WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND THE CONCEPT OF THE “IDEAL MANAGER”

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Abstract

The notion of women’s representation in leadership and decision-making positions has been the focus of persistent interest in Australia since the first equity review was conducted as part of the Royal Commission into Australian Government Administration in 1975. Today, despite three decades of extensive legislation to address gender equity and the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market, women are still underrepresented in senior positions in Australian organisations. Only 16.5 percent of CEOs, 29.7 per cent of key management personnel (KMP), and 30.4 per cent of general manager positions are held by women. The representation of women gradually decreases when moving up management levels, and the gap between male and female ratios increases with the levels of management.

This PhD study focuses on the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in Australia. It explores the experiences of both women and men in senior management positions in two Australian organisations and their views of what is required to achieve a senior position. The study draws on case studies of two Australian organisations and uses a qualitative approach with a social constructivist worldview grounded in a critical social philosophy. A feminist lens is used to analyse gender relations in the two organisations and relies on document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 50 executives and middle and senior managers, both male and female, from those organisations.

Although much research has been dedicated to this problem, there has been minimal published research about the experience of men in senior positions. This paper looks at the perspectives of male senior managers in addition to those of female
managers for two reasons: it is necessary to analyse social actions from the actors’ standpoints; and there is a need to examine men’s experiences to understand women’s exclusion from leadership.

The study is theoretically informed by Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) concept of the “ideal worker”, which was defined as an unencumbered worker, totally dedicated to work and with no responsibilities for family care. However, the focus of this study is on managers and through interviews, the related concept of the “ideal manager” emerged. The ideal manager is distinct from the concept of the ideal worker in emphasising the masculine aspects of senior positions, and is also characterised by non-negotiable long working hours, the ability to be mobile, a focus on career ahead of family with no career break, and a planned career path while proactively seeking advancement. Focusing on this ideal has enabled organisations, in the minds of senior executives, to recruit senior people willing who make the sacrifices necessary for the economic success of the organisation. Women were therefore not seen as qualified for the demands of senior positions, and the ideal manager was usually constituted by men and by masculine values and norms. This ideal enabled dominant economic and political interests to maintain control and the gendering of hierarchies, reinforcing the practice whereby those people who committed more to the job and who desired more responsibility and authority achieved senior positions. The ideal manager was not only a male with a full-time and life-long job, he also had a woman in his life that took care of his personal needs and his children. However, the reality of life as an ideal manager can be difficult, as seen in some of the dilemmas the interviewees faced. The situation examined did not bode well for increasing, attracting, or retaining women in senior positions.
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHRC</td>
<td>Australian Human Rights Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFO</td>
<td>Chief Financial Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Certified Practising Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COO</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVC</td>
<td>Deputy Vice Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEO</td>
<td>Equal Employment Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO WA</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>FWAs</td>
<td>Flexible Work Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEI</td>
<td>Gender Equality Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW</td>
<td>Higher Education Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMP</td>
<td>Key Management Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and/or Intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Managing Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>National Employment Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Old Boys Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPL</td>
<td>Paid Parental Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC</td>
<td>Pro Vice Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTR</td>
<td>Right to Request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGEA</td>
<td>Workplace Gender Equality Agency</td>
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</table>
Statement of Original Authorship

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)____________________________________

Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

As in most other countries, women in Australia are underrepresented in senior positions and continue to have low representation in senior executive roles. Although much research has been dedicated to this issue, and organisations have implemented various strategies to overcome processes that undermine women’s progressions to senior roles (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Burnett, 2010; Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009; Davidson & Burke, 2011; Ely & Meyerson, 2000), the problem continues at the global level, and it is still rare to see women occupying senior level positions (OECD, 2017).

In the context of Australia’s labour market, the provision of equal opportunities has not translated into reality for all women, especially for those who desire senior managerial positions (Strachan, 2010). Women’s representation among all managers in Australia is only approximately 38.4 per cent (Workplace Gender Equality Agency [WGEA], 2017). The WGEA (2017a) reported that the representation of women gradually decreases when moving up managerial levels. Of those reporting to WGEA, only 16.5 per cent of CEOs are women, 29.7 per cent of key management personnel (KMP), 30.4 per cent of general managers, and 34.9 per cent of senior managers are women. This data motivates the exploration of women’s journey into, and their working lives in, senior management. The following research question was therefore developed:

*RQ: Why is the proportion of women senior managers in some Australian organisations so low?*

Drawing on Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) concept of the “ideal worker”, this thesis examines:
a) How do male senior managers construct the “ideal worker” for a senior position?

b) How does the construction of the “ideal worker” influence women’s career paths to senior positions in organisations?

As discussed earlier, in Australia and other countries worldwide, men constitute the majority of managers, especially senior managers, and they are the group who construct the characteristics of the “ideal” candidate for managerial positions. Sinclair argued that “in order to understand women’s exclusion from leadership roles, we need to look at men’s experiences” (cited in Sheridan, Pringle, & Strachan, 2009, p. 550). For this reason, one aim of this study is to understand the perspectives of both women and men managers about what is required to achieve a senior management position, and, in particular, how male senior managers construct and reconstruct the image of the ideal worker in a senior management position, and how this construct influences women’s career progression.

1.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is guided by a critical social constructivist worldview. This approach was deemed to be suited to the research problem as it gives voice to the experiences, concerns, and needs of the object of study, in this case, women and men (Hesse-Biber, Janice, & Yaiser, 2004). From a constructivist point of view, reality is constructed through interactions, communication, and practices, and the meanings and experiences are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inherent within individuals (Burr, 1995). The constructivist paradigm suggests that it is absolutely necessary to analyse social actions from the actors’ stand point (Tracy, 2013).

Constructivists view knowledge as socially constructed through interactions and language, and reality as linked and identified through society’s cultural and ideological
categories (Burr, 1995). For this reason, this research analyses the perspectives of both women and men senior managers and the construction of reality according to their interactions, practice, and communications. As not all human activities can be measured, rather they are interpreted and analysed through “text”, a qualitative methodology was considered the most suitable and valuable tool for analysing and interpreting the human activities (Tracy, 2013, p. 41) contained in this research.

A critical paradigm was also adopted based on the idea that thought fundamentally interferes with power relations, and that data cannot be detached from ideology or a set of beliefs, principles, and myths that guide and have power over individuals and societies. Critical researchers view cultural life as a constant tension between control and resistance and they frame language as a mediator of this power (Tracy, 2013). This is a constructionist study grounded in a critical social philosophy through a feminist lens where gender relations are incorporated and analysed. Within qualitative research, constructive analyses are dedicated to capturing the uniqueness of an event and allowing exploration of the socially constructed nature of reality (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003).

The research is based on case studies of two Australian organisations, referred to as “University” and “Hospitality”. A case study methodology allows for an in-depth understanding of the problem and exploration of issues (Creswell, 2013). University, a public sector type organisation, was chosen from the list of “Employers of Choice for Gender Equality”\(^1\) in Australia (WGEA, 2017). The second organisation, a private sector company, Hospitality, was chosen because it had developed a strategic plan to increase the number of women in senior positions. The study is not an overtly

\(^1\) The WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation commenced in 2014 and is a leading practice recognition program that aims to encourage, recognise, and promote active commitment to achieving gender equality in Australian workplaces. Source: https://www.wgea.gov.au/lead/employer-choice-gender-equality-0
comparative study; however, similarities and differences are discussed. Both organisations were deemed to be appropriate sites for the research as they provided the opportunity to discover challenges in “real life”. Access to the organisations and the interviews with the managers provided an opportunity to assess the participants in their natural environment (Tracy, 2013).

This research explores the experiences of both women and men in senior management positions in both of these organisations and examines their views about what is required to achieve a senior position. A social constructivist worldview grounded in a critical social philosophy was used to analyse gender relations in both organisations. This study explored the research questions in these organisations by: (a) seeking to understand the constructed nature of reality as it relates to women in senior positions and how their social experiences are created and given meaning, (b) identifying the constructed nature of reality rooted in the organisation’s cultural and structural barriers that limit the ability of women to progress, and (c) examining the organisational policies and practices and the role of gendered barriers in the progression of women to senior positions.

There are always different events in the world where only part of the event can be “captured” as a record and certain information is then extracted from it, which is called “data”. Some of these data are better than others; thus, they are stronger and more valid and give more weight to the conclusion (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Thus, as with other research, this study has a number of limitations. For example, this study used only two case studies due to the time constraints of a PhD and difficulty accessing organisations. It was difficult to obtain agreement from the organisations to be part of this research. Researching more organisations in different industries could also assist with a greater understanding of the research problem. Another limitation of this study was the small sample size of administration and professional staff at University, as the data from University was weighted toward academic women and men. Thus, the
findings cannot be generalised to all staff. The ethnic diversity in both organisations was
also limited, as most of participants had an Anglo-Saxon background. Senior managers
were interviewed for the study; however, lower level managers and staff who embarked
on a career path but did not reach senior management were not included. This study
interviews senior manager survivors.

1.3 THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis is presented in eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides the background of the
study and the research aims. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the literature, including
a brief overview of the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in Australia.
The chapter also reviews the contemporary legislation that promotes gender equality in
Australia. The literature review discusses the theoretical debates on gender and
organisations which can create gender differences and inequalities. The concept of
masculinity is discussed in relation to senior management, as well as the idea of
undoing gender to reduce gender differences. The chapter concludes with an elaboration
on Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) ideal worker, which forms the theoretical
framework of this study.

Chapter 3 details the research methods and the methodology used in this study,
while Chapter 4 presents the context of the research and the two Australian
organisations. This chapter also includes a discussion about the current organisational
initiatives and policies in each organisation. While this is not a comparative study,
differences are noted in regards to the extent of their policy development.

Chapter 5 presents a selection of narratives from some of the women and men
senior managers, particularly focusing on their stories, including their transition into
senior positions. Some of the stories are representative of a group of participants, while
other stories are unique. The purpose of recounting these career journeys is to present
the interviewees’ stories in their own words. These individual career journeys comprise
three sections: the participants’ journey to a senior role, the challenges they faced in obtaining a senior role and after they gained a senior position, and finally their future career plans.

Chapter 6 discusses the major themes that emerged from interviews with regard to the experiences of the women and men who had achieved senior positions, and their explanations about what was required to achieve seniority. Chapter 7 explores the challenges women face due to the impact of the masculine characteristics of the ideal worker, as discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 compares the experiences of women and men in the organisations and draws out the themes that challenge women’s career progression. This chapter primarily focuses on women’s perspectives, contrasting them with men’s, as the men were the dominant group in the senior positions of both organisations. The chapter commences with a discussion about the attitudes and beliefs of the male managers interviewed about women in management and describes their stereotypical views of management and the difficulties women face in managing their work and life. Some of the issues women faced in their everyday interactions and how they reflected the masculine model of ideal manager are also discussed. The impact and the intersection of gender are considered in relation to the experiences of the few young managers and some older female managers. The impact of support on women and men’s advancement is also examined and contrasts the experiences of women and men managers.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter refers to the background of the study and reviews the literature that informed the study of the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in two Australian organisations. This chapter firstly contextualises this research project by reviewing the current position of women in the workplace and in senior management positions in Australia. It then reviews the contemporary gender equality laws in Australia by focusing on legislation that promotes gender equality. Thirdly, the chapter traces the evolution of theorising gender and organisations. Next, the chapter elaborates the theoretical foundations of this study, which are based on Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) “ideal worker”. The chapter concludes with a discussion of masculinities and the masculine concept of senior positions. Finally, it identifies the gaps in the literature.

2.2 THE CURRENT POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE IN AUSTRALIA

Women’s representation in the labour force almost equals that of men. They compromise 46.4 per cent of all employees in Australia (WGEA, 2017b, p. 3). The labour force participation rate\(^2\) for women is 71.7, and for men is 82.3 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017). While participation rates vary by age group, they remain in excess of 70 per cent for women in the age range of 20 to 54 years (see Table 2.1). However, the participation rate of women between 20-74 years decreases to 60.7 when their children are between 0-5 years old; however, this is not the

\(^2\) Participation rate is the sum of the employed and unemployed divided by total population from age 15 onwards.
case for men. Women’s participations rate increases to 79 per cent when they have children aged 6-14 years (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.1: Labour force participation rate by age group (years) 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>75.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>73.9</td>
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<td>35–39</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>75.3</td>
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<td>40–44</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>78.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>80.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–54</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–59</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–64</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 15-64</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Indicators (ABS, 2017)

Table 2.2: Labour force participation rate for parents aged 20-74 years with dependent children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of youngest child (years)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–14</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Indicators (ABS, 2017)

More women than men have gained degree level qualifications (see Table 2.3). Two-fifths (39.6 per cent) of women aged 25 to 29 have attained a bachelor degree compared to less than one-third (30.4 per cent) of men (ABS, 2017; WGEA, 2017b). However, women and men have different educational paths. Women dominate in areas such as education, health, creative arts, culture, and society and men in information technology (IT), engineering and technology, and the sciences, such as physics and mathematics (WGEA, 2017b).

Table 2.3: Attainment of a Bachelor degree or above by gender (%) 2006-2017

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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Indicators (ABS, 2017)
This horizontal segregation by gender in university education is reflected in the professions. The proportion of women and men is almost the same in the category of professionals (54.6 per cent women in 2015) (WGEA, 2016b, p. 7); however, women dominate in professions such as nursing, and men dominate in professions such as engineering (WGEA, 2016b). This demonstrates that horizontal gender segregation persists in Australian organisations (WGEA, 2016b).

2.2.1 Women in Management

Women’s representation among managers is still less than men, with women representing only 38.4 per cent of all managers. Reports show that the representation of women gradually decreases when moving up the managerial levels (WGEA, 2017a). Only 16.5 per cent of CEOs are women, and 29.7 per cent of key management personnel (KMP), while 30.4 per cent of general managers and 34.9 per cent of senior managers are women (see Figure 2.1) (WGEA, 2017a). Vertical segregation (segregation by level in organisations) by gender persists, and the gap is wider the more senior the management position (see Figure 2.1). This is particularly the case in the ranks of key management positions, CEOs and Boards of Directors (WGEA, 2017a).

![Women in Management](chart.png)

**Figure 2.1: Women in Management in Australia, 2016-2017**

Source: WGEA, 2016-2017
Although the data shows very gradual improvement in key gender equality indicators, with greater movement of women into management roles and increased action from employers to address gender equality, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles. As it can be seen in Figure 2.3, the representation of women increased across all categories of management between 2013 (the year mandatory reporting under the current legislation, *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, commenced) and 2017. For example, the proportion of women in CEO positions also increased from 15.7 per cent in 2014 to 16.5 percent in 2017, key management personnel (KMP) positions from 26.1 to 29.7, and executive positions from 27.8 to 30.4 (WGEA, 2017a).

