and influences on the decision process. In the case of female top managers this could be, for example, other top managers, the CEO or the board.

The theory of reasoned action considers this social influence in the construct of subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). Subjective norms are the product of an individual's belief about the approval or disapproval of important others towards the behaviour, and the individual's motivation to comply with the views of these. Subjective norms determine a person's intention to behave.

*Proposition 1b: The behavioural intention to promote a family-friendly work culture is determined by female top managers' subjective norms.*

As many behaviours pose difficulties of execution, it is useful to consider perceived behavioural control in addition to intention. Perceived behavioural control captures people's confidence that they are capable of performing the behaviour under investigation.

*Proposition 1c: The behavioural intention to promote a family-friendly work culture is determined by female top managers' perceived behavioural control.*

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF EXTERNAL VARIABLES**

Ajzen (1991) does not attempt to explain behaviour by referring to external variables such as personality traits, demographic variables or attitude towards the target, although does not deny that these variables can affect behaviour indirectly. External variables are related to certain behaviour if they are related to one or more of the variables specified by their theory. However, external variables are not expected to have such reliable effects as the main variables of the model. An external variable can be related to a given behaviour in one time, but not related to it in some other time due to a contextual change in which the behaviour takes place.

Studies which introduced external variables such as personality traits, demographic variables and positions towards classes of individuals, institutions and policies illustrate that additional variables significantly improved the prediction of behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 1999, Sparks & Guthrie, 1998). For example, Harland et al. (1999) and Manstead (2000) demonstrated improved prediction of behaviour with the addition of personal or moral norms. Meanwhile, variables of personality traits improved the prediction of behaviour (Courneya et al, 1999), the addition of demographic variables did not (Albarracin et al, 1997). Even though Fishbein & Ajzen

claim that improvements were only of minor character, this study argues that the inclusion of external variables will add significant explanation to the phenomenon of females in TMTs.

**The importance of external variables in predicting females' behaviour: the case of work-family conflict and family supportive organisation support.**

During a person's life, experiences lead to the formation of many different beliefs and attitudes about various objects, actions and events (Mc Guire, 1969). Experiences are made through affective, cognitive and behavioural information gained from the environment in which someone is living (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Along their career path female top managers have made experiences related to work and family life. Hence, it can be assumed that female managers own work-life experience may have an influence on their attitude towards the promotion of a family-friendly work culture. In fact, female supervisors were found to be more attuned to workers work-life issues than were males (Lightner & Mc Conatha, 1995). The degree of perceived work-family conflict may serve as an indicator of female managers' experiences, and may explain their adapted attitude towards the promotion of a family-friendly work culture. A strong perceived work-family conflict might explain a strong positive attitude towards taking action, whereas a weak perceived work-family conflict a weak positive attitude.

*Proposition 2a: The perceived work-family conflict will be related to the attitude towards promoting a family-friendly work culture.*

Interestingly there are some female managers who do not feel responsible for helping other employees to overcome problems related to work and family (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003). This may occur due to the fact that theses females were not exposed to work-family problems or they were exposed but perceived a lack in organisational support. Female managers who did not receive organisational support such as a caring supervisor or flexible work arrangements may not see the importance why

other females should obtain it. As a consequence females who were faced sink or swim environments and had to do the juggling by themselves may develop a negative attitude towards promoting a family-friendly work culture. They rather believe that it is up to each female to figure it out for themselves. Hence, family supportive organisation perceptions should be considered as a moderator of the relation between work-family conflict and the attitude towards taking action.

*Proposition 2b: Family supportive organisation perceptions will moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and the attitude towards promoting a family-friendly work culture.*

### **The importance of external variables in predicting female's behaviour: the case of social identification**

The attitude towards the behaviour can also be determined by the general attitude female top managers hold towards the employees in need of care (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). This general attitude in turn, may be influenced by how strongly female managers identify with these employees. It was found that perceived common group membership increases helping behaviour towards members of ones own group (Hewstone et al, 2002, Mullen et al, 1992). Group self-enhancement motives promote group solidarity, cooperation and support (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). Hence, it can be assumed that females compose their attitude towards employees in need depending on their perceived group membership. Female top managers bearing strong relations to employees in need may create an attitude in favour of them. Consequently, they may be more attuned to help improving employees' work-life balance. In fact, in a study by Dutton et al. (1998) it was found that female managers who identified with other females have shown a stronger willingness to sell gender equity issues than those who did not.

*Proposition 3: Social identification will be related to the attitude towards promoting a family-friendly work culture.*

## **The importance of external variables in predicting female's behaviour: the case of a pro social personality**

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) personality traits can explain behavioural categories. In fact, personality traits have been found to influence helping behaviour or, in other words, prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg et al, 2002, Penner, 2002). Prosocial behaviour represents a broad category of acts that is defined as generally beneficial to others (Penner et al, 2005). The behaviour of female top managers constitutes a prosocial behaviour; the promotion of a family-friendly work culture in favour of employees. Thus, it can be assumed that personality traits explain parts of females' behaviour. People classified as having a prosocial orientation show greater empathic concern and altruistic motivation to improve the common good (van Lange et al, 1997). Traits that are related to a prosocial personality are "helpfulness" and "other oriented empathy" such as a sense of responsibility and a tendency to empathy (Penner et al, 1995). Scholars have found significant results between these personality traits and prosocial actions such as helping towards co-workers and the organisation (Eisenberg et al, 2002, Unger & Thummuluri, 1997).

*Proposition 4: A prosocial personality will be related to the attitude towards promoting a family-friendly work culture.*

## **The relation between behavioural intention and actual behaviour**

According to Aizen (1991) behavioural intentions might turn into behaviour. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances behavioural intentions are not necessarily turned into actual behaviour. Female managers may hold positive behavioural intentions towards taking action but factors are blocking the actual realization. Reasons for this to occur can include long passages of time between decision and action or countervailing temptations (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). Moreover females may lack energy, interest and persistency supporting other employees in their companies.

### **Perceived Token Status:**

A factor that may moderate the relation between behavioural intention and behaviour is the token status of females in TMTs. Females in predominantly male groups attract more attention from others (Lord & Saenz, 1985). Being aware of different characteristics (Cota & Dion, 1986) can in turn distract women from performing their intentions (Lord & Saenz, 1985). Especially raising work-family concerns, a typically feminine topic in a male dominated group, may hold females back from taking action. To reduce their visibility or to lessen perceived differences and stereotyping by men, studies have shown that female top managers often exhibit male values and behaviour rather than female values (Rosener, 1995a). In fact, female managers were found to lead in ways that were more masculine than feminine (Gardiner & Tigge-mann, 1999, Kanter, 1977) and in some cases even more stereotypically masculine than the male (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

*Proposition 5: The relation between behavioural intentions and the actual behaviour to promote a family-friendly work culture is moderated by the perceived token status.*

### **Perceived Team Psychological Safety:**

Another factor which may influence the relation is perceived team psychological safety. Team psychological safety involves an interpersonal climate in which a person will not be embarrassed, rejected or punished for speaking up (Edmondson, 1999). It enables team members to contribute observations, ideas and knowledge. Female top managers may not feel psychologically safe to raise work-family related issues in the TMT. In fact, senior executives reported a risk of being purged from the company for saying the wrong thing (Edmondson, 2002).

*Proposition 6: The relation between behavioural intentions and the actual behaviour to promote a family-friendly work culture is moderated by the perceived team psychological safety.*

**Proactive personality:**

A proactive personality may also moderate the relation between behavioural intentions and actual behaviour. Proactive persons are considered to take personal initiative in a broad range of activities and situations. The proactive personality has been characterized as someone who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces and who affects environmental change.