Figure 2.3 illustrates a minor increase in the number of women in different levels of management from 2013 to 2017. These statistics show that there has been a positive increase in the trend of women’s representation in management roles; however, it is slight.
Figure 2.3: Changes in Proportion of women by management category in Australia from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017


International comparison shows that Australia has fallen behind other countries with the same corporate governance structure in terms of the proportion of female executives. As demonstrated in Table 2.4, in 2012, Australia had a higher proportion of female directors than the United Kingdom and New Zealand, but fewer than the USA, Canada, and South Africa (WGEA, 2012). While the findings from these countries are not directly comparable due to differences in the indexes that they use, for example, the number of organisations examined, the findings are indicative of the situation (WGEA, 2012, p. 33-34). A recent report showed that Australia ranked 13 in OECD countries in 2015 (see Figure 2.4) for the representation of women in management positions (OECD, 2017).
Table 2.4: International Comparison 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Census date</th>
<th>Female directors</th>
<th>Female executive (key management personnel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>EOWA</td>
<td>ASX 200 ASX 500</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Sealy and Vinnicombe</td>
<td>FTSE 250 FTSE 100</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Soares et al</td>
<td>Fortune 500</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Mulligan-Ferry et al</td>
<td>Financial Post 500 Public companies</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>New Zealand Human Rights Commission</td>
<td>NZSX 100</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Business Women Association</td>
<td>JSE (319)+ 20 state owned</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WGEA, 2012

Figure 2.4: Female share of managers (all ages), % 2015 or latest


2.3 GENDER EQUITY LEGISLATION IN AUSTRALIA

Gender inequalities are embedded in a multidimensional structure of relationships between women and men, which as the modern sociology of gender shows, operates at every level of human experience, from economic arrangements, culture, and the state of interpersonal relationships and individual emotions (Connell, 2005; Walby, 2007).
Legislation in Australia, which specifically focuses on gender equity in employment, forms part of the framework in which organisations operate. Organisations in Australia must comply with this legislation; however, apart from a few specifications, such as not discriminating on the grounds of gender and provisions relating to sexual harassment, the legislation provides few guidelines or frameworks within which it asks organisations to operate. The proportion of organisations with an overall gender equality policy or strategy has increased from 66.2 per cent in 2014 to 71.5 per cent in 2017 (WGEA, 2017a).

In 1975, anti-discrimination legislation was enacted addressing discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and family status. This was followed in the 1980s by equal employment opportunity (EEO) legislation that focused on gender equity and sought to recognise and reflect women’s increasing participation in the workplace (Strachan, Burgess, & Sullivan, 2004). The most influential were the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 and the Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Still, 2006). The notion of women’s representation in leadership and decision-making positions has been a major focus since the first equity review was conducted as part of the Royal Commission into Australian Government Public Administration in 1975 (Taperell, Fox, & Roberts, 1975) and legislative programs in the 1980s improved the status of women in the workplace (Still, 2006; Swan, 2010).

The thesis does not aim to evaluate gender equity legislation; rather, this is the context in which the studied corporations operate. As such, this section provides a brief overview of current legislation in Australia. While there are many factors that diminish the impact of legislation on the work-life balance of its citizens, including prevailing economic conditions and socio-cultural values (Pocock, Charlesworth, & Chapman, 2013), legislation that provides workers with rights and entitlements to access essential
resources, such as paid parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and quality childcare, have been shown to positively affect the fundamental aspects of gender equality that underpin work-life balance (Skinner & Pocock, 2014).

### 2.3.1 Workplace Gender Equity Act 2012

In 2017, Australia had specific legislation that addressed gender equity in organisations and the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market. The Workplace Gender Equity Act 2012 (WGE Act) is the latest version of the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 (followed by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999) (Cardillo, 2013) All Acts have emphasised the promotion of gender equity in the workplace. The WGE Act provides the regulatory framework for organisations to improve their gender equity outcomes, as all organisations with more than 100 employees must report on six gender equality indicators, including the gender composition of the workforce, equal remuneration between women and men, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees, and working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities (WGEA, 2017d).

Organisations must submit an annual gender equality report, which is publicly accessible through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) website (with the exception of confidential remuneration data). In return, organisations receive a confidential competitor analysis benchmark report (CAB report), which helps them to identify areas of improvement for comparison with other organisations. The aim is that organisations will be able to set more realistic targets to improve gender equality (WGEA, 2017a). The WGEA 2016-17 dataset covers more than more than 11,000 organisations, with approximately four million employees. Under the Act “organisations that fail to comply may be deemed ‘non-compliant’. In such instances the Agency may name the employer as non-compliant in a report to the Minister. Non-compliant
organisations may not be eligible to tender for contracts under the Commonwealth and some state procurement frameworks” (WGEA, 2017c, p. 3).

### 2.3.2 Flexible Working Arrangements in Australia

The focus of gender equity legislation and policies moved to “work-family balance” policies in the 1990s (Still, 2006; Strachan, Burgess, & French, 2009). These are also known as “work-life” policies or “work-life balance” policies; however, these are contested terms (Gregory, 2009). While the term refers to both women and men’s “work–life balance” (Allard, Haas, & Hwang, 2011; Seierstad & Kirton, 2015), due to the structure of society, the focus on women and women’s work-life balance remains relevant. First, women are more likely to take on primary responsibility for family and home in addition to their paid work. Second, there is evidence that persistent gendered cultural norms and assumptions underpin the work-family articulation (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Third, women remain under-represented in senior positions in many areas of the economy and society in most countries. This occurs in part because high demand senior positions are difficult to combine with family responsibilities (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015).

Policies enabling the introduction of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) were introduced due to the need for employees to engage in both paid employment and to undertake family roles (Cooper & Baird, 2015). In recent years, the development of FWAs has become a growing area of interest and many scholars have undertaken research in this area. One of the reasons for the introduction of FWAs is that employees need to reconcile the work and care responsibilities that have put pressure on the “ideal worker” model (Acker, 1990) and the policy framework in which it is embedded (Cooper & Baird, 2015).

Supporting and enabling women to increase their participation in employment has been identified as a significant public policy issue (Australian Government, 2010).
Since 2001, Australia has introduced a range of reforms to address work-family issues (Pocock et al., 2013). Three recent reforms with implications for work-family outcomes are of particular interest. These are the introduction of a national government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) scheme from 2011, the introduction of a new right to request part-time work (RTR) flexibility, and the extension of anti-discrimination protection for workers with family responsibilities at both the federal and state levels (Pocock et al., 2013). Until recently, a period of paid maternity leave was only available to around half of Australian mothers, mostly those in public employment or in larger companies (Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond, & Hosking, 2006).

In 2017, 68.3 per cent of organisations had either a policy or strategy for flexible working arrangements, an increase of 10.8 per cent from 2013 (see Figure 2.4) (WGEA, 2017a). Employers in Australia support employees with caring responsibilities through a range of policy initiatives: in the 2016-2017 reports to the WGE Agency, 53.5 per cent of employers offered non-leave based measures to support employees with caring responsibilities. However, this was lower than the previous year (2015-2016) when 56.4% of organisations had these policies. In 2016-2017, the most common non-leave based measure was the provision of breastfeeding facilities (28.7 per cent). The provision of employer-funded childcare was low, with 5.1 per cent of employers offering on-site childcare and 3.1 per cent offering employer-subsidised childcare. In addition, 4.0 per cent of employers offered a return to work bonus after parental leave, and 8.3 per cent offered coaching for employees returning to work from parental leave (WGEA, 2017a).
Figure 2.4: Percentage of organisations with a policy and/or strategy for flexible working
Source: WGEA, 2017

_Paid Parental Leave and Right to Request Flexible Work Arrangements_

Until recently, a period of paid parental leave (PPL) was only available to approximately half of Australian mothers, mostly those in public employment or in larger companies (Whitehouse et al., 2006). Since 1979, following a successful test case run by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, most working women have had access to up to 12 months unpaid maternity leave, and from 1990 this was re-titled “parental leave” and could be shared between parents (Pocock et al., 2013). Australia lacked a national system for PPL until 2011, despite many efforts to create one. In 2009, the Australian Productivity Commission recommended an 18-week paid period of leave, and the model was largely adopted (Pocock et al., 2013). The PPL scheme introduced a government-funded payment of 18 weeks from January 2011 at the level of the national minimum wage (Australian Government cited in Pocock et al., 2013).

Currently, there are a mix of publicly funded and organisational PPL schemes that employees can access. In 2016-2017, almost half (45.9 per cent) of organisations offered paid primary carers’ leave, while 39.3 per cent offered paid secondary carers’ leave. In 2016-2017, primary carers’ leave was an average of 10.1 weeks, which was higher than 9.7 weeks in 2015-2016. Secondary carers’ leave was an average of 1.04 weeks, which was down from 1.5 weeks in 2015-2016 (WGEA, 2016a). Women
utilised 95.3 per cent of all primary carer’s leave and 74.3 per cent of all periods of PPL (WGEA, 2017a). Cessation of employment after parental leave was 8.6 per cent for women (WGEA, 2017a).

The right to request flexible work arrangements “refers to policies, which grant employees procedural rights to ask for consideration of applications for flexible schedules, working hours or place of work to accommodate care arrangements” (Cooper & Baird, 2015, p. 569). In 2010, the Australian Government legislated a right to request (RTR) policy (Cooper & Baird, 2015). Based on this policy, working parents of preschoolers or children aged under 18 with a disability gained a RTR clause as part of the National Employment Standards (NES) in the Fair Work Act 2009. In some cases, employing organisations have also introduced their own versions of such policies. Eligibility was broadened in mid-2013 to all carers, that is, all parents or guardians of a school aged or younger child, those with a disability, those 55 years or older, those experiencing family or domestic violence, or caring for someone experiencing such violence (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2013).

2.4 IMPACT OF THE LEGISLATION

Baird (2005) argued that legislative change affects social norms related to work and employment, which is reflected in the emphasis on employee-centred flexible work practices by organisations identifying as “best practice” or an “employer of choice”. The data from WGEA (2017) shows that there has been improvement in employer action on gender equity. For example, there has been an increase in the number of organisations with an overall gender equality policy and strategy (WGEA, 2017a). Organisations have also reported that they have targeted strategies to support gender equality, and there has been a significant increase in policies for succession planning, talent identification, retention, and promotion (WGEA, 2017a). There has also has been action on pay equity, FWA policies, support of employees with caring responsibilities,
parental leave, family or domestic violence leave, and sexual harassment (WGEA, 2017a).

Despite all of these improvements, only 38.4 per cent of all managers, 16.5 per cent of CEOs, and 29.7 per cent of key management personnel (KMP) are women, and the WGE Agency’s 2016-2017 report clearly states that workplace gender inequality still exists and there is much room for improvement (WGEA, 2017a). Gender equity policies help keep women at work; however, they do not assist greatly with moving them into senior positions (Strachan, French, & Burgess, 2014).

2.5 HISTORY OF THEORISING GENDER AND ORGANISATIONS

This study adopted the work of well-known organisational feminist Joan Acker (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) as a framework, using her focus on the social construction of gender to clarify structural and cultural issues that hinder women’s advancement in organisations. Acker (1990) believed that organisations are gendered (not gender neutral) and this stems from “advantages and disadvantages, action and emotion, exploitation and control, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in term of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (p. 146).

2.5.1 “Gender” and “Sex”

One of the most problematic challenges of feminist thinking has always been the definition of the core constructs “sex”, “gender”, and “woman” (Swan, 2010). The distinction between gender and sex was recognised in the 1960s (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008). Oakley (1972) differentiated between “sex” as biological sex differences and “gender” as a socio-cultural construction of sex differences (cited in Pringle, 2008; Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008), and other researchers have extended this discussion on sex and gender differences (Jacklin & Maccoby, 1975; Durkin, 1978 cited in Pringle, 2008).
Although the term “gender” is widely used in the social sciences and women’s studies, there is no agreement on the meaning, even among feminist scholars (Acker, 1992a; Butler, 1999). The category of “woman” has always been central to theorising feminist political projects and sociology; however, with the critiques from different theorists, it has not been stable (Acker, 1992a). Acker (1992a) stated that the early usage of gender is another use for “woman” and “sex” in a field that is peripheral to the central concern of sociology. The view of what constitutes gender has gradually changed and broadened in a way that the newer version of gender has not displaced the older one. However, in the newer usage, it has been theorised as a principle of social structure and cultural interpretation. Therefore, Acker (1992a) believed gender to be a pattern of differences and dominations through distinction between men and women that is integral to many social processes.

Broadbridge and Hearn (2008) asserted that the sex and gender approach can easily restore its biological meaning. Alvesson and Billing (1997) stated that “gender is a dichotomous construct that nominated a mix of masculinity and femininity attributed to individual sex bodies”. Other researchers believe that women and gender have to be understood as always intersected by experience, identity, and social discourses that produce social differences (Swan, 2010). Benschop and Verloo (2006) stated that the creation of gender accentuates the social and cultural meanings of sex differences, including fairly constant characteristics. Pringle (2008) believed that “gender has been constructed on heterosexual foundation of stereotypical femininity and masculinity framed with oppositional gender relations” (p. 110). Most women define gender in an objective way; therefore differentiating themselves from men based on gender stereotypes (Pringle, 2008).

Gender is signified through cultural and structural arrangements in organisations, including hierarchies and occupational sex segregation (Acker, 1990). In a similar way,
Connell (1987) stated that gender not only refers to individuals but also to organisational, collective, and historical processes. An organisation’s structure reproduces gender and creates culturally appropriate norms through structural limits and cultural processes (Alvesson & Billing, 1997). Masculine genders dominate and are so institutionalised in organisational cultures and workplace practices that they are taken-for-granted, maintained as the status quo, and interlinked with managerial performance (Hearn & Collinson, 2006). However, the body of literature on organisations and management, which refers to biological differences between men and women, does not address these issues. These approaches are problematic due to a lack of attention to culture, power, change, and social structures of gender (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008).

In this study, gender refers to the socio-cultural meaning that is the structural concept of gender relations. As Acker (1992b) claimed, “gender has patterned and socially produced the distinction between female and male, feminine and masculine” (p. 250). Benschop (2007) defined gender “as a complex, multilayered social practice which distinguishes between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and which involves both informal and formal power processes” (as cited in Brink, Holgersson, Linghag, & Dée, 2016, p. 7). In summary, “we understand gender not as the natural properties of biological men and women, but as the socially produced pattern of meanings which distinguish the masculine from the feminine” (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p.7).

2.5.2 The Introduction of the Concept of the Gendered Organisation

Theorising of gender and organisations was initiated in the late 1960s and early 1970s as feminist scholars criticised traditional organisational research as incompetent because it ignored the significance of gender in working life (Acker & Van Houten, 1974; Kanter, 1977 cited in Acker, 2012a). Since then, researchers have expanded their understanding about how inequality is produced and reproduced in the workplace and
subsequently created new concepts such as “gendering” or “gendered” organisations. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, most of the relevant work related to gendered divisions of labour, authority, and hierarchy, with less of a focus on management and organisations (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008). There is currently a vast amount of literature on gender and organisations, some of which overlaps with the literature on women’s leadership styles, but most of which seeks to unravel and understand women’s experiences in organisations (S. Acker, 2012b). Broadbridge and Hearn (2008) believed that Joan Acker’s “Hierarchies, Jobs and Bodies” (1990) and Kanter’s (1977) “Men and Women of the Corporations” are two of the most influential works in this genre.

In spite of a wide range of findings about gender differences in leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 1995), Kanter (1976) and Acker (1990, 2012b) asserted that differences are a result of organisational structure, not the nature of women (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). Kanter (1976) argued that it is not a matter of women’s nature or just being a woman, but that if men were in the same situation, for example, less preferred as leaders, with lower organisational power, and sometimes isolated and stereotyped, they would be in the same situation as women and they would be considered to be “tokens” in their organisations.