*Proposition 7: The relation between behavioural intentions and the actual behaviour to promote a family-friendly work culture is moderated by the degree of a proactive personality.*

**RESEARCH MOTIVATION**

As the number of females in TMTs rises, a better understanding of the dynamics of women's behaviour seems justifiable and necessary. In fact, some surveys point out that the issue of women's representation in decision-making roles is an increasingly important topic in the US and in Europe. However, there has been less research undertaken in behavioural aspects of females in TMTs. Furthermore, less attention has been given to female top managers experiences raising work-family issues in TMTs. Given the life experiences of most women, the likelihood of systems change increases. Hence, this study tries to support research that contributes to a better understanding of females in TMTs, in order to help companies understand how and what profile of women can possibly lead in implementing a family-friendly work culture.

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## **4 The role of female managers in creating work-family cultures: an empirical analysis**

### **4.1 General Introduction to Research Paper III**

Leaders, managers and supervisors are seen as key figures in creating and influencing organisational culture (Isaac & Pitt, 2001; Schein, 1990, 1999). In addition, they are also important providers of social support and may, therefore, be able to reduce the work-family mismatch of their employees (Allen, 2001; Galinsky & Stein, 1990).

Research paper III outlines a revised version of the conceptual model discussed in research paper II. Model revision was inspired by Prof. Ronald Burke and Prof. Hazel Rosin during my stay at Schulich School of Business, Toronto. The revised conceptual model offers a novel explanation of female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues. Hypotheses testing gives insight into the factors and the cognitive structure that influence female managers to promote a work-family culture. Work-family conflict, perceived organisational family support, perceived supervisory family support, transformational leadership, perceived token status, social identification and proactive personality will be related to females' behaviour to promote work-family cultures.

Research paper III was presented at the European Academy of Management Conference, Ljubljana 2008 and was accepted for presentation in the ISSWOV Meeting, Singapore 2008. The EURAM conference is a peer reviewed conference. The full paper has to be sent.

## **4.2 Research Paper III: Creating work-family cultures: the role of female managers as change agents**

### **ABSTRACT**

Scholars point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of work-family practices to the development of work-family cultures. This is because a supportive work-family culture increases the likelihood that employees will feel comfortable using work-family practices without worrying about negative career consequences. Research on what contributes to a work-family culture is rather limited. Some findings suggest that management support towards the creation of a work-family culture becomes a necessity. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of leadership, particularly the role of female leadership, regarding the promotion of work-family cultures. Do female managers see themselves responsible for promoting work-family cultures? A conceptual model will be tested aiming to offer a novel explanation of female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues. Factors and the cognitive structure that influence female managers to promote a work-family culture will be discussed. Self-reported data was obtained from an online survey that was passed to female managers across Europe.

Keywords: Female Managers, Work-Family Culture

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade a changing workforce and changed lifestyle expectations of employees have forced companies to implement numerous practices to improve the work-life balance of their employees. Companies adopted practices such as flexitime, shorter working hours, job-sharing, tele-working, childcare services and special maternity leave arrangements (Frone, 2003). Reasons for this lie in public pressure (Ingram & Simon, 1995), but also in the increased belief of companies that such practices raise employee satisfaction; work ethics and motivation (Friedman, 1992); reduce absenteeism and staff turnover rates (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000); elevate satisfaction with the balance between work and family (Ezra & Deckman, 1996); and diminish work-family conflict (Goff et al., 1990) and related stress (Johnson, 1995).

Nevertheless, studies have shown that the implementation of work-family practices does not guarantee people make use of them (Allen, 2001; Bond et al., 1998). A reason might be that workplaces still inherit underlying work assumptions that are strongly male-biased (Lewis, 2001). Consequently, employees are afraid of using work-family practices because they fear they may lose credibility with all the negative career consequences (such as slow promotion and financial penalties) this entails (Swiss & Walker, 1993).

It seems that offering work-family practices does not necessarily change informal practices and traditional corporate values. In order to do so, an increasing number of scholars point out the importance of moving beyond the formulation of work-family practices to a change in organisational culture (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002, Lewis, 1997, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999; Allen, 2001; Batt & Valcour, 2003; Berg et al. 2003; Frye & Breugh, 2004; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). The development of a work-family culture that supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives becomes a necessity for reducing work-family mismatch (Thompson et al., 2005). In fact, work-family culture was the most strongly related factor to work-family conflict and was found to be a critical prerequisite to effectiveness and utilization of other family-related benefits (Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Frone, 2003, Thompson et al., 1999).

The knowledge of what creates and maintains a work-family culture is still limited (Thompson et al., 2005). Future research should begin focusing on what contributes to a supportive work-family culture (Thompson et al., 2005). Findings suggest that senior management support is an important factor to establish work-family cultures (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Because senior managers are the key actors in implementing new organisational cultures (Schein, 1985; Smirnich & Morgan, 1982; Tichy & Ulrich, 1984), it becomes important to consider how they view the promotion of a work-family culture (Thompson et al., 2005). Although leadership can potentially play an important role (Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al. 1999), prior research has not attempted to theoretically and empirically integrate work-family culture and leadership.

An interesting question that arises relates to the role especially female managers play regarding the promotion and creation of a work-family culture. Companies have promoted females into management positions in order to bring different and valuable perspectives to their decision-making process (Cox, Lobel & McLeod, 1991; Thomas & Ely, 1996). These females have different views, values, and ways to express and to communicate their opinion (Burke, 1994; Mattis, 1993, 2000; McGregor et al., 1997). Based on social contact theory (Kanter, 1977; Blau, 1977), as the percentage of women in management increases, female managers should be better able to form coalitions and exert political influence. It is apparent to assume that new patterns are emerging.

But what can be expected of these female managers? Do they perceive that they have a role in advancing work-family issues and work-life balance issues in their organisations? Do they assume responsibility as change agents for other employees in the corporation? In order to answer these questions it becomes central to look at female managers' perceived importance of this topic. Although either male or female decision-makers can actively pursue work-family related issues, a focus will be lead only on female managers. This is mainly rooted in the fact that females are expected to face work-family issues more often than males. Even though family responsibilities are nowadays more balanced between females and males, women are still the main person in charge of caring for children, the elderly, and carrying out household tasks (Fredrikson-Goldsen & Schlarlach, 2001; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Eby et al., 2005; Friedman & Greenhaus,

2000). A large body of literature deals with the fact that females experience higher levels of work-life conflict than males (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001), and parental status has a stronger impact on role overload, stress, and depression levels experienced more by females than by males (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Many females are thus forced to juggle family and work demands and have to deal with family issues, even when it interferes with their jobs (Hochschild, 1997; Newell, 1993). Especially female managers feel isolated at work and experience greater strain than their male counterparts (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Davidson & Cooper, 1992).

This study presents a model of the antecedents of females' proactive encouragement of work-family cultures. It sets out to examine various individual, group and organisational factors that are likely to determine whether female managers promote a work-family culture. Although Dutton et al. (2002) and Ashford et al. (1998) analyzed the conditions under which female managers raise and promote gender-equity issues, explaining the behaviour of female managers in work-family integration remains under-researched. Consequently, future research is necessary to better understand, predict and facilitate the circumstances in which female managers' support for work-family integration is likely to occur. A conceptual model will be tested aiming to offer a novel explanation of female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues, taking into account women's personal characteristics and own work-life experiences. Model variables include work-family conflict, perceived organisational family support, perceived supervisory family support, transformational leadership skills, perceived token status and proactive personality. Self-reported data was obtained from an online survey that was passed to female managers across Germany and Spain. A structural equation modelling approach is applied.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### **The role of managers in changing organisational cultures to become more family-friendly**

Managers play an important role in changing organisational cultures and values (Schein, 1985; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Tichy & Ulrich, 1984). Organisational outcomes such as strategic choices, a firm's innovativeness and performance were found to be influenced by managerial background characteristics such as age, tenure, race, socio-economic roots, functional and educational background (Hambrick & Mason's, 1984; Hambrick et al., 1996; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Some studies even went beyond demographical variables and found managers' attitudes and values to be the most important factors affecting their opinion towards the effectiveness of diversity management (Morrison, 1992) and taking action in the development of an organisation's affirmative action programs (Blanchard, 1989).

In creating work-family cultures, the involvement of managers and CEOs has been found to be crucial (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). If work-family balance is not considered a valuable issue by managers, neither work-family practices nor the existence of a work-family culture is probable. A work-family culture consists of three components: managerial support, time demands, and career consequences (Thompson et al., 1999). Time demands refer to employees' perceptions of the underlying norms dictating the organisation's expectations to work long hours and put job priorities before personal lives in order to be viewed favourably by management in the organisation. Career consequences represent the extent to which employees believe that using work-family practices are associated with negative career consequences (Thompson et al., 1999). Managerial support is the extent to which management in the organisation is perceived to be sensitive to employees' work-family demands.

Through their behaviour, managers can change a company to become more family-friendly. Thomas and Ganster (1995) defined a supportive supervisor as one who "empathizes with the employee's desire to seek balance between work and family responsibilities" (p. 7). Examples might include allowing personal calls home after a child returns from school, supporting an employee's participation in a flexible work schedule

or being understanding when an employee must occasionally leave early to pick a child up from day care. In addition, these supervisors do not make long hours or unrealistic work schedules a prerequisite to favourable career consequences, and they communicate to their employees that their careers will not be negatively affected by using work-family practices (Bragger, 2005).

In sum, managers with a family-friendly mindset can actively try to challenge existing underlying work assumptions. On an individual level they give managerial support to subordinates towards family-related issues, and proactively eliminate negative career consequences associated with devoting time to family-related needs. On an organisational level they promote the availability of benefits and raise work-family issues inside internal meetings etc.

Due to their status and power as decision-makers, managers can therefore be influential role models for other employees and can act as powerful change agents in the process of creating a work-family culture. In fact, findings suggest that for work-family practices to have greatest impact, management support is required (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Hence, organisations should make an effort to train their managers to support work-family practices, to be sympathetic to employees' need to achieve balance between work and family, and to increase their awareness of work-family issues.

In addition, previous studies indicate that managers as supervisors who are supportive when work problems arise, contribute to lower levels of emotional exhaustion (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), and similar results have been found for supervisor support with family-related issues (Leiter & Durup, 1996; Ray & Miller, 1994). Supervisor support, for example, has been found to play an important role in minimizing perceived work-family conflict (Allen, 2001). Whereas providing work-family practices alone was not associated with work-family conflict, reporting to a supportive supervisor was associated with less work-family conflict (Demerouti et al., 2001; Allen, 2001; Goff et al., 1990; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), and in turn higher work satisfaction (Thomas & Gangster, 1995), lower absenteeism (Goff, 1990), and less intention to quit (Thompson et al., 1999). Frone and Yardley (1997) found a small but statistically significant reduction in work-to-family conflict, but not family-to-work conflict. Leiter & Durup (1996), however, found

work-related support from supervisors to be significantly correlated with lower levels of both, although the relationships were modest.

In general, even the most family-friendly work places were found to be useless and counterproductive, particularly in cases where supervisors did not support employees to make use of work-family practices (Grover & Cooker, 1995; Judge & Colquit, 2004).

### **The role of female managers in enhancing work-family cultures**

Although researchers have linked work-family issues with leadership (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Frye & Breugh, 2004; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), only few studies deal with the role of female leadership behaviour in the development of a work-family culture. Lightner and McConatha (1995) found that female supervisors were more attuned to workers work-life issues than males. Pitt-Catsoupes et al. (2006) found that organisations with more females in executive positions were more likely to develop work-life initiatives. These findings confirm the process suggested by social contact theory (Kanter, 1977; Blau, 1977). As the percentage of females in lower and middle level management positions increases, female managers should be better able to form coalitions and exert political influence. Consequently, as females become a more powerful group within a company, they should be better able to encourage the introduction of HR practices that will be useful in addressing work-family issues.

A complementary explanation suggests that female leaders may be more sensitive to employees' needs for work-family issues. Research into females' emotional experiences has shown that they demonstrate socially desirable, other-oriented feelings like empathy (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). In contrast to males, females are encouraged to not only express emotions openly and often, but also to be sensitive to the feelings of others (Brody, 1999; Shields, 2002). The majority of studies have revealed that females do perform more emotional labour than males (Hochschild, 1979, 1983; Pierce, 1999), and research on females' work behaviour has reconfirmed the perception that females' values relate to cooperation, networking, and caring. Female managers, in comparison

with male managers, appeared to be more interested in collaborative ways of working, and their interpersonal work behaviour reflected skills of nurturing, caring and listening; all associated with the social role of women (Maddock & Parkin, 1993).

Other research on female managers' impact on women's issues in organisations are studies undertaken in Canada (Burke, 1994), the US (Maddock, 1999; Mattis, 1993, 2000) and in New Zealand (McGregor et al., 1997). These studies demonstrate strong support that female managers are sensitive to equal opportunities issues acting as change agents (Mattis, 1993, 2000; Burke, 1994; McGregor et al., 1997). However, results reveal that females are still hesitating to actively enforce gender issues in their organisations. In total, there were fewer females who indicated that they had actively introduced women's issues for discussion in their organisations than those who only agreed that they feel responsible to address these issues. An even greater divergence existed between females who have opened discussion and those who believe that these issues are appropriate for organisational agendas.

Results by Rindfleish and Sheridan (2003) and Watts (2007) found contradictory results. The majority of female managers in their study were not actively promoting changes themselves and therefore could not be considered as change agents. A more recent study by Guillaume and Pochic (2007) found two types of female leaders. The first type of female executive was very demanding with their subordinates and expected those who want a career to make the same sacrifices as they did. Overall, these females did not favour diversity management either because it seems normal for them to adapt to this dominant pattern, or because they do not want to get preferential treatment that could undermine their professional legitimacy. The second type of female executives, most of them young females, was trying to defend an alternative model, described as flexible availability, promoting management based more on results than on excessive attendance (Guillaume & Pochic, 2007).

The only studies that explained contextual factors, females attend to when considering raising gender issues in their organisation, are the ones by Dutton et al. (2002) and Ashford et al. (1998). Both analysed under what conditions female managers raise and promote gender equity issues in their workplace. It was found that the most potent factor affecting willingness to sell gender equity issues was exclusiveness of organisa-

tional culture. In other words, in contexts where females experience less exclusion, females will expect to be more successful and will therefore be more encouraged to raise gender equity issues in their organisation.

## **TOWARDS A MODEL OF FEMALE BEHAVIOUR IN PROMOTING WORK-FAMILY CULTURES**

### **INDIVIDUAL-RELATED VARIABLES**

#### **The role of transformational leadership in promoting a work-family culture**

Leadership has been suggested to be an important factor in the process of creating work-family cultures (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Managers with transformational leadership styles were found to increase the effectiveness of work-family practices and programs (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). They displayed more citizenship behaviour such as altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue (Williams, 1994). It is therefore apparent to assume that managers with transformational leadership skills also demonstrate a strong behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. In fact, transformational leadership behaviour goes very closely in-line with the broader conceptualization of supportive supervisors (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). Transformational leaders attend to their subordinates' needs, provide support, act as mentors or coaches, listen to their concerns, and foster a supportive climate for individual growth (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998). They provide constructive feedback and encourage subordinates to think about new alternatives to solve complex problems (Shin & Zhou, 2003).