Researchers have indicated that women in male dominated jobs usually encounter exceptional situations, with Kanter (1997) explaining this phenomenon as “tokenism” (Benschop & Doorewaard, 2012). Kanter (1997) blamed the structural conditions of organisations, specifically those stemming from the nature of hierarchy. She categorised the behaviour of women into three structural variables: the opportunity structure, power structure, and sex ratio. Kanter’s (1977) theory of tokenism states that “the quantitative ratio in a group determines the perception of the behaviour and position of a loner-a token- in group” (as cited in Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a, p. 792). Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a) explained “tokenism” as the phenomenon of “show pieces”.
The early feminist project was concerned with creating non-hierarchical and egalitarian organisations (Martin, 2000). For instance, they tried to change the structure of organisations from “Tayloristic” to “team-based” (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b). However, in their study of the Dutch banking sector, Benschop and Doorewaard (1998b) revealed that gender processes are more complicated and ambiguous than just the hierarchical structure of organisations. They explained that “the gender subtext” (discussed in the following section) is important whether the organisational structure is Tayloristic or team based (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b). Therefore, it is important to understand other underlying reasons or review the organisation’s structural and cultural behaviour, whether it is a “Tayloristic” or “team based” organisation and any other types of organisational structure.

2.5.3 Gendered Organisations: Gender Substructure and Gender Subtext

Gender assumptions derived from the policies and rules in large bureaucratic organisations and the implementation of these written procedures create the gendered differences and inequalities in these organisations (Acker, 2006b). The term “gendered organisations” is derived from the social, economic, and symbolic differences between men and women that has developed and changed over time (Acker, 1994). As Acker (1992a) stated, “gender is difficult to see when males dominate the central institutions” (p. 251).

Joan Acker (1990) believed the concept of the job is completely and implicitly gendered, while organisational logic presents it as gender neutral. Organisational logic has material forms in written work rules, labour contracts, managerial directives, and other documentary tools for running large organisations, including systems of job evaluation. Job evaluation is accomplished through the use and interpretation of documents that describe jobs and how they are to be evaluated. These documents contain a symbolic indicator of the structure, and the ways that they are interpreted and
talked about in the process of job evaluation reveals the organisational logic (Acker, 1990). The rules of job evaluation are the underlying logic that provides a blueprint for its structure. A job as a set of tasks and responsibilities represents a position in the organisation. A job is separate from its incumbents and the job evaluation should evaluate the job, not the people, who may diverge in skills, commitment, and productiveness (Acker, 1990).

This gendered concept of a job is still common in the context of Australia, in which it is framed by the long-lasting tradition of men as breadwinners (Strachan, French, & Burgess, 2009), who are unencumbered workers who have no responsibility other than their full-time job and who have wives that take care of family responsibilities (Acker, 1990). These organisational practices and processes based on gender reproduce the pervasive and persistent structuring that creates gender inequality in organisations (Acker, 1990).

Gendering processes are supported by the gender substructure and gender subtext of organisations (Acker, 1990, 2012a; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998c). The gendered substructure is the covert process in organisations where inequality is perpetuated and reproduced (Acker, 2012a). The gendered substructure is formed by the gender subtext, organisational logic, and the notion of the “ideal worker” (discussed in Section 2.5.4), which creates the concept of gendering processes in organisations. Acker (2012a) used the concepts of the gender substructure and gender subtext in a very similar way; however, she used “gender subtext” as a part of gender substructure. Gender subtext refers to text, implicit and explicit, written or just common practice, that shapes the gendered processes and structures (Acker, 2012a). These processes reinforce the maintenance and reproduction of gendered organisations (Acker, 2012a).

These invisible processes have been termed gendering processes by a number of researchers including Benschop (2009), Benschop and Doorewaard, (1998a, 1998b,
The pattern of gender processes was introduced by Connell (1987), who referred to gendering processes as a particular social unit in particular times. Therefore the pattern is not always the same all around the world, and this disparity is as a result of history and local customs (Acker, 2006c). Although there is great variation in the patterns of gender in organisations, the highest positions of power are most of the time taken by men (Acker, 1990). For instance, in her study of Swedish banks, Acker revealed that while banking is a female dominated industry, positions of power and control are male-dominated (Acker, 1994 cited in Acker, 2006b). Therefore, banks are gendered organisations and hierarchical positions are distributed unequally between male and female employees (Acker, 1994 cited in Acker, 2006b).

In order to investigate gender inequality in an organisation it is necessary to examine the gendering processes (Acker, 2012). These practices, such as task design, distribution of power in decision-making and supervision, covert and overt rules, behaviour at work, and also the design of the workplace, can be considered part of the gendering processes in organisations (Acker, 2012a). One example is how gender entered the system that gave more value to physical jobs rather than caring tasks (Acker, 2012a). Furthermore, notions about gender underlie the documents and contracts used to construct organisations and to provide the common-sense ground for theorising them (Acker, 1990).

According to Acker (1990) there are five sets of processes that produce gendered social and organisational structures, processes that Kanter (1977) also recognised. First there are divisions based on gender, including the division of labour, physical space, power, and allowed behaviour. These practices maintain the existing divisions of the labour market, family, and society, practices that Kanter (1977) also discussed. Second, the construction of symbols and images that describe, reinforce, or sometimes oppose
those divisions. These have many sources in language, ideology, popular and high culture, dress, the press, and television. Kanter (1976) illustrated the image of a senior manager as forceful masculinity. Third, the interaction between men and women produces a social and organisational gendered structure. Fourth, these processes explain the gendered components of individual identity. Fifth, gender is associated with the fundamental, ongoing process of creating and conceptualising social structures (Acker, 1990). Pringle (2008) added that gendering processes are more obvious in the informal aspects of the organisation, where actions are determined by cultural norms, interactions between men and women, women and women, and men and men in organisations and these processes create gender identity. Other researchers have identified the importance of the culture of an organisation and its impact on women’s career paths, and particularly whether or not they pursue promotion to senior positions (Acker, 2012a; Kloot, 2004; Liff & Ward, 2001; McDonagh & Paris, 2012; Özkanl & White, 2009).

### 2.5.4 Gender Subtext

In 1977, Kanter introduced the concept of “gender subtext” for the first time. The concept of gender subtext is similar to Acker’s (1990, 2006b, 2006c, 2012a) “gender substructure”. Kanter (1977) defined gender subtext as an obvious effect of the structural conditions on gender discrimination in organisations. Smith (1987a) expanded this, describing it as “the internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional and discursive organisation that regulates, organises, governs and otherwise controls our societies” (Smith, 1987a). Smith (1987a) also noted that this abstracted, neutral, and conceptual form of regulation covers class, gender, and racial subtexts.

Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a, p.789) described gender subtext as “a set of covert and power-based processes and practices that systematically produces the gender distinction via a set of arrangements”. Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a) believed that
the perception of gender equality and gender inequality stems from a gender subtext, which consists of three organisational settings, including “show pieces”, “the mommy track”, and “the importance of being asked”. Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a, 2012) demonstrated that the phenomenon of show pieces (Kanter’s (1977) “tokenism”) in organisations is complicated. Women not only need to break the critical boundaries, but also need to try hard to prove their potential and demonstrate that they have the characteristics of an “ideal worker”. Thus, Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a, 2012) argued that it is important to understand other underlying reasons or review the organisation’s structural and cultural behaviour, rather than focus on how women differ from men.

A gender subtext indicates that part-time jobs are only for women and they are only available in low qualified and dead-end-jobs that do not offer career opportunities (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a, 2012). In addition, women with family responsibilities have to satisfy a company board that work is their priority over family, while men in a similar situation are rarely asked about their plans or family responsibilities (Brink & Benschop, 2012).

Male board members can feel they are protecting women by not appointing them to jobs with high demands and heavy responsibilities. Martin (2006) also described this stereotype as “paternalistic masculinity”, where there is the belief that women will have trouble managing demanding jobs, as their role is to take care of the children. Organisations can be unwilling to support parents as they believe having children leads to reduced hours or denotes a lack of commitment. In a culture where working long hours is considered the major indicator of commitment, talented women with care responsibilities are usually overlooked.

Priola (2007) demonstrated that a masculine culture exists even if the organisation’s managers are women (cited in Billing, 2011). Women managers have
explained behavioural and cultural barriers, such as stereotypes, as the main barriers to the top positions (Paludi, 2013). The stereotypical view is usually a disadvantage for women, as most of the time they are considered poor applicants for the management positions by decision makers (Paludi, 2013). Ridgeway (2011) claimed that gendering in leadership occurs because of the ‘commonly held view’ view (stereotypical view) that female managers are less competent than male managers, which makes men more legitimate as leaders than women. In addition, according to Schein (2007) the major barrier to women’s career advancement continues to be gender stereotyping of the managerial position. Schein (2007) has been researching gender stereotyping of management positions in the USA, the UK, Germany, China and Japan for over three decades and she finds that the “think manager – think male” attitude is a commonly held belief among male management students who will make the future managers. She concludes that corporate males in the USA continue to see women as less qualified than men for managerial positions.

Therefore, women are usually considered “others” and less suitable for senior positions, which leads to an underestimation of the number of women suitable for senior positions (Brink & Benschop, 2012). These beliefs develop a hierarchical pattern of social interaction through which men exert more influence and exercise more leadership (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Ridgeway, 2011). As a consequence of this stereotypical view against women in organisations, women are seen as less competent and suited to leadership than men (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Heilman, 2001). For instance, people devalue the success of female managers and refuse to attribute women’s success to their capabilities, instead considering it a result of other external factors (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Heilman, 1983, 2001).
2.6 THE CONCEPT OF THE “IDEAL WORKER”

The concept of the ideal worker was developed by Joan Acker in the early 1990s as a framework for the social construction of gender in order to clarify structural and cultural barriers that hinder women’s advancement in organisations. The ideal worker, which Acker (1992b) also called the “disembodied worker”, is defined as an unencumbered worker who is totally dedicated to work and who has no responsibility for family care. She believed that the ideal worker is more likely to be “a man whose work is his life and whose wife takes care of everything else” (Acker, 1992b, p. 425). This ‘common understanding’ illustrates the image of the disembodied worker who has no other responsibilities except for paid work. This image privileges men, marginalises women, and maintains gender segregation in organisations. Gender neutral, disembodied organisational structures and work relations are a part of a control strategy in industrial societies (Acker, 1990).

In organisational logic, both jobs and hierarchies are abstract categories that do not have an occupant, human bodies, or gender (Acker, 1992b). However, the structure of work is based on the ideal worker concept and organisations are constructed from the concept of the ideal worker (Özbilgin & Woodward, 2004). Organisational practices and processes based on gender contribute to the reproduction of pervasive and persistent structures that create gender inequality. (Acker, 1992a, 1992b). Acker (2012a) argued that these practices and processes are supported by the gendered substructure and gender subtext of organisations and the notion of the ideal worker.

Organisational practices, policies and interactions are based on the material concept of life, which reinforces discrimination by the masculine images of work and the ideal worker. These instrumental goals facilitate new measures of competence without considering gender. Therefore, these practices generally limit women’s advancement, for example, practices such as extra working hours, which encourage the
use of “face time” at work as an indicator of commitment. Women are the group who are criticised frequently, as they have limited time to spend at work due to their family responsibilities (Maddock & Parkin, 1994; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; French & Sheridan, 2009).

In particular, a common understanding of organisations underscores the image of the ideal worker, the characteristics of which are abstract and neutral in the organisational text; however, they resemble the image of the male rather than the female worker (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Brink & Stobbe, 2014; Hoobler, Hu, & Wilson, 2013). Therefore, women need to demonstrate that they have the characteristics of the ideal worker (Acker, 1992b), and prove themselves more than men in order to progress through the their careers and up the career ladder.

Feminist organisational scholars, including Acker, have noted that most workplaces are organised as if paid work is the only, or at least the primary, responsibility of employees (Bailyn, 1993, 2003). Other researchers have also referred to the ideal worker and defined it as a White, able-bodied, 40-year-old, heterosexual man whose pattern of accomplishment and justice serve as the norm (Brink & Benschop, 2011; Hoobler, 2005).

While the concept of the ideal worker has been used by many researchers (Bardoel, Drago, Cooper, & Colbeck, 2011; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a, 1998b, 2012; Benschop & Verloo, 2006; Billing, 2011; Brink & Benschop, 2012; Ross-Smith & Chesterman, 2009; Tienari, Quack, & Theobald, 2002; Wilhoit, 2014), all were based on Acker’s (1992b) description of the ideal worker. Gender and management researchers have used the concept mostly as a framework for their studies and have not developed it. The exceptions are Brink and Benschop (2012) in their article “Slaying the Seven-Headed Dragon: The Quest for Gender Change in Academia” and Liff and Ward (2001) in their article “Distorted Views Through the Glass Ceiling: The Construction of
Women's Understandings of Promotion and Senior Management Positions”. While both articles used the words “ideal manager”, they did not further develop the concept.

In their article “Slaying the Seven-Headed Dragon: The Quest for Gender Change in Academia”, Brink and Benschop (2012) used the words “ideal manager” once. The study was based on an empirical study in three academic fields on the recruitment and selection of professors. The purpose of the study was to examine the slow pace of gender change in academia. One of the fields they referred to was the “leaky pipeline”, which is a drop in the number of qualified women applicants in the medical sciences. They said that despite the existence of a substantial pool of qualified women applicants for professorship, the percentage of applicants for professor positions had dropped dramatically. They explained that this decrease was a result of closed recruitment, which occurs when “candidates are invited by scouts through formal and informal networks” (Brink & Benschop, 2012, p. 78). Women are overlooked because of the overrepresentation of men in scout positions. Scouts search their own homogeneous masculine networks for eligible candidates and use their own view of excellence to assess these candidates. As a result, Brink and Benschop (2012) concluded that “We discern two salient gender inequality practices leading to a neglect and underestimation of talented women: (a) the paternalistic view of scouts, and (b) the image that women do not correspond to the image of the ideal manager” (p. 78). Although they mentioned the term ideal manager once, they did not develop the idea or provide characteristics for this term.

In their article “Distorted Views Through the Glass Ceiling: The Construction of Women's Understandings of Promotion and Senior Management Positions”, Liff and Ward (2001) used the words “ideal manager” once. The study was based on an empirical study carried out in a UK high street bank. The purpose of study was to explore whether there were issues relating to women’s interest in and willingness to
undertake senior jobs. Specifically, they wanted to explore women middle managers’ views on how they perceived senior jobs. Thus, the article reported the expectations of those who had not yet achieved senior jobs. As a result, Liff and Ward (2001) concluded that “While the imagery has moved beyond simple exclusion of women, it is clear that the way an ideal manager is viewed remain saturated with characteristics traditionally as male” (p. 26).

2.6.1 Discourse of Choice

The characteristics of the ideal worker are at odds with the social roles of women as the main caregivers and women are presented with the choice of motherhood or a career. Women’s contemporary experience of disadvantage is often justified through recourse to the rhetoric of choice (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). The discourse of choice explains the frequent inequalities between men and women, blames individual women, and explains women’s disadvantages in term of their “traditional choices” (Lewis & Simpson, 2015). However, the discourse of choice ignores the structural and systemic elements inherent to the gendering process of organisations and the notion of the ideal worker, which creates inequality in organisations. Liff and Ward (2001) stated that organisational cultures, structures, and practices provide the context in which women decide that senior jobs are not for them and they are not willing or able to work in such a masculine culture with the construction of the ideal worker. Kossek, Su, and Wu (2017) believed that women’s individual “choices” are shaped by social context factors in which they are embedded. Therefore, the notion of the ideal worker explains that women continue to make choices and remain in the lower to middle echelons of an organisation.

Despite women’s increased presence in the labour force, social and institutional adaptation to women’s changing worker identity has been far from complete, both at home and in the workplace. Australia is one of the most unequal countries with respect
to men and women’s sharing of domestic and care work (Craig & Mullan, 2011). This disconnect between changing labour force participation and unchanging gendered patterns of care-giving is likely to account for the consistent confirmation that women are more likely to experience inequality in career progression as a matter of their care responsibilities than men.

As discussed earlier, many policies that provide flexibility have been introduced by organisations in Australia since the 1990s. These policies were championed by the government to increase women’s labour force participation (Burgess, French, & Strachan, 2009). However, studies have shown that taking some form of flexible work arrangements is problematic for women who wish to advance to management positions (Brink & Benschop, 2011). The concept of the mommy track describes a situation faced by some women, especially those in senior positions. The scenario is that women in senior positions request part-time jobs after having a baby, and since senior positions are not available part-time, they must take on lower level roles. Therefore, mothers seeking part-time or more flexible working hours can “be shunted off the main track into a side-track” (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a; Benschop et al., 2012; Schwartz, 1989). Liff and Ward (2001) reported that the women in their study expressed the concern that “motherhood would spell the end of their career” (p. 26). They also reported that promotion for women was widely seen as “synonymous with childlessness”, as they believed that if they took maternity leave they would not progress in their career.

In this way, many women at some point in their career path take an “off-ramp” (Hewlett, 2007), or are seen as “opting out” (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Stone, 2007; Wilhoit, 2014), or are “pushed out” (Kossek et al., 2017). The statistics show that the main reasons for this are work-life balance and care responsibilities for both children and elderly parents (Bailyn, 2003; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).
According to Hewlett and Luce (2005), people establish a successful career between the ages of 30 and 45, which are the prime years when hard work has the maximum payoff. However, they are also the prime years for beginning a family. Thus, women who take time off during those years may find that they never catch up with male colleagues. It has been also perceived that if they pass 35 years old and do not have children, then organisations can invest in them; however, at this point age is a barrier for promotion (Liff & Ward, 2001). Tomlinson and Durbin (2010) stated that women’s decision to “opt out” of careers is usually due to a combination of inflexible organisational structure and masculine corporate culture that influence women’s abilities to actively participate in childbearing. Jacobs and Winslow (2004) argued that due to age constraints it is not feasible for most academic women to delay childbearing until they have tenure, as they believe that having a family earlier can “derail” the tenure process due to taking “time-out”, despite FWA entitlements.

In contrast, when men choose a career break, “time-out” or “off-ramps”, it is not as a result of childcare or eldercare responsibilities, they have other reasons, such as switching careers, obtaining additional training, and starting their own business (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). For men, it seems to be a strategic repositioning of their career, different from the concerns of women.

As stated earlier, the characteristics of the ideal worker resemble the image of a man rather than a woman. Therefore, as a result of the ideal worker norm, women usually undervalue their own qualifications and over-value their male colleagues qualifications (Ross-Smith & Chesterman, 2009). “Girl disease” is a metaphor used by Ross-Smith and Chesterman in 2009, and “It designates a multiplicity of micro-factors supporting women’s reticence to seek promotional opportunities and the ambivalence towards assuming more senior managerial roles” (p.588). In this regard, the authors cited Niederle and Vesterlund's (2007) research, which showed that women not only
turn away from competition, while men are attracted to it, but also that high-performing women entered their competitive tournament scheme too rarely and low-performing men entered it too often. Women often undervalued their own skills and were described as not as good at self-promotion as men. They also need support and encouragement to apply for a higher position. Ross-Smith and Chesterman (2009) stated that women are more modest about their capabilities and their readiness for positions. Their study showed that many women needed to be encouraged to apply for more senior positions and had not applied for them without specific endorsement.

2.7 MANAGEMENT AND MASCULINITY

Men and masculinity are central to a gendered analysis of management and organisational processes (Acker, 1990). Despite this centrality, they remain “taken-for-granted”, “hidden” and “unexamined” (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). In using the term “masculinity” Kerfoot and Knights (1996) invoked a definition that pertains to the socially generated consensus of what it means to be a man, to be “manly”, or to display such behaviour at any one time. By referring to “masculinity” rather than men, Kerfoot and Knight (1996) made the distinction between the biological category of sexed bodies (men) and the social constitution of gender difference.

In the history of management there has been a close connection between the male gender and hierarchy, and references to militarism and warfare are prominent, drawing on military experiences when there is an organisational problem and therefore emphasising control (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). Managers and senior executives always represent themselves as “hard men”, displaying a highly autocratic management style (Knights & Tullberg, 2012).

Management is a masculine concept, which has derived from taking charge and directing, especially in the context of war (Mant, 1977, p. 20 cited in Collinson & Hearn, 1996). Management came from the terms of “ability to control people, events,
companies, environment, trade unions, and new technology” (Collinson & Hearn, 1996, p. 3). The masculine practices and concerns of management, such as the personal ability to control, are rooted in managerial language, which is gendered. This masculine nature of management seems to be taken-for-granted (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). Because of the relations between men, power, and authority in organisations, the literature on management fails to question its gendered nature. Indeed, the image of middle and senior managers seems to be impregnated with a particular notion of masculinity (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Knights & Tullberg, 2012). The literature illustrates how management excludes women, and also demonstrates that men still continue the domination of management. Examples can be easily seen in many book titles, such as “Men as Managers, Managers as Men”, “Men who manage”, “Manager for himself”, “The man on the top” and “The man and the corporation” (Knights & Tullberg, 2012).

The strong link between management and masculinity has been studied and discussed by scholars such as Hearn, Collinson, Knights, Kerfoot, Acker and Kanter. These studies have illustrated how the large number of male managers influences the low number of women in senior positions, and in addition, these studies have investigated the relationships between power, management, and masculinity (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Kanter, 1977; Kerfoot & Knights, 1996; Knights & Kerfoot, 2004). The relationship between senior positions and men is highly gendered, which has derived from the masculine nature of managerial functions (Collinson & Hearn, 1996).

The gendered nature of management refers to the articulation of men and masculinities (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). According to Knights and Clarke (2014), Western societies are based on the principal of “hegemonic masculinity” in their social and business life. This is where management comprises social practices of men’s preference for men and men’s company, and use of masculine models, stereotypes, and
symbols in management (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Kanter, 1977). Connell (2014) defined “hegemonic masculinity” as a pattern of masculinity that is most honoured, which occupies the position of centrality in a structure of gender relations, and whose privileged position helps to stabilise the gender order as a whole, especially the social subordination of women. “Hegemonic masculinity” is contrasted not only with femininity, but also with subordinated or marginalised masculinities that exist in the same society (Connell, 2014).

2.7.1 The Social Construction of Masculinity

Organisations are always sites of male power and masculinities, and workplace issues such as organisational decision-making, remuneration, and culture often reflect and reinforce masculine material-distinctive practices. Many ways of being men are formed and constructed in the work processes of control, collaboration, innovation, competition, conformity, resistance, homosociality, and contradiction (Hearn, 2014b).

Social expectations have identified the masculine identities of a man (Knights & Tullberg, 2012). This masculine image takes a variety of forms, such as being tough, independent, indestructible, and impenetrable (Knights & Tullberg, 2012). These behaviours can have some catastrophic consequences in both society and business. For example, this masculinity allows financial managers to take high risks with other people’s money. This “discourse of masculinity” includes hierarchal privileges to superior status closely connected with management. For example, being a senior manager encompasses victory, competition, and control as performative components in the process of doing masculinity in business (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993).

The techniques and style of management have embedded the “discourse of masculinism” (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). This has affected the reproduction of masculinity and privileges men over women in senior position. The “discourse of masculinism” has been divided into two practices, “paternalistic masculinity” and
“competitive masculinity” (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). Paternalistic masculinity refers to the paternalistic culture of management, which involves controlling employees through deception of the family imagery, where power is exercised for the good of the recipient (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). Competitive masculinity reflects the managerial privileges that order human productive capacities and rank individuals according to their competitive competence (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993).

Although masculinity has historically been defined as legitimate behaviour and identities for men (Connell, 1995), modernised masculinity does not simply equate with men anymore, and women can practice masculinity (Connell, 2014). For many women, the organisational life is one wherein they are required to display traits associated with the common benchmarks of masculinity (Kerfoot & Knights, 1996). This is particularly the case where women seek to compete with men for managerial positions, because the gendered nature of management discourse and practice means that everyone is judged against a single masculine measure of competence (Kerfoot & Knights, 1996).

“Traditional” masculinity, which is often understood as patriarchal and perhaps violent, is contrasted with a “modern” masculinity, which is often understood as more expressive, egalitarian, and peaceable (Connell, 2014). Connell (2010) stated that the connection of modern masculinities with management has to be understood in the neoliberal world economy:

It is now clear that managerial masculinities are embedded in the routines of organisational daily life, in the work of management, and in the ideologies of the corporate world. It is also clear that managerial masculinities are not fixed, but are subject to change - with economic circumstances, with changing technologies, and in response to challenges from women (p. 8).
2.7.2 Masculinities and Gender Regimes

Acker (1994) argued that gendered organisations are not similar in various times and contexts; thus, any industry within a different time and context has some sort of gendered organisation, which she termed the “gender regimes”. These gender regimes change all the time due to the ongoing flow of actions and interactions and the influences on gendering processes and practices that intentionally, or even sometimes unintentionally, create gendered organisations (Acker, 1994, 2006b). Kerfoot and Knights (1996) also believed that masculinity is not fixed in time or place, and the definition of masculinity at any given moment is diverse and in flux.

Connell (1987) used the term gender regime to refer to the patterning of gendering processes in particular social units at a particular historical time. Connell (2010) believed that gender regimes in the neoliberal society are a modernised masculinity, which is different from masculinity of earlier generations and is produced by several changes in historical masculinity. In Australia, the latest wave of modernisation consists of acceptance of women in positions of authority; tolerance for gay men and lesbians in the workplace; and the capacity to work comfortably in a computer-rich environment (Connell, 2010).

Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct masculinity differently; thus, there is no one uniform pattern of masculinity. Therefore, in large-scale multicultural societies there are likely to be multiple definitions of masculinity (Connell, 2001). Thus, there are likely to be different understandings of masculinity and different ways of “doing” masculinity (Connell, 2001) within a given cultural setting or any workplace. According to Billing and Alvesson (2000), “The social construction processes of gender are complex, multifaceted and heterogeneous” (p.152). Masculinity and femininity are not static traits, but change over time and vary with class, race, occupation, organisation, age, and individual conditions. Value systems are cultural
constructions, and it is therefore possible to change perceptions so that something, which was previously regarded as negative, can be re-valued and regarded as positive (Billing & Alvesson, 2000). It is also more likely that there will be more than one kind of masculinity.

### 2.7.3 Hegemonic Masculinity

One of the relevant forms of masculinity that most gender and management scholars refer to is “hegemonic masculinity”. It is a form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in a given setting. Hegemonic masculinity means the pattern of masculinity that is most honoured, which occupies the position of centrality in a structure of gender relations, and whose privileged position helps to stabilise the gender order as a whole, especially the social subordination of women. Hegemonic masculinity is contrasted not only with femininity, but also with subordinated or marginalised masculinities that exist in the same society (Connell, 2014). “Hegemonic” signifies a position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance, which other forms of masculinity persist alongside. The hegemonic form need not be the most common form of masculinity.

As defined by Connell (1987; 2014), hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. It is an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women. The hierarchy of masculinities is an expression of the unequal shares in that privilege held by different groups. “Hegemonic masculinity does not equate to violent masculinity” (Connell, 2014, p. 9). Hegemony refers to cultural centrality and authority to the broad acceptance of power by those over whom it is exercised (Connell, 2014). Hegemonic masculinity in gendered organisations involves publicly privileging a business or professional identity that distances men from day-to-day family caregiving (Connell & Wood 2005).
Homonocial Reproduction

Homosociality means power between men, information between men, emotional “socio-erotic” charge between men, and even the dispensability of individual men, but affirmation of men more generally (Hearn, 2014a). Researchers have revealed that men in high-level corporate positions tended to hire other men into high-level management positions, a process called homosocial reproduction (Kanter, 1977; Lipman-Blumen, 1976).

One of the reasons for women’s lack of career progression is their exclusion from informal networks, which has been identified in a large body of literature (for example, O’Neil, Hopkins, & Sullivan, 2011; Sheridan, 2002; Xu & Martin, 2011). Top levels of management have been shaped by homosocial networks that have a strong interest in reproducing and constantly confirming their masculinity; thus, this phenomenon has reinforced and reproduced the masculine norms and values in society and in organisations (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Kanter, 1977). Male informal networks are identified as common and powerful in organisations. This type of network is commonly referred to as “the old boys’ club” or “old boys’ network” (OBN). The most commonly cited source of discomfort for women is related to the OBN, which is powerful in gaining promotions and work opportunities (Bagilhole & White, 2008). The OBN facilitates an accelerated career for network members, who appear to come from similar educational and family backgrounds (Bagilhole & White, 2008; White, 2003; White & Bagilhole, 2008). In countries such as Australia, with an Anglo-Saxon origin, the OBN supports its members who reflect the network’s image, which is white, heterosexual, and male (Faulkner, 2009).

2.8 DOING AND UNDOING GENDER

Gender is not a set of role expectations; instead it has to be played and performed in working life as an important arena of doing gender, and in particular, doing

Women in senior positions usually find themselves in a double bind when “doing” and “undoing” gender. For instance, if they are highly communal, they may be criticised for not being agentic enough. However, if they are highly agentic, they may be criticised for lacking communion. Either way, they may leave the impression that they do not have “right stuff” for powerful jobs, which could lead to them being denied opportunities to succeed. There is a real penalty for women that behave like men (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

2.9 CONCLUSION

The literature upon which this thesis is focused examined the gendering of selected organisations and the concept of the ideal worker that reinforces gender inequality in senior positions. Therefore, this study drew upon Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006c, 2012a) ideal worker to understand the gendering processes in two Australian organisations. The ideal worker is defined as an unencumbered worker who is totally dedicated to work and has no responsibilities for family care (Acker, 1990, 2006a, 2006c, 2012a). The characteristics of the ideal worker are abstract and neutral in
organisational texts; however, some authors have suggested that it resembles male rather than female workers (Acker, 1990; Brink & Stobbe, 2014; Smith, 1987a).

In addition, management has remained a masculine concept (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Hearn, 2004; Kerfoot & Knights, 1993; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Knights & Tullberg, 2012). Although there are more women in management positions than in previous decades, senior positions are still dominated by white male managers (Knights & Tullberg, 2012). Acker (1992a) stated that, “gender is difficult to see when males dominate the central institutions” (p. 567). Researchers believe that the masculine concept of senior positions usually generates challenges for women who desire such positions. They argue that women who assume senior positions need to exhibit masculinity in order to be accepted (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Charles, 2014; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Hearn, 1998, 2004; Kerfoot & Knights, 1996; Wajcman, 1999). Despite enormous efforts to decrease the masculinity of senior positions, it retains a masculine concept (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hearn, 1998; Kerfoot & Knights, 1993, 1996; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Koenig, Mitchell, Eagly, & Ristikari, 2011). While organisations are defined as gender-neutral, the authority structure is dominated by the image of managers as masculine (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Kanter, 1976; Knights & Tullberg, 2012; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). The image of the ideal manager reproduces the masculine norm of organisations that is highly valued and regarded as the taken-for-granted norm of organisations (Brink & Stobbe, 2014).