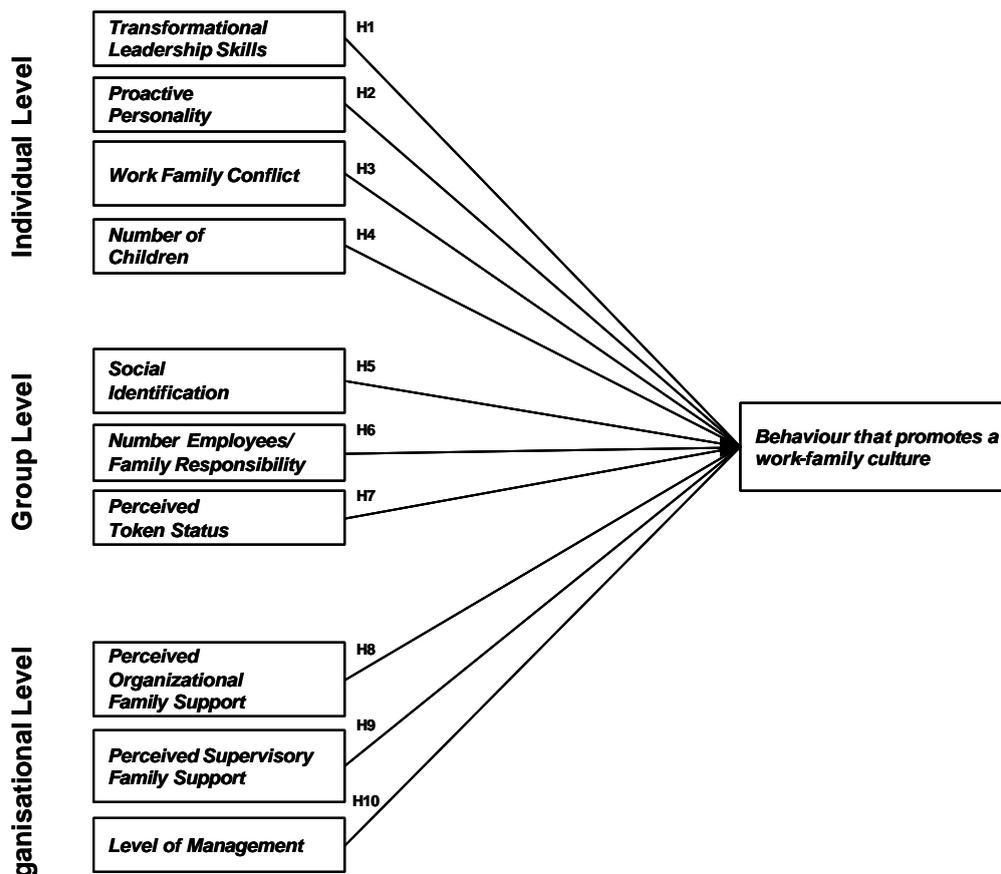
Putting transformational leaders into the context of work-family issues, it is apparent to assume that they support employees with work-family responsibilities. Transformational leaders may encourage employees to participate in flexible work schedules without any threat of punishment or negative career consequences, and to understand when someone has to occasionally leave early to pick up a child from day care. As transformational leaders pay special attention to their subordinates' individual needs

(Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998), they may increase the level of co-workers' support, which in turn helps employees to integrate work and family life (Frone et al. 1997; Grywacz & Marks, 2000; Thompson et al., 2005). Similarly, as they are open to new and creative ideas about how to get the work done (Bass, 1998), they would likely give employees their own discretion over the way in which they perform their jobs. Consequently, employees should be better able to use work-family practices to integrate their work and family lives (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Moreover, transformational leaders are more likely to encourage progressive and innovative ideas related to work and family (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000; Pfeffer, 1994), and may develop a sense of common fate with their subordinates (Deluga, 1992). By displaying those behaviours, the message being sent to employees is that it is possible to be a productive worker, involved, and yet a caring family member at the same time.

Female managers demonstrated high degrees of transformational leadership skills. They were found to display significantly more transformational leadership behaviour than males (Druskat, 1994; Bass et al. 1996; Bycio et al. 1995). This may be explained by the fact that the social role of women in society allows them, and imposes on them, to be cooperative, emotional, and supportive (Rosener, 1990, 1995a, 1995b). Other studies on female leadership found similar characteristics that go close in-line with transformational leadership. Powell's collaborative and Eagles and Harriman's participative leadership styles offer further justification for women's skills of caring (Eagle & Johnson, 1990; Harriman, 1996; Powell, 1993). Female leaders tend to share power and like to ensure that their decisions reflect as much information as possible. Within decision processes, they encourage participation that in turn helps employees to express their ideas and to solve problems (Helgesen, 1990). Female leaders realize the importance of networks and connections in organisations, and take a more proactive approach than males do in addressing problems (Bass & Avolio, 1994). They are strong in generating ideas and innovation (Rosener, 1995; Helgesen, 1990), and especially in management positions tend to be even more innovative than in lower-hierarchical positions (Tulett, 1995). All things considered, transformational leadership is expected to be related to a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. Figure 1 presents the model on female managers' behaviour towards promoting work-family cultures.

*Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model: Factors that influence female managers' behaviour to promote a work-family culture**



**The role of a proactive personality in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.**

Whether someone engages in a certain kind of behaviour can be determined by how proactive a person is. Proactive people are considered to take personal initiative in a broad range of activities and situations (Bateman & Crant, 1993). The proactive personality has been characterized as someone who is relatively unconstrained by situ-

ational forces and who affects environmental change. Research suggests that the more proactive individuals are, the more likely they are to take initiative and act to make changes, to solve problems, and actively pursue possibilities that could advance their interests and careers (Bateman & Crant, 1993). It can be assumed that a proactive person is more likely to demonstrate a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.

*Hypothesis 2: Proactive personality is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

### **The role of work-family conflict in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.**

During a person's life, experiences lead to the formation of many different beliefs and attitudes about various objects, actions and events (Mc Guire, 1969). Experiences are made through affective, cognitive and behavioural information gained from the environment in which someone is living (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Along their career path, female managers have made experiences related to work and family life. Female managers' own work-life experience is expected to have an influence on their behaviour towards the promotion of a work-family culture.

Nowadays, on average women do at least twice as much routine housework as men do (Coltrane, 2000). More specifically, recent research has found that when both parents work full-time in professional or managerial jobs, males made over 40 percent fewer work trade-offs to accommodate family obligations than their partners (Maume, 2006). Even though family responsibilities are more balanced between females and males, females are still in charge of caring for children and the elderly, and for carrying out household tasks (Fredrikson-Goldsen & Schlarlach, 2001; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Eby et al., 2005; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Therefore, females are more receptive to the interference of family responsibilities with their work (Butler & Skattebo, 2004), and they invest more time in family activities at the expense of work time than males do (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). As a consequence, females experience high levels of work-life conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Voydanoff, 2002), role overload, stress and depression (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Especially female man-

agers feel isolated at work and experience more of the negative spillover than their male colleagues do (Burke & McKeen, 1994; Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Davidson & Cooper, 1992). The sources of that stress are related to the expected and actual roles of women in society, and to the fact that women still occupy a minority status in organisations (Burke & McKeen, 1994). Therefore, it is not surprising that female supervisors were found to be more attuned to workers work-life issues than were males (Lightner & McConatha, 1995).

The degree of perceived work-family conflict may serve as an indicator of female managers' work-life experience, and may explain their adapted behaviour towards the promotion of a work-family culture. Work-family conflict can come about because work interferes with family or because family interferes with work (Kopelman et al., 1983; Burley, 1989). Even though the number of hours spent in paid work was almost identical for females and males, females reported significant higher scores for work interference with family than males (Gutek & Klepa, 1991).

Under the assumption that experienced work-family conflict turns into altruistic helping behaviour, it can be assumed that a strongly perceived work-family conflict might explain a strong behaviour towards promoting a work-family culture. Moreover, it can be assumed that the number of children a woman has has an impact on whether females promote work-family cultures. The number of children may serve as a proxy for how salient and important work-family issues are for female managers.

*Hypothesis 3: Perceived work-family conflict is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

*Hypothesis 4: The number of children a woman has is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

## **GROUP-RELATED VARIABLES**

### **The role of social identification in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture**

Whether female managers engage in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture or not can be determined by the general attitude they hold towards the employees in need of care (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). This general attitude in turn may be influenced by how strongly female managers identify with these employees. It was found that perceived common group membership increases helping behaviour towards members of one's own group (Hewstone et al., 2002; Mullen et al., 1992). Group self-enhancement motives promote group solidarity, cooperation and support (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). In other words, females compose their attitude towards employees in need depending on their perceived group membership. Female managers bearing strong relations to employees with family responsibilities may create an attitude in favour of them. Consequently, they may be more attuned to help improving employees' work-family issues. In fact, in a study by Dutton et al. (1998) it was found that female managers who identified with other females have shown a stronger willingness to sell gender equity issues than those who did not.