Organisations have implemented various strategies to overcome and change the subtle forms of gendering processes; however, these processes have remained gendered and continue to persist as the natural and taken-for-granted elements of everyday organisational life (Benschop et al., 2012).
This study aims to develop and construct the concept of the “ideal” candidate for senior positions through the following questions:

- “How do male senior managers construct the “ideal worker” for a senior position?”
- “How does the construction of the “ideal worker” influence women’s career path to senior positions in organisations?”

Although scholars have used the concept of the ideal worker for more than three decades, no one has expanded the concept. However, this study focuses on senior management, and therefore has the potential to provide greater understanding about the ideal manager. While Liff and Ward (2001) and Brink and Benschop (2012) mentioned this term, they did not elaborate on it or provide any hints about the concept and its characteristics.

In addition, while scholars have long investigated the underrepresentation of women in senior roles, the problem still exists and women are still rare in the senior positions around the world. This is also the concern of many organisations in Australia (Strachan, 2008; Strachan, Burgess, et al., 2009). Most Australian organisations have tried to achieve equity in senior positions; however, this still remains one of their main challenges; in particular, the slow progression of women into senior positions (Strachan, 2008; Strachan, Burgess, et al., 2009). As Benschop et al. (2012) claimed “Gender and change do not go together well” (p. 2). Acker (1992a) also stated that, “Gender is difficult to see when males dominate the central institutions” (p. 567).
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology used in this study to examine the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in Australia. The study addresses the following questions:

Q: Why is the proportion of women senior managers in some Australian organisations so low?
   a. How do male senior managers construct the “ideal worker” for a senior position?
   b. How does the construction of the “ideal worker” influence women’s career path to senior positions in organisations?

This chapter first discusses the philosophical approach to the methodology. It then discusses the research design and how the research questions were developed. The ethical issues are then discussed, followed by the outline of the data gathering process. The methods of analysing and coding the interview data are then presented. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within the data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the methods and methodology chosen for this study.

3.1 PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

Paradigms are the preferred way of discovering reality, creating knowledge, and collecting information about the world. Research paradigms vary on the basis of their perspectives of the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), the values associated with areas of research and theorising (axiology), and the strategies for collecting and analysing the data (methodology) (Tracy, 2013).
This research adopted a critical social constructivist worldview. This approach was deemed to be more suited to the research problem, as it gives voice to experiences, concerns, and needs of the objective of study, in this case, women (Hesse-Biber, Janice, & Yaiser, 2004). From a constructivist point of view, reality is not something “out there” that a researcher can easily describe or explain in a report. Rather, reality is constructed through interactions, communications, and practices. Therefore, from a constructionism perspective, meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inherent within individuals (Burr, 1995). The constructivism paradigm always suggests that it is absolutely necessary to analyse social actions from the actors’ standpoint (Tracy, 2013). Therefore, in this research it was necessary to undertake analysis through the perspectives of male senior managers, in addition to those of female managers, according to their interactions, practices, and communications to construct the reality. Moreover, constructivists view knowledge as socially constructed through interactions and language, and reality as linked and identified through society’s cultural and ideological categories (Burr, 1995). Thus, human activities are not tangible material realities and cannot be measured, but can be interpreted and analysed through “text”. Consequently, qualitative methodology is considered a suitable and valuable tool for analysing and interpreting human activities (Tracy, 2013, p. 41).

Furthermore, Geertz described researchers as “cultural interpreters” who provide intense descriptions about discourse beliefs, values, and action in society and organisations (Geertz, 1983). Thus, another part of constructivism is analysing how culture is symbolically constructed and reconstructed. For example, Geertz (1983) likened culture to a spider web: a cultural web not only exists, but is also spun (Tracy, 2013, p. 50).
This research also adopted a critical paradigm, based on the idea that thought is fundamentally interfered with power relations and that data cannot be detached from ideology or a set of beliefs, principles, and myths that guide and have power over individuals and societies. Critical researchers view cultural life as a constant tension between control and resistance, and they frame language as a mediator of this power (Tracy, 2013).

This is a constructionist study grounded in a critical social philosophy and adds a feminist lens through which gender relations are incorporated and analysed. Within qualitative research, constructive analyses are dedicated to capturing the uniqueness of an event and allowing exploration of the socially constructed nature of reality (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). This research maintains a commitment to the empowerment of women (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993) and gives voice to the experiences, concerns, and needs of women (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004). Finally, this study attempts to bring meaning to the phenomenon of the “ideal manager”.

The focus of methodology is on the best means to gaining knowledge about the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This research is structured as two case studies, which examine the construction of the reality that undermines women’s advancement to senior positions through a cultural and feminist lens using a qualitative method.

A case study methodology refers to an in-depth understanding of the problem and exploration of an issue using the case as a specific illustration (Creswell, 2013). Although Stake (2006) claimed that the case study is not considered a methodology, rather a choice of what is to be studied (Stake, 2006), others consider it a research strategy, a strategy of inquiry, and a methodology (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009, cited in Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) argued that the case study is qualitative research in which the researcher tries to investigate a case or multiple cases through multiple sources of information, such as interviews, documents, observations,
and audio-video material. The researcher then reports case descriptions and themes that have been uncovered in the investigation process (Creswell, 2013). Because constructivists believe that knowledge is socially constructed, researchers can assist readers to construct knowledge through the use of case studies (Stake, 2000).

The case study methodology was adopted for four main reasons: first because “how” and “why” research questions favour case studies (Yin, 2009); Second, “what” questions investigate “values” and “taken-for-granted” aspects of the organisation; thus, this thesis used ethnographic tools to help examine the values and norms based on the culture-sharing of the groups in the organisations and to identify local conditions for an analysis of the relations that permeate the conditions (Creswell, 2014; Smith, 2002); Third, a case study indicates learning towards different perspectives and highlights reality by triangulating across different sources of data and sets of facts. Fourth, many of the influential researchers in gender and organisation studies believe that case studies are suitable for answering questions about gender inequality in organisations (Acker, 2012a; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Kerfoot & Knights, 1993; Knights & McCabe, 2015). Finally, fixed-choices (quantitative questions) would not reveal the full nature of values and ideology, except by luck; however, a case study and qualitative method enables deeper examination of the details of ideology that might not otherwise be approached.

While some researchers have chosen narratives (Acker, 2012b; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Pringle, 2008; Wilhoit, 2014), answering the research questions in this study was not only about analysing the stories told, it was also necessary to investigate the construction of the reality that influences women’s career paths to senior positions. For this reason, a case study provides for an in depth understanding. In addition, researchers who have worked on the gendering process (Acker, 1994, 2006a; Acker, 2010; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Ely & Meyerson, 2000) have used case studies that
came close to ethnography study, because it is not only culture, but also the structural arrangement of the job and task design in the organisations that reinforce gender-inequality. Finally, the triangulation of the case study is considered to be the process of considering different aspects to clarify meaning and use different ways to identify various ways the phenomenon is seen (Silverman, 1993, cited in Stake, 2000).

Consequently, two case studies were chosen in order to determine a better understanding of the phenomenon, as organisational policies, practices, and culture do not only have an impact on the underrepresentation of women in the organisations, but also the construction of reality, such as the construction of the ideal manager, which needs to be investigated (Acker, 1990, 2006b, 2012a; Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008). Hence, this approach is an instrumental case (Stake, 1995), which is well suited for discovering the covert and taken-for-granted aspects of organisations that undermine women’s advancement to senior positions (Stake, 2000).

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research involves a series of research questions that are related to each other. First, there is the overall research question that drives the research project. In this study, the overall research question is:

Why is the proportion of women senior managers in some Australian organisations so low?

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the main research question can be very general. Sub-questions are then developed as part of the broader overarching research question, and the analysis they inform provides the answers to the main research questions.

a) How do male senior managers construct the “ideal worker” for a senior position?
3.3 DATA GATHERING PLAN

3.3.1 Research Context

This research was conducted with two organisations. Case study one took place in a university (referred to as “University”) that was chosen from the list of “2014 Employers of Choice for Gender Equality in Australia” (WGEA, 2014a). Case study two features a hospitality business (referred to as “Hospitality”) and was chosen as it had a strategic plan to increase the number of women in senior positions. Both were deemed appropriate sites for the research as they provided the opportunity to discover the challenges in “real life” and assess the participants in their natural environment (Tracy, 2013). Men dominated senior management positions in both organisations (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). In fact, the percentages were similar, with women in 30 per cent of the three senior levels, and one third of the senior managers. Women formed nearly half (47 per cent) of the “other manager” category at University, compared to 35 per cent at Hospitality. Few managers worked on a part-time basis: 15 women and six men at University and 20 women and one man at Hospitality. Only one woman and one man at the general manager level worked part-time (at University) and all others at senior and other manager levels were full-time.

Table 3.1: University Managers by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager occupational categories</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO/Head of Business in Australia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key management personnel</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other executives/general managers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior managers</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other managers</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total: all managers</strong></td>
<td><strong>177</strong></td>
<td><strong>232</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WGEA, Public Reports, 2017
### Table 3.2: Hospitality Managers by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager occupational categories</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO/Head of Business in Australia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key management personnel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other executives/general managers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior managers</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other managers</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total: all managers</strong></td>
<td><strong>252</strong></td>
<td><strong>455</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WGEA, Public Reports, 2017

3.3.2 Access to the site

Qualitative study involves investigating research sites and gaining approval to access the sites in a way that facilitates easy data collection (Creswell, 2013, p.151). This study used purposeful sampling, snowballing, and a gatekeeper strategy. Access to research sites was gained through a number of mechanisms: access to the organisations was first requested through my networks in the LinkedIn website. I also approached HR experts through the Australian Human Resource Institute. Although I was successful in the first step and presented my research several times to various organisations, I was not able to obtain final approval from all of the stakeholders in those organisations. Therefore, my supervisors used their own networks and were successful in obtaining approval from two organisations. Following this acceptance, an email was sent to the organisations outlining an overview of the research (see Appendices 1 and 2: Information sheet and cover letter) requesting permission from the organisations to conduct research (purposeful sampling).

3.3.3 Unit of Analysis

This study examines two units of analysis, which includes two Australian organisations. Acker (2006b) suggested that organisations are critical sites for the investigation of the continuous creation of complex inequalities, because much societal inequality originates in such organisations. Work organisations are also the target for
many attempts to identify invisible aspects of the reproduction of inequalities (Acker, 2006).

Thus, two organisations were investigated to understand the taken-for-granted values and norms, discover the experiences of women and men participants in middle and senior management positions, and uncover the perceptions of the rationale behind the underrepresentation of women in senior positions.

3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Patton (199) stated that, “Multiple methods of data collection and analysis provide more grist for the research mill” (p. 1192). The data collection protocol described here followed the case study protocol, which included document collection analysis and interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The use of different methods allows for triangulation (in this study the interviews were triangulated with legislative and company policy documents), which is important for problem solving because no single method ever sufficiently solves the problem and each method uncovers different aspects of the empirical reality.

3.4.1 Document Collection

Document analysis is beneficial in case study methodology to gain an understanding of the objects that cannot be observed (Yin, 2009). Therefore, in this study, the data collection began with reviewing documents, such as those publicly available on the organisation’s websites (with “gender” as the keyword) and the WGEA website (recent report). In addition, any other public documents that explored the organisation’s practices and initiatives relating to female managers’ succession planning, including their initiatives for recruitment, deployment, development, promotion, and retention of women in senior positions were also reviewed. Policy documents provided by HR managers of the organisation, including regulations and legislation that supported women’s promotion in the organisation, such as gender
equity, gender representation, codes of conduct, and any diversity programs that were applied in the organisation, and HR documents, as well as demographic data, were also analysed to gain an understanding of the organisational practices for women’s advancement to senior positions.

3.4.2 Interview

Organisational practices, processes, and culture were explored using interviews, and I was able to gain the trust of some staff and establish rapport with those I wished to interview, which was crucial to the success of the interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, the next step was conducting semi-structured interviews with executives, senior managers, and middle managers, both women and men, in order to investigate the gendering processes of the organisation and the organisational norms and values. Their views about being a senior manager and value sharing in the organisation, as well as the taken-for-granted aspects of organisations were also discussed (Brink & Stobbe, 2014). All interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews began with a general question to establish some trust between the interviewee and myself and continued with questions about their transition to senior roles to investigate how senior managers, especially men, constructed the ideal manager and also how this influenced women’s progression to senior positions.

While undertaking the interviews, I kept the overall topic in mind in order to take the lead from my respondents. Each interview took about 45 minutes to allow respondents enough time to discuss their issues comfortably (Brink & Stobbe, 2014). This method of interview resembles a friendly conversation that constructs the data from these men and women’s work experiences (Ross-Smith & Chesterman, 2009; Spradley, 1979). For example, the interviews began with “Tell me about your transition into a senior position” and respondents were then asked to “Tell me about some of the challenges and opportunities that you faced getting into senior positions”. These
questions enable me to discuss the established understanding of transition of women and men into senior roles and also facilitate an understanding of an “ideal candidate” for managerial positions, and whether masculine norms and values still exist (Billing, 2011).

In summary, I always kept the main questions of this project in mind. Furthermore, I led and encouraged interviewees to describe and explain the situation in a way that tells a story. I continued the interviews until the answers became duplicated. While I was interviewing, in addition to recording, I also took field notes about important points (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), which helped me while analysing the interviews.

3.4.3 Sampling in Interview

Purposeful sampling was chosen for this study (Creswell, 2014; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Tracy, 2013), whereby a sample appropriate for the parameters of the research questions was purposefully chosen (Tracy, 2013). Two organisations were chosen, as discussed above, one from the list of “Employer of Choice for Gender” in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, and the other was a 24/7 business that had very few females in senior roles.

The interviews were conducted with male and female senior managers in two organisations. They were deemed suitable informants for exploring how they constructed the ideal manager, the pathways to senior positions, and the perceived barriers. In addition, some assistant managers were also interviewed to determine their perceived barriers for further progression. Finally, HR managers were interviewed, firstly because they were considered a sample of senior managers, and also so that some questions about HR practices that facilitate employees’ progress to senior positions could be asked (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). In this study, 50 informants, 26 from University (see Table 3.3) and 24 from Hospitality (see Tables 3.4), were chosen.
in the two organisations. In contrast to most gender studies in organisations that focus more on women’s voice, I purposefully requested to interview more men than women where possible, as I wanted to gain more insight from male senior managers perspectives. I required men’s perspectives and views on the topic, as they occupied senior leadership positions in larger amounts; thus, it was important to understand what it takes to become a senior leader from their perspectives (Sinclair, 2009). However, when I commenced interviewing in each organisation more women than men agreed to take part in this research. Therefore, I interviewed, 29 women and 21 men in total.
Table 3.3: Details of Interview Participants at University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Deputy Director</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>Dean - Prof</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>E</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Head of Dept - Prof</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>M</td>
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</table>

3 All names are pseudonyms in this research
Table 3.4: Details of Interview Participants at Hospitality

<table>
<thead>
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<th>No</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

The criteria for the selection of participants were based on the organisational profiles of each organisation. HR managers provided a list of contact details and I personally invited the participants to participate in the study. The invitation was sent via email and included a cover letter, information sheet, and consent form. If the participants were willing to participate they replied to the email and dates and locations for the interview were then chosen that were suitable for both of us. Teleconferencing was also used with those senior managers who had limited availability. The confidentiality of their information was emphasised and informed consent was signed by interviewees before participating in the interview.