Moreover, it can be assumed that female managers that are directly exposed to family-related issues in their work are more inclined to promote work-family cultures. Researchers found that issues that were noticed and were interpreted as relevant to managers and the organisation were more likely to produce action (Ansoff, 1980; Dutton and Duncan, 1987, Milliken et al. 1998). Female managers that have employees with family responsibilities under their supervision are therefore expected to show more attention to work-family issues, and in turn are more likely to engage in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.

*Hypothesis 5: Social identification is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

*Hypothesis 6: The number of employees with family responsibilities is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

## **The role of perceived token status in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.**

A factor that may hinder female managers from engaging in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture is their perceived token status. Females in predominantly male groups attract more attention from others (Lord & Saenz, 1985). Being aware of different characteristics (Cota & Dion, 1986) can in turn distract them from performing their intentions (Lord & Saenz, 1985). Less powerful members within a decision-making group are prone not to voice their concerns or to be ignored if they do, leading to domination by the powerful members (Ridgeway et al., 1994; Foddy & Smithson, 1996; Whyte & Levi, 1994). Especially raising work-family concerns, a typically feminine topic, in a male-dominated group, may hold females back from taking action. In fact, in contexts where females experience less exclusion, they were found to be more willing to sell gender equity issues inside their organisations (Dutton et al., 2002; Ashford et al., 1998). To reduce their visibility or to lessen perceived differences and stereotyping by males, studies have shown that female managers often exhibit male values and behaviour rather than female values (Rosener, 1995a). Female managers were found to lead in ways that were more masculine than feminine (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999, Kanter, 1977), and in some cases even more stereotypically masculine than the male (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

*Hypothesis 7: Perceived token status is positively related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

## **ORGANIZATIONAL-RELATED VARIABLES**

### **The role of perceived organisational family support and perceived supervisory family support**

Interestingly, there are some female managers who do not feel responsible for helping other employees to overcome problems related to work and family (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003; Guillaume & Pochic, 2007). This may occur either because these females have not been exposed to work-family problems or they were exposed but perceived a lack of organisational support. Female managers who did not receive organ-

isational family support (White et al., 2003) and/ or supervisory family support (White et al., 2003; Fernandez, 1986), such as flexible work arrangements or a caring supervisor, may not see the importance why other females should obtain it. Females who faced sink or swim environments and had to do the juggling by themselves, may develop a negative attitude towards promoting a work-family culture. They rather believe that it is up to each female to figure it out for themselves. Hence, they are not willing to help others and therefore will not demonstrate the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. In fact, studies on perceived organisational support show; when employees recognize that they are supported by their organisation, they are motivated to reciprocate through increased organisational citizenship behaviour and supportive leadership behaviour (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This process goes closely in line with research on procedural and distributive justice. When employees are being treated unfairly by their organisation and supervisors they do not reciprocate this treatment with altruistic behaviour (Organ, 1977; Tansky, 1993; Folger & Konovsky; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Moorman & Byrne, 2005; Wright & Sablinski, 2008).

*Hypothesis 8: A strongly perceived organisational family support is positively related to the behaviour towards promoting a work-family culture.*

*Hypothesis 9: A strongly perceived supervisory family support is positively related to the behaviour towards promoting a work-family culture.*

### **The role of legitimate power in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.**

Legitimate power is defined as formal power arising from an organisational position (French & Raven, 1959). The level of management, in which female managers work, may be a source of legitimate power that in turn influences their behaviour towards work-family issues. The higher the management rank, the higher the power level, and consequently, the likelihood of engaging in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. As power is a critical factor and fundamental element for success in the negotiation process (Kim et. al., 2005), and since it increases the probability that a person can carry out his or her own will despite resistance (Weber, 1947), it can be assumed:

*Hypothesis 10: The level of management is related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.*

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

### **Data Collection and Sample**

Data was collected from female managers (N= 342) hosted in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Spain in February 2008. With the help of professional women's associations, an invitation to an online survey was sent to female managers either by a newsletter or directly to their private email address. Females were allowed to forward this email to other females they know that were eligible to take part in the survey (the Snowball Principle). Respondents come from Germany Austria, and Switzerland in 43% of cases, 44% from Spain, and 13% from other European countries. 29% of the respondents hold senior management positions, 47% middle management positions and 24% lower management positions. The average age of the respondents is 37.22 (min = 22; max= 59). On average, they have 0.96 children (min= 0 max= 5). The majority of respondents are married (52.3%), are living together (23%), are singles (18.9%), are divorced (5.6%) and 1.2% are separated.

Due to the Snowball Principle females work in different sectors. The biggest group work for consulting & auditing (16.7%) followed by financial services, banking, finance, insurance (14.3%). Females work on average 5.11 years for their present employer and 3.51 years in their actual position. Only 7% work part-time indicating that they work less than 35 hours a week concluding that the majority of the sample works in a full-time position.

## Measurement of variables

### Independent variables:

*Work-family conflict:* Work-family conflict can come about because work interferes with family or because family interferes with work. Work interference with family (WIF) was measured by using Kopelman's et al (1983) 4-item scale (.83). Family interference with work (FIW) was measured by using Burley's (1989) 4-item scale, (.83). Respondents indicated their answers on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). *Social identification:* Social identification was measured by a shortened version of Mael and Ashforth's (1992) 6-item scale on organisational identification. Respondents indicated their answers on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), three items.

*Proactive personality:* Proactive personality was measured by using a shortened version of Seibert et al. (1999) 10-item proactive personality scale. Respondents indicated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) their levels of agreement that each of the statements is an accurate description of themselves, 4 items. *Perceived token status:* Item construction was inspired by Kanter's theoretical work on Tokenism (1977). Respondents indicated their answers on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Respondents were asked questions such as, "In my organisation I feel accepted as a female" and "I feel safe to bring up issues related to work and family in my organisation". *Transformational Leadership (TFL):* The TFL scale is based on a shortened version of the 16 item multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5x short (Bass & Aviola, 2000). Fifteen items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

*Perceived supervisory family support (PSFS):* The PSFS scale is based on a shortened version of the 6-item scale developed by Fernandez (1986) and re-worded by White et al. (2003). As originally formulated by Fernandez (1986), it asked parents to indicate the degree to which supervisors are willing to be flexible and understanding when work-family conflicts arise (e.g. 'My supervisor is very understanding if someone has to leave early or come in late due to a family emergency'). The items in the White et al. (2003) study were re-worded to direct the respondent to consider the actions of their supervisor toward all employees, rather than toward the individual respondent, or to par-

ents only. Four Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. *Perceived organisational family support (POFS)*: The POFS scale is based on a shortened version of the 9-item scale developed by White (2003). Four Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

**Dependent variable:**

*Behaviour that promotes a work-family culture*: Item construction was inspired by Thompson et al.'s (1999) concept of a work-family culture. Items go around the three components of a work-family culture: managerial support, time demands, and career consequences. Respondents answered 12 items on a 7-point scale (1 = never to 7 = always) as to whether they performed the behaviour.

Table 2 presents an overview on the constructs and items used for the questionnaire design.

**Table 2: Constructs and related Questionnaire Items**

CONSTRUCT	SOURCE	ITEMS	Cronbach's alpha
<i>Perceived organisational family support (POFS)</i>	shortened version of the 9-item scale developed by White (2003); 7 point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Q1 My organisation has many programs and policies designed to help employees balance work and family life Q2 My organisation provides its employees with useful information they need to balance work and family. Q3 In general, my organisation is very supportive of its employees with families. Q4 Employees really feel that the organisation respects their desire to balance work and family demands.	Cronbach's alpha .898
<i>Perceived supervisory family support (PSFS)</i>	Shortened version of White et al. (2003); 7 point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Q5 The subordinates in my department feel free to discuss family problems that affect work with my supervisor. Q6 My supervisor is very understanding if someone has to leave early or come in late due to a family emergency. Q7 My supervisor measures people on their overall productivity, not simply hours spent in the office. Q8 My supervisor supports any company policy that helps employees with families.	Cronbach's alpha .849
<i>Behaviour to promote a family-friendly work culture (BE)</i>	Inspired by Thompson et al.'s (1999) concept of a family-friendly work culture; 7-point scale (1 = never to 7 = always)	Q9 I pointed out the importance of implementing work-family practices. Q10 I told other managers to be sensitive to employee's family needs and personal concerns. Q11 I actively initiated the implementation of special awareness training programs focusing on work-life balance issues in my organisation. Q12 I actively tried to promote employees even when they had family responsibilities. Q13 I told employees to put their family first in the event of a conflict. Q14 I demonstrated to subordinates that family time is valued by the organisation, by not working late, at home, on weekends. Q15 I did not give employees with family responsibilities the opportunity to work from home. Q16 I preferred to promote people that have no family responsibilities. Q17 I avoided scheduling meetings so that employees with family responsibilities get in conflict. Q18 I got upset when subordinates are not able to attend a meeting because of family re-	Cronbach's alpha .520

		sponsibilities. Q19 I limited an employee's career progress because of family related reasons. Q20 I communicated to my subordinates that long hours in the office are the way to achieve advancement.	
<i>Social identification (SI)</i>	Shortened version of Mael & Ashforth's (1992) six-item scale; 5 point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Q21 When someone criticizes employees with family responsibilities, it feels like a personal insult. Q22 I am very interested in what others think about employees with family responsibilities. Q23 When I talk about employees with family responsibilities I usually say we rather than they.	Cronbach's alpha .567
<i>Perceived token status (TO)</i>	Inspired by Kanter's theoretical work on Tokenism (1977); 5 point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Q24 In my organisation I feel accepted as a female worker. Q25 I feel safe to bring up issues related to work and family in my organisation.	Cronbach's alpha .600
<i>Work-family conflict (WIF FIW)</i>	(WIF) Kopelman et al. (1983) 4 item scale ; (FIW) Burley's (1989) 4 item scale; 5 point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Q26 My friends/ Family dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I'm at home. (WIF) Q27 After work I come home too tired to do some of the things I would like to do. (WIF) Q28 I am often too tired at work because of things I do at home. (FIW) Q29 On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interest. (WIF) Q30 My personal life takes up time that I would like to spend at work. (FIW) Q31 My supervisors and peers dislike how often I am preoccupied with my personal life while at work. (FIW) Q32 My work takes up time that I would like to spend with my family. (WIF) Q33 My personal demands are so great that it takes away from my work. (FIW)	Cronbach's alpha .664
<i>Transformational leadership skills (TFL)</i>	15 items from the MLQ Form 5x short (Bass & Avolio, 2000); 5 point scale 1 = not at all to 7 = frequently, if not always.	Q34 I help others to develop their strengths. Q35 I spend time teaching and coaching Q36 I consider each individual as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from others Q37 I talk about my most important values and beliefs Q38 I seek differing perspectives when solving problems Q39 I talk optimistically about the future Q40 I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose Q41 Talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished Q42 Go beyond self-interest for the good of the group	Cronbach's alpha .861

		<p>Q43 Consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions</p> <p>Q44 Suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments</p> <p>Q45 I get others to look at problems from many different angles</p> <p>Q46 I express confidence that goals will be achieved</p> <p>Q47 Act in ways that build others' respect for me</p> <p>Q48 Display a sense of power and confidence</p>	
<i>Pro active personality (PAP)</i>	Shortened version of Seibert et al. (1999) 10 item pro active personality scale; 7 point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	<p>Q49 I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others opposition.</p> <p>Q50 Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.</p> <p>Q51 Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.</p> <p>Q52 If I see something I do not like, I fix it.</p>	Cronbach's alpha .733

## Data Analysis

The model was tested using structural equation modelling by means of LISREL 8.7. In a first step, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to verify the validity and the reliability of the measures. In CFA, convergent validity is evaluated by the significance of each standardized coefficient loading, as well as its magnitude. Item measures that passed the significance test but that had standardized latent variable loadings less than 0.5, were eliminated from the measurement model. Thus, adequate convergent validity for the remaining items was established. Due to many items per construct, composite scores for each construct were calculated. The quality of the composite scores was obtained following Saris and Gallhofer (2007):

$$\text{Quality of } x = 1 - \left[ \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \text{var}(e_i)}{\text{var}(x)} \right]$$

where –  $\text{var}(e_i)$  – is the error variance of the observed variable and  $\text{var}(x)$  is the variance for the composite score.

The measurement error for the observed variables in the structural equation models was computed using the known values from quality and the variance of the observed variable as follows:

$$(1 - \text{quality}) \text{var}(\text{var}_i)$$

where  $\text{var}(\text{var}_i)$  is the variance of the observable variable.

Table 3 presents an overview on items used after the CFA for the measurement model.

**Table 3: Final Item Selection for Measurement Model**

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	QUALITY OF THE COMPOSITE SCORE
<i>Perceived availability of organisational work-family practices (PAWFP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My organisation has many programs and policies designed to help employees balance work and family life.</li> <li>• My organisation provides its employees with useful information they need to balance work and family.</li> </ul>	q=.95
<i>Perceived organisational family support (POFS)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, my organisation is very supportive of its employees with families.</li> <li>• Employees really feel that the organisation respects their desire to balance work and family demands.</li> </ul>	q=.97
<i>Perceived supervisory family support (PSFS)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The subordinates in my department feel free to discuss family problems that affect work with my supervisor.</li> <li>• My supervisor is very understanding if someone has to leave early or come in late due to a family emergency.</li> <li>• My supervisor measures people on their overall productivity, not simply hours spent in the office.</li> <li>• My supervisor supports any company policy that helps employees with families.</li> </ul>	q=.96
<i>Behaviour to promote a family-friendly work culture (BE)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I pointed out the importance of implementing work-family practices.</li> <li>• I told other managers to be sensitive to employee's family needs and personal concerns.</li> <li>• I actively initiated the implementation of special awareness training programs focusing on work-life balance issues in my organisation.</li> <li>• I demonstrated to subordinates that family time is valued by the organisation, by not working late, at home, on weekends.</li> </ul>	q=.97
<i>Social identification (SI)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When someone criticizes employees with family responsibilities, it feels like a personal insult.</li> <li>• I am very interested in what others think about employees with family responsibilities.</li> <li>• When I talk about employees with family responsibilities I usually say we rather than they.</li> </ul>	q=.92

<i>Perceived token status (TO)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In my organisation I feel accepted as a female worker.</li> <li>• I feel safe to bring up issues related to work and family in my organisation.</li> </ul>	q=.84
<i>Work-family conflict (WIF)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My friends/ Family dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I'm at home. (WIF)</li> <li>• After work I come home too tired to do some of the things I would like to do. (WIF)</li> <li>• On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interest. (WIF)</li> <li>• My work takes up time that I would like to spend with my family. (WIF)</li> </ul>	q=.95
<i>Work-family conflict (FIW)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My personal life takes up time that I would like to spend at work. (FIW)</li> <li>• My supervisors and peers dislike how often I am preoccupied with my personal life while at work. (FIW)</li> <li>• My personal demands are so great that it takes away from my work. (FIW)</li> </ul>	q=.89
<i>Transformational leadership skills (TFL)</i>	<p>TFLIC (Individual Consideration)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I help others to develop their strengths.</li> <li>• I spend time teaching and coaching</li> </ul> <p>TFLIBIA (Idealized Behaviour/Idealized Attributes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I talk about my most important values and beliefs</li> <li>• I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose</li> <li>• Go beyond self-interest for the good of the group</li> <li>• Consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions</li> <li>• Act in ways that build others' respect for me</li> <li>• Display a sense of power and confidence</li> </ul> <p>TFLIS (Intellectual Stimulation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments</li> </ul>	q=.91 q=.94 q=.93 q=.84