4 All names are pseudonyms in this research
3.4.4 Data Collection Protocol

The study was conducted in three phases. The first phase was used to establish connections with the HR department of the two organisations, to identify the study population, and to attain the required documents. This helped me to develop an understanding of the context prior to investigating the fieldwork.

The second phase comprised document collection and analysis from a range of different materials that covered equality issues (Bradley & Healy, 2008). Documentation was collected through sources such as the organisations’ websites and reports to WGEA, which were publicly available through the WGEA website. A picture of the organisations’ strategies and their actions was derived through the documentary analyses, which assisted with preparation before conducting the interviews (Bradley & Healy, 2008).

The third phase of the research was semi-structured interviews with 50 female and male senior managers. Each interview took between 45 minutes and one hour. Interviews were undertaken over six months. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. I also kept an analytical memo, which is a brief document of my researcher reflections and thinking about the data to synthesis them into analytical meaning. It was a first-draft of self-report about the study, which served as the basis for the analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

3.5 DATA EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS

Clarity on the process of data analysis is critical (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Comparison and evaluation with other studies in the field is easier if we know how the researcher analysed their data and what assumptions informed their analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Thematic analysis was used in this study. There is no set agreement on the specifics of a thematic analysis and it is a process of moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extract of data being analysed, and the data being produced. Some of the phases of thematic analysis are similar to the phases of other qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Table 3.5 provides Braun and Clarke's (2006) description of thematic analysis.

Table 3.5: Phases of thematic analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Familiarising yourself with your data:</td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generating initial codes:</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Searching for themes:</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reviewing themes:</td>
<td>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Defining and naming themes:</td>
<td>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Producing the report:</td>
<td>The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The process of analysis started from when the interviews were conducted. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the first phase of thematic analysis is familiarisation with the data; thus, I looked at the patterns of meaning from when I began conducting the interviews and while transcribing. The endpoint is the reporting of the content and meaning of the patterns (themes) in the data where themes are abstract constructs that the investigator identifies before, during and after analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As mentioned earlier, all of the interviews were conducted using
interactive conversation, so I had the prior knowledge of the data. During the interviews I developed some initial analytical interests and thoughts that I noted down in my field notes. This later assisted me to shape my thoughts. In addition, transcribing the interviews provided a greater depth and breadth of the data before coding (Riessman, 1993). These aforementioned steps provided me with a strong foundation for the rest of the analysis.

After transcribing the interviews, the next phase of thematic analysis is generating an initial list of ideas – what is in the data and what is interesting about them. Codes were then developed based on the interviewees’ responses, the literature, and other emergent concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tesch, 1990 cited in S. Acker, 2010).

In the first phase of coding, I made an extensive description of the case (Creswell, 2013) and then interpreted it to construct what was happening. The primary cycle of coding focused on the “what” questions. The secondary cycle of coding examined the primary codes and began organising and categorising the codes into interpretive concepts (Tracy, 2013). I then used “analytical coding” or “thematic coding” to explore the “why” and “how” questions (Tracy, 2013), and referred back to theories (Tracy, 2013) to interpret the codes.

The data and demographic information about the participants were entered into NVivo. The use of NVivo enables the researcher to consider demographic issues, such as age and sector when there are emergent themes or contradictions in the discussion (Miles et al., 2014).

3.6 RESEARCHER’S DIARY AND REFLEXIVITY

My field notes were a significant part of data analysis. The field notes captured my feelings and thoughts before and after conducting interviews. I reviewed the post-interview notes before analysing each of the interviews. By being conscious of the need
to be reflexive, I focused on representing the views of the participants as authentically as possible (Holgate, Hebson, & McBride, 2006, pp. 314, 322), while at the same time responding to my own issues, feelings, and experiences (Holgate et al., 2006, p. 322). For example, notes written prior to commencing interviews described the anxiety I felt about entering the field, particularly how I would be perceived as someone (an “outsider”) wanting to know the details of their career and whether they would trust me to share their personal information. However, when reflecting on these notes, I understood that while participants were concerned about their own situation, they were also concerned about others in similar situations. I understood that there was little likelihood of interviewees being highly hostile, as participants wanted to contribute to change by helping to improve outcomes for women experiencing challenges in their careers.

3.7 RESEARCHER’S PHILOSOPHY

The researcher’s acknowledgement of their standpoint in the project is crucial (Holgate et al., 2006). However, everyone’s life is different due to the situated position of their lived reality, and there is never one truth. This is an important methodological and theoretical standpoint (Yuval-Davis, 2012). Being female, non-Anglo-Saxon, middle class, and from a non-English speaking background did affect my interviews and was absolutely important in this study. Therefore, the acknowledgement of one’s own position in relation to the research assists the reader in two ways. First, the reader gains an insight into a methodological approach that recognises the processes of intersectionality (in my case, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, culture, and age) and second, it provides further information that enables the reader to question the effect this may have on the research (Holgate et al., 2006). This project, as with other qualitative studies, was underpinned by my own background. I am an Iranian woman in my 30s, and moved to Australia just before commencing my PhD. Although I am from
a different background, the fact that I am a female was a factor that slowly broke down the barriers with women managers and assisted me to build relationships of trust. However, because the focus of research was on women managers, it was therefore difficult to build a relationship with the male interviewees. Some were supportive of the research topic and others were against the topic. I was not sure whether I could build a relationship of trust with the male managers, and therefore nothing could alter the artificiality of the situation while interviewing male participants. In addition, I was an outsider and researching something that might not be in their interest at all. Nevertheless, by opening the conversation with male managers by focusing on “them” (their own career journey, their career progression, and their opportunities and challenges) I was able to build a relationship of trust after maybe five to 10 minutes of conversation.

It is worthwhile mentioning that my experience interviewing male participants at University was different from interviewing male managers at Hospitality. Most of the men at University seemed to be supportive of the research. However, at Hospitality, this was somewhat mitigated by the fact that it was their diversity leader, who was male, who encouraged male managers to participate in the study. Although they contacted me directly and stated their interest, I was still not sure whether it was their own interest or their relationship with the diversity leader that made them participate in the study. As a side note, Hospitality had three branches in different cities, and the diversity leader was located in their head office; thus, the number of male interviewees from head office was greater than that of the two other branches.

In summary, I reflected on my emerging understanding of how each participant understood their transition to a senior role based on their gender within their current social, environmental, and political context. Being a middle-eastern woman, my perspective was that Australia has numerous supportive policies and is therefore a
utopia for women. However, when I moved to Australia and observed the environment that I had been living in during the last three years, I found that the issue was somehow entrenched in the culture of society.

### 3.7.1 Objectivity and Truth

In order to attain rigor in a qualitative study the researcher should take responsibility for reliability and validity through verification strategies, both integral and self-correcting, during the conduct of inquiry itself (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Verification refers to the mechanism used while conducting the research process to ensure the validity, reliability, and hence, the rigor of the study (Morse et al., 2002). A good qualitative researcher always checks the design and implementation to confirm the congruency among the question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies and analysis. This process helps the researcher to recognise when to continue, when to stop, and when to modify the research process in order to achieve reliability and validity (Morse et al., 2002); thus, these strategies were used in this study to ensure the reliability and validity of the research.

### 3.8 Limitations of the Study

Qualitative studies are not generalisable, as they are time and context bound, which is one limitation of this study; however, the qualitative method was deemed the best way to explore the research questions. Similarly, from a constructivist point of view, knowledge and reality are not something that researchers can easily describe or explain, rather they view knowledge that is socially constructed through interactions, language and reality, as linked and identified through society’s cultural and ideological categories (Schwandt, 2000; Tracy, 2013).

After analysing the data and writing the findings, I determined that my study had another limitation. When I was interviewing men and women managers in the organisations, they spoke about their partners and their personal life and about how
having a supportive partner facilitated them to achieve senior positions. Although the data was reached and I considered their views as their partners, it would have been beneficial to also interview their partners, as I believe it would have added richness to the collected data. There are always different events in the world where only part of what happens can be “captured” as a record, and certain information is then extracted from it, which is called “data”. Some of these data are better than the others; and as such, they are stronger, making them more valid and giving more weight to the conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). As a result, I believe I could have achieved a stronger outcome from my research and obtained a better understanding of the phenomenon in the context of the participant’s personal life.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues in qualitative studies need to be considered in all phases of the research, including prior to and during the early phases of conducting the study, the data gathering, analysing, and reporting data, and finally publishing the results (Creswell, 2013, p.57). Prior to conducting the study, it was important to gain ethical approval from Griffith University. This was in the form of obtaining ethical clearance prior to conducting the study. The human component of this study, which included interviews, conformed to the guidelines established by Griffith University in its human research ethics manuals. However, some elements of the case study, such as the document analysis, were outside of the scope of this arrangement. Therefore, a proportion of the work required ethical approval. At the beginning of the study, it was important to disclose the initial purpose of the study to all participants and obtain their approval before conducting the research through an informed consent agreement. While gathering data, I assured the gatekeepers and authorities that the research would not generate any disruption to the activities of the site. Throughout the analysis and reporting of the data, I kept the nature of the organisations anonymous, de-identified
participants, and maintained organisational confidentially, which was necessary (see Appendix 4: Ethics clearance certificate).

3.10 CONCLUSION

This study drew on case studies of two Australian organisations and used a qualitative approach with a social constructivist worldview grounded in a critical social philosophy. A feminist lens was used to analyse gender relations in the two organisations and this relied upon document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 50 executives and middle and senior managers, both male and female, from those organisations.
Chapter 4: Research Contexts

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research context of the organisations (Hospitality and University) that were the focus of this research. One set of data analysed the organisation’s websites and documents supplied by the organisations. The second set of data was based on the interviews with the HR director from each organisation. The interviews focused on the initiatives, including the policies, practices, and initiatives for women’s advancement to senior positions in each organisation.

Like other universities, University prioritises education. It claims to value social justice and diversity. As at 2015, a key priority of University was equity and diversity, which included improving the proportion of female staff in senior roles. Included in University’s strategic plan was the goal to improve the proportion of female staff in senior academic and administrative positions and improve the respective gender representation in academic and administrative units to achieve gender balance at all levels. University’s commitment to equal employment and gender equity could be seen through a number of activities and initiatives, which were expressed in the volume of documents supplied. Information on University’s website that related to gender equality was comprehensive, and publicly available to outsiders. These policies and practices continue to be updated.

In contrast, Hospitality had few documents pertaining to gender and equity, their website had no gender equity content that could showcase their value and perspectives about gender equity. Therefore, most of the information about gender and equity in this

5 Reference is not included for confidentiality reasons
chapter was captured through interviews with Hospitality’s HR staff and the diversity leader.

4.2 UNIVERSITY

In Australian universities, the industrial award for academics specifies five academic levels: level A: associate lecturer, level B: lecturer, level C: senior lecturer, level D: associate professor, and level E: professor. The industrial award for administrative allied staff encompasses an 11-step structure. The Higher Education Worker system (HEW) has HEW level 1 as the lowest level, rising to HEW level 10. Levels 10+ refer to the most senior administrative staff, who are directors (including deputies and associates), pro vice chancellors (PVCs) and deputy vice chancellors (DVCs).

4.2.1 The Employment Landscape at University (2015)

In 2015, sixty per cent of the fixed term and continuing (permanent) total workforce at University were women. Table 4.1 demonstrates the major differences between academic women and men. The differences appear from level D and above, that is, associate professor to professor. This issue also relates to the higher education workers. Lara (HR associate director) stated that the gap between women and men increased after HEW 10+, as more men were directors, PVCs, and DVCs.

Table 4.1: Composition of female to male academics at University:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level A</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level B</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level C</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level D</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level E</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Organisational Profile, 2015
4.2.2 Recruitment and Selection Process for Senior Positions

Academic staff must apply for promotion. Academic management positions, such as deans, are advertised both externally and internally, using advertisements that include the position description and key selection criteria. Lara commented that:

Probably most of the deputy heads roles would be recruited internally, [from the] academic staff, if you think you are in that level you can put in your application. Once it is a head or dean position, they are always externally recruited. For the general staff, there has to be a position in that level, which is quite different [than for academics]. The majority of time that would be advertised externally and you would put in your application.

Based on University’s Equity and Diversity Plan (2014-2017), the recruitment and selection policy clearly sets out that an increase in the representation of women into senior levels is their main goal. Lara explained based on this strategic plan, the promotion committee should consider gender equality and they must have women represented on all recruitment panels. If not, they need to meet with the HRM director and the DVC Engagement to discuss this and find a solution. There is also a requirement that for level C and above for academic staff and for level 9 and above for general staff, that there must be at least one female on the short list. University values gender equality and actively encourages a diverse group of applicants to apply for management roles. According to data provided by University, the promotion success rates for level C and above and level 9 and above for women were higher than men between 2010 to 2014. Of all women who applied for promotion, the success rate was 80 per cent; and for men who applied for the promotion, the success rate was 72 per cent.
4.2.3 Leadership Programs

According to Lara, the data related to promotion shows that fewer women than men were applying for promotion; however, when women did apply, their success rate was high. To respond to fewer women applying for promotion, University developed a program specifically targeting women titled the “Women Only Promotion Session”. University also offers two different leadership programs for women that focus on women’s progression to management positions.

The first leadership program is designed for and targets middle level women, both academic and general staff. This program assists University to increase the number of women at levels D and E and senior administrative roles (HEW level 10 and above). This program helps that group to understand the leadership at University and be prepared for career progression. University appoints a mentor for participants to guide their career development. The second leadership program matches the participants with a relevant senior executive who works through their career planning. They may analyse the 360-degree feedback and they can seek dialogue with other senior level executives. Lara said “It is a bit more exposure to the senior executive and current leaders, but also having [the] ability to tell them what you are doing to be able to establish more of a relationship”.

The second leadership program is smaller and targeted at women who are already in leadership positions, both senior academic or senior administrative staff. University aims to enhance their leadership capabilities to build a pipeline into more senior positions. This program specifically looks at the succession of women who are already in senior positions to prepare them for future success. The HR director discusses the candidates to nominate for the second leadership program with the PVCs and DVCs. In addition to an internal relationship with senior executives, this leadership program
allows participants access to external executives, exposing them to how senior leadership operates in other organisations.

Furthermore, University has set up a formal mentoring scheme through both programs. University allocates funds for participants in both leadership programs to access development or coaching. University sponsors senior women leaders to attend conferences where presenters include women PVCs and DVCs from across the industry.

Lara explained that:

Thirty-eight per cent of academic women who have gone through the first leadership program have been promoted to a higher role. Academic women who have attended the second leadership program (15 people in total), 75-80 per cent of them have been promoted.