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I get others to look at problems from many different angles</li> </ul> <p>TFLIM (Inspirational Motivation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished</li> <li>• I express confidence that goals will be achieved</li> </ul>	
<i>Pro active personality (PAP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others opposition.</li> <li>• Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.</li> <li>• Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.</li> </ul>	q=.91

## RESULTS

Due to previous results for the measurement model, hypotheses were tested using a regression correcting for measurement error ( $R^2 = .41$ ). Table 3 presents the standardized regression coefficients and t-values associated with the direct estimates used to test the hypotheses. Because all data are self-reported and collected through the same questionnaire during the same period of time with a cross-sectional research design, there exists the danger of common method variance and common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Although the confirmatory factor analyses corrected for variance in measurement error, Harman's one-factor test was conducted to test the presence of common method variance (Harman, 1967). For the data, fourteen factors with eigenvalues ranging from 1.01 to 8.16 were extracted. Each accounted for between 1.8% and 14.8% of the variance. In total they accounted for 61.9% of the variance. This provides confidence that common method variance is not likely to be a serious problem.

**Table 4: Standardized regression coefficients and t-values**

	Regression Coefficients	t-value
H1 Transformational leadership		
• IC	.24	4.30**
• IBIA	.15	1.98**
• IM	-.22	-2.62**
• IS	.00	-0.04
H2 Pro active Personality	.09	1.66*
H3 Perceived Work Family Conflict		
• WIF	.05	.92
• FIW	.10	1.98**
H4 Number of Children	.12	2.35**
H5 Social Identification	.13	2.64**
H6 Number of Employees/ Family Responsibility	.19	2.55**
H7 Perceived Token Status	.15	1.87*
H8 Perceived Organisational Family Support		
• PAWFP	.43	5.76**
• POFS	-.20	-2.11**
H9 Perceived Supervisory Family Support	-.04	-.46
H10 Level of Management	.12	2.02**
R <sup>2</sup>	.41	* p<.10 ** p<.05

**The role of individual-related variables in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture**

Findings support H1 for several transformational leadership skills. Especially transformational leadership skills that are closely related to a supportive work-family behaviour demonstrate a positive and significant relationship with a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. Individual Consideration (IC) has the strongest relation ( $\beta=$

0.24;  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by Idealized Behaviour and Idealized Attitudes (IAIB) ( $\beta = 0.15$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Surprisingly, Inspirational Motivation (IM) is significant but negatively ( $\beta = -0.22$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) related to a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. Data found no support for the transformational leadership skill, Intellectual Stimulation (IS). Findings also support H2. Proactive personality ( $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ) has a positive significant relationship with the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. As to perceived work-family conflict, H3 is only confirmed for family interference with work (FIW) ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) but not for work interference with family. Consistent with H4, the number of children per female is positively related to a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture ( $\beta = 0.12$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

### **The role of group-related variables in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture**

In support of H6, the number of employees with family responsibilities is positively related to a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In terms of perceived token status, hypothesis H7 was supported as well ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). In addition, social identification ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a positive significant relationship with the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture.

### **The role of organisational-related variables in predicting the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture**

Unfortunately, H9, that perceived supervisory family support is positively related to the behaviour under study, did not find support by the data. However, perceived organisational family support (H8) was supported. According to the data, perceived organisational family support can be split into two factors: (1) perceived organisational family support (POFS) and (2) perceived availability of organisational work-family practices (PAWFP). Whereas POFS describes perceived organisational family support, PAWFP relates to the perceived availability of work-family practices and an organisation's ability to inform employees about the existence and functionality of work-family practices. H8 was supported for PAWFP but not for POFS. As assumed, PAWFP is

positively related to the behaviour towards promoting a work-family culture ( $\beta=0.43$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Finally, the level of management (H10) is related to the behaviour that promotes a work-family culture ( $\beta=0.12$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Nowadays, the existence of a work-family culture becomes more and more a necessity for attracting and retaining good employees. University graduates and job seekers are putting a high importance on work-family issues while choosing future employers. A change in organisational culture, in which employees' well-being is emphasized, should become a clear priority for organisations (Goodman et al., 2001; Peterson & Wilson, 2002; Sparrow, 2001). In fact, evidence has shown that a work-family culture improves the psycho-social well-being of employees (Flynn & Chatman, 2001; Goodman et al., 2001; Van Vianen, 2000; Premeaux et al., 2007), as well as minimising absenteeism (Goff et al., 1992), employee dissatisfaction, accidents and loss of productivity (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991), and high turnover (Grover & Crocker, 1995). Hence, organisations should invest in awareness training that includes information about family-friendly measures and behaviour, and should promote a work-family culture in which HR strategies and policies are designed on a more long-term basis. HR practices still often have a short-term perspective that is likely to have negative implications for an employee's well-being and family life. In addition, organisations should try to change the long-working-hours' culture (the underlying norms and attitudes associated with working-time expectations), asking themselves whether hours spent visibly at the workplace are strictly necessary and are a real sign of commitment and productivity (Bailyn, 1993; Lewis & Taylor, 1996; Schein, 1999).

Previous studies revealed the importance of the involvement of managers in building work-family cultures (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Only if managers believe that their organisations are responsible for employees' personal lives, is it likely that a change in organisational culture takes place. The present study focused in particular on the role of female leadership in creating work-family cultures. Study results serve as a useful tool

for organisations in order to assess the reasons why and when female managers engage in a proactive behaviour that promotes work-family cultures. Certain individual, group and organisational-related factors were found to be related to a behaviour that promotes work-family cultures.

Female managers who scored high on transformational leadership skills demonstrated a stronger behaviour towards work-family cultures than those that did not. Results are not surprising as transformational leadership skills go closely in line with a family-friendly behaviour. Female managers possessing transformational leadership skills consider each employee as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from others (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998). They help employees to develop their strengths by acting as a coach or mentor, and consider employees' needs over their own needs. They are admired, respected, and trusted, and serve as role models by showing their own willingness to sacrifice for the good and interest of the group. Hence, transformational leaders serve as powerful change agents that help to make work places more family-friendly.

The level of female managers' proactivity served as another individual-related factor that was found to be related to a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. The more proactive the female manager, the more actively she pursued and advanced work-family issues. Moreover, personal attachment played a critical role in engaging in a behaviour that promotes work-family cultures. Female managers, having employees with family responsibilities under their supervision and having their own children, were more likely to demonstrate a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. It seems that being exposed to family-related issues in their work and personal life, makes female managers more aware of employees work and family needs, and in turn more active to look for new ways of how work will be done. Whether they engage in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture or not, also depends on how strongly they identify with employees with family responsibilities. Female managers who held strong relations to employees with family responsibilities were more attuned to help improving employees' work-family issues. This result goes closely in line with earlier research that perceived common group membership increases helping behaviour towards members of one's own group (Hewstone et al., 2002; Mullen et al., 1992).

A crucial individual-related factor that helps to explain female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues is their own work-family experience. Females that suffered family interference with work, a form of work-family conflict, were more inclined to promote a change in organisational culture than those that did not. Considering that the average female in the sample was 37 years old and had one child, this finding is not surprising. Particularly between the ages of 25 to 40, women have to develop their careers. But during the same time period they are also likely to have children and family constraints. As typical organisational career patterns often ignore individual life cycles and assume that managers are male (Guillaume & Pochic, 2007), female managers are often forced to sacrifice career development for family reasons or vice versa.

An organisational-related factor that has to be taken into consideration when talking about women's work-family experience is their perception of organisational family support. The way they perceive their present employer in terms of work-family issues was hypothesised to influence their behaviour towards the promotion of work-family cultures. In fact, female managers' perception of the availability of organisational work-family practices influenced their behaviour. Female managers that were working in organisations, in which work-family practices and policies already exist, were more motivated and encouraged to engage in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture. It seems that the formal availability of organisational work-family benefits is interpreted as a positive sign for pushing work-family issues forward inside the organisation.