Of the mentoring scheme Lara added that:

One of the benefits of the program is that [the] formal sponsorships or mentor relationships that develop within the senior executive members not only enhances visibility, it also enhances the relationship with senior executives.

In addition to these two leadership programs, the deans and the PVCs at University assist women managers in the lower levels by talking with them about their career path and the progression that University provides. University has also identified male champions, who are senior male executives within University who celebrate when women are successful, making it clear that equity and diversity is very important to University.

4.2.4 Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)

University offers various FWAs to employees, including reversible part-time appointment for the care of dependents, a flexible work year, variable hours, and flexitime (general staff only). These are available to all staff and not specific to senior
roles. In senior positions, flexibility is gained through discussions between employees and their managers to decide how FWAs will work for that person.

Leave options in University’s enterprise agreement include parental leave, family, cultural obligations, special circumstances leave, and domestic violence leave. This study only discusses parental leave (see Table 4.3 below).

Table 4.2: Parental leave entitlements at University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior continuous service with the University</th>
<th>Paid parental leave entitlement</th>
<th>Unpaid parental leave entitlement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 months or more</td>
<td>26 weeks (total parental leave and primary carers leave)</td>
<td>26 weeks</td>
<td>52 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 12 months</td>
<td>Six weeks paid parental leave</td>
<td>46 weeks</td>
<td>52 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9 months</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>52 weeks</td>
<td>52 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University website

University also offers a variety of family friendly options, including special zone parking for pregnant women, an on-site childcare centre, family day care, first aid rooms, and parent/breast-feeding rooms. Parenting and breast-feeding facilities are available on all campuses for all staff and students to access. Childcare facilities are available only on one of the campuses.

According to Joshua (HR director), having policies in place is necessary; however, these are not sufficient, as organisations need to have the culture of FWAs as well. He explained that in order to create the culture of FWAs, University has a male PVC and DVC who pick up their children on certain days of the week to make the culture visible for other employees.

4.3 HOSPITALITY

Hospitality has a target of 50 per cent of women leaders by 2020, in Tiers 1 to Tier 4 of management. Tier 1 is company executive, Tier 2 is general manager, Tier 3 is senior manager, Tier 4 is assistant manager, Tier 5 is frontline manager or team supervisor, and Tier 6 is frontline team member (people who do not manage staff).
Employees at Hospitality are divided into two categories: the first group are those who commenced working at Hospitality doing a generic floor job and have progressed through the organisational ranks. The second group are those who joined the professional and management workforce.

4.3.1 Strategies to Improve the Number of Women in Senior Positions

To improve the number of women in senior positions, Hospitality developed different strategic plans. Firstly, they aimed to increase the awareness of equal opportunities within the organisation. To do this, Hospitality invited external women leaders to speak about their careers and how they got to where they are. They also planned to analyse the organisation’s reports to identify issues, such as where the decline occurred and the numbers by gender for each level. They were also initiatives to move from awareness of gender equity to embedding it into practice. For instance, they looked at their talent review and succession planning to identify how many women were present in those programs in order to increase awareness. Hospitality began to review its parental leave policy, FWA policy, and their processes. During 2016-2017, Hospitality ran a pilot on FWAs in senior roles to enable employees to work flexibly and to examine its feasibility. In 2017, the diversity leader commenced the pilot, which was still in the early stages, and thus, no data had been reported.

According to Ross (diversity leader, Tier 2) another initiative, “The Women in MBA” program, was expensive and was not considered to have much of an impact or create a significant number of women in senior positions.

Hospitality included a diversity plan in their strategic plan from 2015. Ross noted that, “The executives started being interested in diversity recently … [and that] having the executive championing and demonstrating [it] is really critical. If an organisation doesn’t have the CEO and executives on board, nothing will change”.
Although Hospitality had been in existence for more than 20 years, they emerged from their parent company in 2012, and Ross noted that, “We’re probably an example of a new company rather than a company that has deeply embedded policy in gender equity”.

Hospitality was aiming to increase the number of women leaders in Tier 1 and Tier 2 senior management. To achieve this, they had different strategic plans, and Ross commented that their main problem in recruiting internally is that they usually did not have enough women on the recruitment list, but they did have a lot of men, and so, as a result they mostly recruited men:

When we are developing employees, we don’t exclude people. There is (sic) some areas of our business that is (sic) 24 hours 7 days a week roles, so females usually have excluded themselves from taking on [these] positions. Women don’t want to be at the beck and call all the time, whereas men say “I don’t want to do it, but I’ll do it for my career”. So, there is an adjustment around what it is people have to do in order to progress, they have to spend time on a night shift. That is what you really want the people to do.

4.3.2 Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)

Flexibility in senior management positions is decided on a case-by-case basis. However, it is not offered, senior managers need to request it. As stated earlier, Hospitality was going to pilot FWAs at all levels of management to determine whether it was feasible. Ross explained:

We’re going to target, for example, a team within finance and say everyone within this team is going to have flexible working arrangements available to them. The person may be male or female, may [or may] not have children. The manager [is] going to each of those people, and saying, “What does flexible working arrangements mean for you?” For some people it might mean cutting down the traveling time so that they have time, they can use that traveling time
to work from home. So that they can devote the time that would’ve been used sitting in traffic to their children at night or put them to bed. For someone else, it might mean working flexible hours so that they can train for a spot. The whole thing about this pilot is to test our theory that it can be done and can also mean that a person can also successfully do their job, whether they’re in the office or not.

According to Ross, Hospitality’s senior executives believed that for a lot of their senior female leaders with children, especially young children, the FWAs would go a long way in assisting their work-life responsibilities and encouraging them to know that they were supported by the company. He added that “Part of the pilot is showing to people that it works and it works really well”.

Increasing the number of women in senior roles was developed by Hospitality Corporate, and is now flowing down to other branches of the organisation. In 2015, the focus was on reviewing the maternity/parental leave policy to ensure that the entitlement was parallel with Australian best practice, ensuring that there was a work-life balance and they were looking at keeping in touch with staff whilst they were on maternity/parental leave. Ross commented that:

We are a much more open minded to women who have care responsibility, open minded about start and finish times for anybody with carer responsibility, whether that be male or a female. These days, with technology, there’s a lot more to be open minded about, just being connected to the workplace without necessarily being here all the time. I’d like to tell you that we’ve got working from home arrangements, and we can work something out with weekday, work nights. We don’t have that at the moment, but I will say that there’s an open mind to start and finish times, and an open mind to ensuring that our women can do the job after pick up for (sic) children at school, that they can finish up
their work day at home, but there’s no set practices about certain days or times of the week that they, they work from home just yet.

Hospitality has succession planning that specifically focuses on women and Asian employees, but these employees need to express their interest in the programs. Ross said “By doing that we don’t put somebody in there if they’re not willing to be picked up for [the] succession plan”.

Hospitality has talent review and succession planning processes in place, where they examine senior positions to see how they can encourage more women, but as Ross noted, “There aren’t a whole lot of females filling up those positions anyway”.

4.3.3 Development Programs for Women

There are different programs at Hospitality to increase the number of women in senior roles, such as the mentoring program, which is a one-on-one, where a manager is paired with a very senior manager (GM and above) where they meet every few weeks for a year. Discussions can be about anything from a specific topic about their career to the experiences of the mentor passing on knowledge. The group sponsor program is a group situation where six to eight team leaders are grouped a manager. They meet monthly as a group to discuss a topic that has been given to them. There are reading materials and activities to complete before they come together to talk about that topic. For example, the topic could be about engaging teams, providing feedback, or leading diverse teams, and the group sponsor leads that discussion and facilitates the discussion. Hospitality ensures there is a 50 percent female representation in these groups.

Another initiative that Hospitality’s gender diversity group is working on is to create awareness and educate people across the organisation about the reasons for the underrepresentation of women.

The Women in MBA program discussed earlier is where Hospitality partnered with X company. Basically, X company funds 50 percent of the MBA and Hospitality funds
the other 50 percent. Hospitality sent three women for these programs. This is the first
time they have launched this program and as such, they have not seen the outcomes yet.

**Unconscious Biases**

At Hospitality all executives have to participate in unconscious bias training
where they are assessed and identify their unconscious biases in areas including gender,
multi-culturalism, LGBTI, and age. After the assessment, a report is provided to them
and the results are discussed in workshops. There are two workshops involved in this
program: an overview about unconscious bias and action planning. Between the
workshops, the participants do the assessment. Ross said:

I think at least a few of [the] male senior executives have probably made
conscious efforts since then, because they are now aware of the impacts that
their biases can have. So, they have already booked in more workshops, more
unconscious bias sessions for executives. So, the executive level has already
done it, and now we’re rolling it down to the level below that and the level
below that.

**Diversity in Decision Making**

Hospitality focuses on diversity rather than just gender. Most senior male
managers talked about developing a “diversity of thoughts” in the organisation instead
of only increasing the number of women managers. Executives and HR managers
believed that Hospitality would have a competitive advantage if they recruited more
Asian executives, as their customers were mainly from Asian countries and they were
interested in the topic of recruiting Asians into all levels of the organisation. Tony
(CFO) mentioned:

A large part of our client base is Asian, especially in Sydney, so that means that
we need to make smarter choices about the composition of our leadership. At
the moment, our executive leadership team is 100 percent Caucasian, there are
ten of them, [and] two of them are female. So, they realise that if we were able
to have a more diverse leadership team... it will be more innovative. Someone with a different mindset or a different skill set and different experiences, particularly with the Asian market, will help us differentiate ourselves.

All senior male managers were they were concerned by the questions around underrepresentation of women in senior roles and they emphasised their focus was on “diversity of thoughts” not on gender.

**HR Strategies Focusing on Women**

Hospitality had recently changed some of their recruitment practices, and although they did not have any strategies in place to recruit women, increasing awareness about attracting more women was mentioned. Different HR managers were interviewed in a number of Hospitality enterprises, but most of the discussion was around how they recruited people into generic positions and not specifically how they recruited for their senior positions. However, the final decision with regards to senior roles (GM or above) is always made by the CEO and the group executive of HR.

In talking about the recruitment process for senior levels, Maggie (recruitment manager, Tier 3) commented:

In terms of our recruitment practices for senior positions, I’ll be very honest with you, it’s a very high level at the moment, so it really is just about making sure that we have women represented when we look to final representation of who’s successful for interviews for the role. If we go through all of our candidates and we realise that the five finalists are all men, then we will go back and increase the final candidate pool to ensure women are represented. And if we have a final selection of final two people, we encourage that both genders are represented in the final two candidates, so that’s some very high level stuff in terms of candidate calling.
In terms of candidate attraction, she also said that they do not have any strategies in place yet.

**Turnover**

Amy (HRM) said that turnover is low in their management team, but high at the front-line level:

When you look at [the] gender breakdown, there is no real split, females don’t leave more or less than men, they just leave at the same amount and when you look at breakdown of the organisation, we’ve got 43 per cent female, 57 per cent male [so] that’s not too far of a representation of employment in the workforce at all.

However, she explained that throughout the organisation the turnover rate was high, but was similar to the industry turnover rate.

### 4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed and described the practices and policies that focused on the recruitment and retention of women to senior roles. University was a strictly regulated organisation with numerous policies in place and very formal processes for recruitment and promotion. University was also one of WGEA’s “Employers of Choice” for gender since 2013. In comparison, most of the information gathered from Hospitality was derived from interviewing the diversity manager and HR managers. Most of their initiatives were very new; thus, there was little information to report. Hospitality was focused on their competitors and increasing awareness around diversity, with gender slightly de-emphasised.
Chapter 5: Experiences of Female and Male Managers Achieving Senior Positions Within Two Organisations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the narratives of some of the women and men who shared their stories about their transition into senior positions. It does not discuss all 50 participants, rather it tells the stories of some of the managers who were deemed to be representative of a group of participants, as well as some whose stories were unique. All participants were asked the same questions, but individually raised different issues. In some instances, more usually with male participants, follow up questions were asked in order to gain information about career and career trajectories.

The purpose of recounting these career journeys is to provide an insight into their journeys in their own words. These individual stories comprise three sections. First, there is brief description of the participant’s journey to a senior role. Second, the challenges these managers faced reaching senior roles are recounted, as well as the challenges they faced when they gained the position. Finally, the participant’s future plans for progression in their career are presented.

In this chapter, the interviews are divided into four groups based on the organisation and the gender of the participants. The separation by gender enables an understanding of the differences between female and male managers in the two organisations, while the separation of the two organisations allows institutional differences to be revealed. This chapter sets the scene for the following chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) in which the participants’ stories are developed into the main themes that emerged from the interviews.
5.2 WOMEN AT HOSPITALITY

5.2.1 Julia

Julia was a senior manager (Tier 3) at Hospitality. She was 52 years old, had a partner, and two adult children. She had worked for Hospitality for more than 28 years, although this was not continuous, as she worked for another organisation for several years. She had been in a management position for almost 10 years.

Julia is representative of group of women at Hospitality who started in a front-line customer-focused position and progressed through the hierarchies to Tier 3 of management. All of the women in this group had only progressed up to Tier 3, the lowest management level, and usually took a long time to achieve this role.

Achieving a Senior Position

Working with the organisation for 28 years gave Julia an opportunity to progress from a front-line customer-focused position into a senior position, “I started here originally as a… [a front-line customer-focused position] and it was just a natural progression, you worked your way up… moving up to the next step, the next step, the next step. I was really lucky. I was in the right place at the right time”. In these years of progression in the company, Julia felt supported by her managers:

I’ve never had any struggle to get where I’ve got to… I’ve had a lot of support from my managers… which I’ve worked with for 30 years, so they’re people that I’ve basically grown up with. We were all in our twenties when we started here, so I’ve known all of my immediate managers for 30 years… and [we’ve] worked together for 30 years, so I think that’s very unique. I don’t think you’d see that many places.

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6 Tier 1 = The Co. Executive  
Tier 2 = General Manager  
Tier 3 = Senior Manager  
Tier 4 = Assistant Manager
Julia worked in a managerial position in another organisation for several years before moving back to Hospitality, and it was through that experience that she gained a management position in Hospitality, “I got more managerial experience, and when I came back… I already had that experience”. On her return to Hospitality she commenced in a floor management position, then moved to an operational position, and then to a frontline management role. She then gained a management position where she ran a whole floor of operations, including duties such as staff rosters and dealing with customer disputes and complaints. Her current position is as an operational manager at Hospitality, which is categorised as Tier 3 of management.

**Challenges**

Julia faced challenges when she had small children. She never used any kind of FWAs, “It wasn’t an option, they didn’t have …[FWAs] because it’s quite a long time ago. Now they do”. Hospitality is currently giving some consideration regarding night shifts when staff have young children. Twenty years ago there was no consideration at all, “absolutely zero consideration”. Her husband worked in the same organisation and they had to have a babysitter during the nights they worked. In her front-line customer-focused position, her normal shifts started at 3.30 am, and she had to wake up at 2 am, on a 24-hour rotation. It worked for her perfectly when her children were small as she could finish her work and do her maternal duties for the whole day, “If I finish[ed] work at 11 o’clock, I was with them all afternoon. I could pick them up after school. You know, I was there all night. I could do their homework and all of that kind of stuff”.