In the case that female managers perceived their organisation as a poor family support provider, they felt responsible to engage in an even stronger behaviour that promotes work-family cultures. In the case that they perceived their organisation as family supportive, they engaged in a weaker behaviour to promote work-family cultures. This surprising finding contradicts earlier research originated from social exchange theory that found that when employees recognize they are supported by their organisation; they are more motivated to reciprocate through increased organisational citizenship behaviour and supportive leadership behaviour (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Findings replicate Susan Lambert's results that found that the more supportive workers perceived the organisation in terms of work life, the less likely they engaged in citizenship behavior (Lambert, 2000). This phenomenon may

be explained by the fact that females working in family supportive environments have already internalized underlying organisational norms related to work and family, and are therefore not aware of their performed family supportive behaviour anymore. Or females who already feel supported by the organisation see less of a need for improvement and in turn are less likely to push work family issues forward. In fact, Organ & Lingl (1995) found that in organisational contexts in which exist a strong work family culture, work life benefits may become commonplace. Workers come to view them more as a right than a privilege and in turn think it is unnecessary to exert extra effort.

Another organisational-related factor that has been found to be influential was the level of management. The likelihood to engage in a behaviour that promotes a work-family culture was higher for women in senior management positions. Legitimate power seems to be a critical factor and fundamental element for success in establishing work-family cultures.

In sum, organisational contexts can influence females' behaviour. Besides organisational contexts, group-related factors were found to be critical as well. Female managers' perceived token status plays a major role. In order to engage in a work-family friendly behaviour, female managers have to feel accepted as a female worker and have to feel safe in raising work-family issues in their organisation. This argument replicates earlier findings; in contexts where females experience less exclusion, they were found to be more willing to sell gender equity issues inside their organisations (Dutton et al., 2002; Ashford et al., 1998). As a consequence, organisations should create more inclusive environments in which female managers do not feel as tokens.

## **Practical Implications**

Findings raise the question on what kind of practical changes are necessary in an organisation's corporate culture and strategy, so that female managers enforce a permanent change towards a work-family culture. First of all, to implement work-family cultures organisations have to raise awareness among their female senior managers that taking organisational responsibility for work-family issues is a valuable asset for success. Second, organisations clearly have to focus on the development of transforma-

tional leaders. Only with a supportive, caring, and empathetic management can work-family cultures actively come into place and implemented work-family practices and programs used effectively. Positive news is that managers can be trained to become transformational leaders, helping employees with work and family issues (Barling, et al., 1996). Third, organisations have to communicate to their female managers the existence and functionality of work-family practices and programs (Prottas et al., 2007). Moreover, organisations should create more inclusive environments in which female managers do not feel as tokens and feel safe to raise work-family issues. Last but not least, the fastest way of creating work-family cultures is to move more females into senior management positions, incorporating them into decision-making. Considering the fact that females are still more exposed to work-family issues than males, they are more likely to make the creation of a work-family culture a priority. Their voice and own work-family experience should be considered in the design and administration of new HR practices and policies related to employees' wellbeing.

## **LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

By interpreting study results, several limitations have to be considered. First, a cross-sectional design limits the degree of making causal inferences and of testing the strength of relationships over time. Especially dealing with behaviour, a longitudinal design is needed (Spector, 1994). Second, due to the snowball sampling procedure, no generalisability can be made for work-specific sectors and country. Third, there exists the danger of interpreting self reported data. Constructs were measured with a common method and source. Therefore, results have to be analysed in the light of common method bias. While the analysis has taken steps to limit common method bias, the self reported data may not be representative of actual behaviour. Therefore future research should try to overcome common method bias by collecting data from multiple sources such as subordinates and work colleagues. In addition future research should use multiple methods of gathering data such as qualitative interviews in conjunction with self-reports (Spector 1994).

Despite its limitations, the study has made several contributions to the work-family literature. For the first time, a conceptual model was developed that offers a novel explanation of female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues. Hypotheses testing opened up the black box into the factors and the cognitive structure that influence female managers to promote a work-family culture. In addition, a new construct, that is, the behaviour to promote a work-family culture, was developed. This new construct can be used in testing the work-family-friendly mindset of supervisors and managers. In addition, it serves to draw a more holistic picture of organisational work-family friendliness. Our hope is that this study will lead to more empirical investigations, analysing both our proposed conceptual model and replicating empirical testing across different cultures. While this research emphasised the role of managers (micro level) in creating work-family cultures, future research in general should try to take a more holistic approach, considering also the role of organisational practices (meso level) in advancing work-family friendly environments. Future research should start questioning current job designs and career development models as both can have an impact on the ability of employees to integrate work and family (Perlow, 2001).

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## 5 Thesis Conclusion

In the last decades the issue of work and family attracted increased attention at both an academic and practitioner level in Europe. The three research papers have dealt with that issue from different angles. Research paper I focused on the role of work-family practices and their impact on females' career advancement. Its objectives were to identify and compare companies' involvement with work-family practices and policies in 14 European countries, and to test whether these practices actually create a work-family culture that enhances the career advancement of women. In contradiction to earlier findings (Mattis, 2002; Spinks & Tombari, 2002; Jafri & Isbister, 2002; Mays et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2005; Giscombe, 2005; Hammond, 2002), research paper I concluded that work-family practices alone do not support and develop females' career advancement.

Research paper II and III raised the assumption that the creation of work-family cultures becomes a necessity for fostering change. Inspired by earlier research (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007; Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Lapierre & Allen, 2006), both papers looked at the role of female leadership in creating work-family cultures. Only a few studies attempted to theoretically and empirically integrate work-family culture and leadership previously. And particularly the role of female leadership in creating work-family cultures remained under-researched. Hence, research paper II and III developed a conceptual model that offers a novel explanation of female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues. Hypotheses testing in research paper III gave insight into the factors and the cognitive structure that influence female managers to promote a work-family culture. Several factors were found to be explanatory for female managers' behaviour towards work-family issues. Concluding remarks give recommendations on practical changes that are necessary to occur in order to enforce a permanent change in organisational cultures.

First of all, organisations have to raise awareness among their female senior managers that taking organisational responsibility in work-family issues is a valuable asset for organisational success. Second, organisations clearly have to focus on the development of transformational leaders, as only with a supportive, caring, and empa-

thetic management, can work-family cultures actively come into place and can implemented work-family practices and programs be used effectively. Third, organisations have to communicate to their managers the existence and functionality of work-family practices and programs (Prottas et al., 2007). Moreover, they should create more inclusive environments in which female managers do not feel like tokens and feel safe to raise work-family issues. Last but not least, the fastest way of creating work-family cultures is to move more females into senior management positions, incorporating them into decision-making. Their voice and own work-family experience should be considered in the design and administration of new HR practices and policies related to employees' wellbeing.

While research papers I, II and III emphasised the role of companies and managers (micro level) in creating work-family cultures, future research should try to take a more holistic approach, considering also the role of governments and communities (macro level). Nevertheless, companies and managers (micro level) still leave plenty of room for future research. On a micro level, future research should start questioning current job designs and career development models as both can have an impact on the ability of employees to integrate work and family (Perlow, 2001). Only jobs and career models that allow employees' autonomy and discretion in how and when the job gets done, can employees better meet multiple work and family demands. Unfortunately, jobs and typical career development models nowadays are still designed as if workers have no family responsibilities. But this assumption does not hold anymore. In the last decades societies have moved to a division of labour depending on both females and males. In order to respond to these changes, organisations have to redesign its workplaces, providing career development models and job designs that are family-friendly. By doing so, organisations can enhance females' career advancement and employees' wellbeing. HR representatives, managers and their subordinates should work together to create work-family cultures in which jobs, performance evaluations, schedules and career development plans meet the needs of both, the employees' personal and family life and the organisation's performance goals.

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