Julia believed that there was currently more support for women in the organisation than there had been previously, “In the last few years, my immediate managers, there’s two, and they push you a little bit, and get you out of your comfort zone, and [they] go ‘No, you should be doing this, and look at that, and you need to extend yourself’, so that’s good”. However, “You still get some from the old school. They say women are
the flavour of the month, you will get that job because you are a woman. So, you still have that target versus merit kind of thing which is a difficult one”.

Julia had always worked in male dominated positions. At her level there was a poor representation of women “about 30 per cent women and 70 per cent men”. She said when she participated in a board meeting she was not heard. Julia said that although they were friendly, the boys’ club culture still existed.

I went to a meeting of my shift and… of my peers on the same level as me, and I’m the only female and there’s seven men. So, it’s still… that talk about the footy and the soccer and… there’s still that boy’s thing. And, sometimes, when they say things, I look at them and go, ‘Did you really just say that?’ [laughs]. You can’t say that anymore. Twenty years ago, you could say it, but you can’t say it now. You know, it’s not like it, how it was 20 years ago. It was dreadful 30 years ago. You know, if you’re a female, it was just like, you do this and you shut up and you don’t say anything.

She believed that there were still challenges for women in Hospitality. While there had been many changes due to the rules and regulations that existed about “diversity”, women still needed to prove themselves more than men. Julia felt that she needed to work harder to show that she did a good job in her position and that she deserved it and had not been given it because she was a woman. She explained:

It’s quite different today. Yes, there was a little bit, and I know that a lot of the men feel a little bit threatened about diversity. Being female, at the moment, yes it will help things, because every business is looking into diversity. But it’s not just because you’re a female, and sometimes that’s, I guess, you feel that you have to prove yourself a little bit more, you have to be a little bit better, so that it’s not, you only got there because you’re female.
Julia continued this line of thought:

Diversity is a word that I hate, because to them [men], it just means, it doesn’t matter if you’re good or bad. You’ll get the job because you’re female, and there’s so much more to it than that, they have to start looking at good women [who] get the job on merit as well.

But then she said, “But generally, it’s okay, and again, I’ve known all these people for such a long time, I can just go, ‘Pull your head in and be quiet’. Whereas, if I didn’t know them, I couldn’t do that”.

Julia said that women usually did not apply for the job because they felt that they were not perfect in everything or that they did not have all of the required skills. However, she had learned that you did not need to always be perfect, as you would learn when you got to the position and experienced it. Until then you could ask for help from people who were experts in that area. “Whereas five years ago, I would go, ‘I can’t do that, so I’m not gonna apply for the job’”. She concluded that “This is a very male dominated industry and most of the executives are men, however, there has been an effort being made in this organisation to make a change”.

**Future Career**

Now that her children were grown, Julia was able to think about her career progression and look for opportunities. In the interview, she was enthusiastic about further career progression, “My kids are grown up now, there’s a lot of change coming, and I like change, there’s gonna be a lot of opportunities in the next three to five years in the organisation”. However, Julia did not state a specific career goal.

### 5.2.2 Sofie

Sofie was a senior manager (Tier 3) at Hospitality. She was in her 50s and single, and had grown adult children. She had worked for Hospitality for six years. Previous to working at Hospitality, she held management positions in various organisations for
more than 15 years. Sofie is representative of a group of women who were recruited externally to Hospitality and had the ability to be mobile in their career, to work long hours, and had no care responsibilities.

Achieving a Senior Position

Sofie commenced work in a Tier 3 position; she had achieved a senior management position before moving to the company. She had been mentored since her first management position and had always been proactive regarding further progression. Sophie had always been the main “breadwinner” of the family. She said that although most women did not apply for a job until they felt they fully knew every part of it, she had always “raised her hand” for every opportunity because she had seen many men who “just apply” for any opportunity [when it comes]:

I sort of worked my way up. Challenged myself as much as I could; threw my hat in the ring. I had many male colleagues, men that said they can do the job [but] have (sic) never even done a part of it. So, it was an opportunity of backing yourself, and putting yourself out of your comfort zone, and then just finding some good people to help you be the best you can be.

Whenever an opportunity approached, she applied for it, “I am prepared to change myself as much as I can … if you’re doing everything the right way, with credibility and integrity… then I find there’s nothing you really can’t attempt”.

Geographical mobility also had a significant influence in her career progression, “I’ve travelled around, probably, to build my career and get exposure. I would never have achieved the senior management [position], had I not moved”. However, she added some of those opportunities also happened because of her partner’s mobility.

Challenges

Sofie saw her challenges as family responsibilities, frequent moves due to her husband’s relocations for work, and discrimination in the workplace because of her
gender and age. She moved to different cities to follow her husband. Although this mobility assisted her to progress, it was challenging at the time:

My husband wanted to move, and I was pretty settled. We had a couple of young kids, and he was bored in [his job] so he would find the job first, and I happened to find one, and then it just helped my career. After a while he wanted to move again, so I’m like, “Okay, I’m not going to go backwards, so what, what else is out there? Where do you want to go?” And he said there are more opportunities for me, so he was prepared for me to find the roles, and I did, and we moved to [city] and [I] had a great opportunity there.

Her career suffered when she became a single parent, because she wanted to spend more time with her children, “I wanted my children to be quite settled. They’d been to about seven schools by this time, and that’s when I left my managerial position at [X], because I wanted to spend more time with my children”. She reflected on the concept of “choice” in career:

It depends what people want in their life. It’s give and take, we hinder ourselves if we want to. We make it work if we want to. I got to this stage when I was a senior manager, [I] wasn’t giving enough time to my family, and that’s when I changed career.

Sofie explained that most of the gender discrimination occurred when she was in other organisations before moving to Hospitality. However, in Hospitality she was discriminated against because of her age.

**Future Career**

Sofie had been proactive in her career progression. She had been geographically mobile and always proactive in her career progression, but she was still not optimistic about her further career progression at Hospitality. She believed that her gender and her age hindered further progression in her current organisation. Hospitality, like other
organisations, recruits and promotes younger people, and most of the internal mentoring, coaching, and programs are for younger people. Although Hospitality was growing, Sofie believed she had no chance for further progression in Hospitality.

Ideally, I’d love to get to a general management level, in [that] sort of role. I look at it now—I’ve got no ties now, basically my children are old enough. They’ve got their own careers, so I just help support them, so now it’s my turn to go and do something a little bit different. However, now age is a challenge. I do think, without realising it, organisations become quite age-specific.

She was enthusiastic about progression to the next level of management, which would be a general management position, but not in Hospitality.

Honestly, I don’t think I [will] progress more in this organisation. I don’t think I’ll be supported to get to the next step, so I’ll create it myself. I have external mentors that I [will] use to help me get to my next level, and I don’t think it will be in this business.

5.2.3 Alison

Alison was a senior manager (Tier 3) at Hospitality. She was 48 years old and a single mother with two children. She had worked in the hospitality industry for 26 years and had been in her current position since 2011. Alison is representative of women who were recruited externally, but who started at a front-line customer-focused position in another organisation in the same industry, progressed to supervisor position and then moved to Hospitality. Although she had acted in higher positions several times, she had not progressed further than Tier 3.

Achieving a Senior Position

Initially, Alison worked overseas in the same industry in a front-line customer-focused position, and she progressed to a supervision position. When she moved to Australia, she successfully applied for a similar position. Alison said that she had not
planned to advance her career, but she has always been “...in the right place at the right time”:

I applied for the next level up because it was just what people did, so I did, and I got it. I have always been happy in the current role. I have never had much ambition to move forward, it's just that I've seemed to be in the right place at the right time.

Her opportunity to take on a more senior position came when the general manager and the operations manager were both made redundant, and she was the only candidate who could fill the roles. The managing director offered her acting roles as both the general manager and operations manager. Eventually, the organisation externally recruited another male general manager. Alison successfully applied for the operations manager position (Tier 3). Subsequently, another two general managers were recruited at different times and when they left Alison also took on the acting roles.

**Challenges**

Alison saw her challenges as working long hours, not using FWAs, and an organisational culture that discriminates against women. She spent around 40 to 45 hours at the workplace each week and then worked another 10 hours at home answering emails and finishing her work. Although she would have preferred to work part-time, she believed this was not an option in a senior position.

Alison worked in various management roles, but explained how she faced cultural barriers in the boardroom:

I wasn’t being listened to. I felt like I couldn’t open my mouth at the table because I wasn’t being taken seriously, and quite often I’d just be talked over, or kind of dismissed. And for me, I lost a lot of confidence.
She concluded that “Senior male executives do not trust women and they believe that senior roles are just for the boys. They just need to give a chance to women”.

**Future Career**

Alison was looking for further progression in her career; however, she was a single mother of two children and this presented major challenge:

> I struggle at the moment, because I have two young children that I am trying to provide for. At the same time, I am trying to develop and go further in my career, and I am finding it’s really hard to do both. I struggle, and I feel like I don’t do either very well. I’m not sure if that’s the case, but [that’s] how I feel, is that trying to raise a family by myself and trying to further my career, I don’t feel I can do both.

### 5.3 MEN AT HOSPITALITY

#### 5.3.1 Edward

Edward was the chief operating officer (COO) (Tier 1, Executive) at Hospitality. He was 38 years old, and married with two children. He gained his first managerial position in 1997, and when he moved to Hospitality he was a senior manager. Within nine years he moved to the executive level. Edward is representative of men in Hospitality who had quickly progressed to executive positions.

**Achieving a Senior Position**

Edward commenced work as an accountant in another organisation but was soon offered the opportunity to become part of a senior executive team. In 2006, he moved to a managerial position at Hospitality, and was promoted nearly every two years. He quickly transitioned into an executive position and was offered an opportunity to move from limited managerial responsibility to meeting with VPs and CEOs internationally. Since 2015, he had been the chief operating officer at Hospitality. Edward’s manager supported him and gave him opportunities for further progression:
When I was in [a] senior management role [Tier 3], my job was essentially to support the managing director in regard to commercial business decisions across the whole property. So, for example, there was a decision made that we were going to outsource the theatre rather than having in-house shows. … [The managing director] asked me to manage that process. I [had] never managed the theatre before. I [had] never outsourced a theatre before… One thing that I did know is that I had the senior’s complete support, and what he had recognised was that I had leadership and management abilities, and the technical skill set… so he had me supported with HR and the people that could give me the technical aspect, and all I had to do was really lead and manage the process.

Edward quickly progressed because his managing director supported him and offered him acting roles with more responsibilities to the general manager (Tier 2) position:

That was the first time I had a large team, so I went from my biggest team of about eight people to 120 people, which is a significant [increase] in [the] number of people to manage. Quickly after that, I went to a team of about 280 people.

Edward explained how the considerable support from the managing director and technical support from the finance and HR teams played an important role in producing such a result. However, he said, “I suppose my ability to lead and change is what initially drove my managerial exposure and then senior leadership roles”.

**Challenges**

Edward saw his challenges as being considered for opportunities, achieving recognition, and ensuring that he had “ticked as many boxes as possible” to seize the opportunities. Although he worked long hours—around 60 to 80 hours per week—he did not consider this a challenge. He was happy with his work lifestyle and believed
working long hours was integral to being an executive manager, “The hours put into work is… is consuming sometimes. It is that part of deciding to be a senior executive”.

He had someone at home to take care of the family, and he could focus on his career progression. He said that his wife also worked full-time, and decisions were made as a family, and not based only on his own personal career progression.

**Further Career**

Edward had a strong ambition to achieve success in his career. He believed that Hospitality had a clear succession planning system for everyone within the organisation:

> Our executive general manager of HR and my manager and director, we regularly have meetings or feedback, in regard to what the gaps are in my development, what do I need to focus on. So, every six months and 12 months, we have a formal program that we go through, called the Gross Development Plan.

Although he was in an executive role, he was still seeking further progression. His sole concern had always been how to be considered for the opportunities that would arise. He believed that his career path was clear, and the organisation was developing and preparing him for further progression, and in addition, he had the CEO’s support in achieving further development.

**5.3.2 Mathew**

Mathew was a general manager (GM, Tier 2) at Hospitality. He was 54 years old and partnered with two children. He had been in the organisation for eight years, and last year was promoted to general manager. He is representative of men who had progressed to higher positions but who had no specific intention to progress further and had no acknowledged challenges.
Achieving a Senior Position

Mathew commenced in Hospitality as a senior manager at Tier 3 and transitioned into a general manager position (Tier 3). He believed that he had always had plenty of support assisting his progression:

I’ve always been supported in my roles while I’ve been here … There’s always been an opportunity to grow … From an educational point of view, there’s always … third party internal education available to grow your skill sets or set [you] on the right career path. We’ve had available external consultancy for either personal or team use. We have access into a lot of different forums and conferences, which also allows us to grow in building our network.

Challenges

Mathew did not mention any challenges in his career. When I prompted him, he was not sure what to talk about:

I’m not sure there have been challenges. Maybe learning? No, I don’t think there has ever been a challenge in regard to that, to be where I am. There are times when I’d like to do things more quickly, but can’t always, for whatever reason. I make changes or whatever, but I can’t think of any challenges.

When I asked him about work-life balance, he noted the long-hours culture. He worked 50 to 60 hours a week and he blamed himself for not balancing work and life. Mathew reflected that, nowadays, technology allowed workers to be more flexible and work from anywhere at any time. Mathew was physically located in one city and led team members located in another city, so they used phone, email, or other means to complete a job. Mathew said that the organisation seemed to be family-friendly, but they did not have part-time or flexitime … or other FWAs for his level. He said executives believed that FWAs did not work at this level in their organisation.
**Future Career**

Mathew did not have a long-term plan for further progression, and was not currently looking for advancement because he was “too busy” to think about his career path:

I don’t think I’ve ever sat down and gone, “Right, in five years’ time I wanna be a CEO”. I think I’ve always enjoyed the role I’m playing. At some point, you know, within two years or whatever it happens to be, I’m always looking at what’s next. But I don’t really have that long-term view in [my] career. I’ve been lucky here, that I’ve had opportunities across a number of different areas to keep me interested, so it hasn’t been a case of, “In eight months I’m looking to leave at any given point”.

**5.3.3 Tony**

Tony was the chief financial officer (CFO, Tier 1, Executive) at Hospitality, one of the nine executives in Hospitality. He was 47, and partnered with two children. His story was unusual, because he was the only executive who was externally and directly recruited into a CFO position.

**Achieving a Senior Position**

Tony worked for an accounting company and progressed to a senior management position. He had worked as CFO in two other organisations and was directly recruited into his current position. He believed that some of his success was due to his enthusiasm for success and some of it was because of his network, support, and relationships, both within the organisation and external to it. He was proactive in seeking support and mentoring:

I think more of my progression was probably me tapping people that I had a lot of respect for. You (sic) ask them if they would be willing to be a mentor for myself and help me develop my career. Most of the time that wasn’t with my direct manager; that was … somebody outside of my direct manager. So, I took
it more on myself to say, “Hey, I got my feedback that I get from my boss, I have the feedback that I’m getting from other people”, but I kept in with people who before were my supervisors. I was being mentored by my supervisor, and I went out of my way to create other relationships.

These mentors played a significant role:

I’ve had [a] number of mentors that I’ve worked with, that I’ve established in my career. And I’ve also had them at different times, when I’m working on some of my own leadership development capabilities, [that] I wanna work on as a leader. I’ve had coaches as well help me with those things. Yeah, at different times in my career I’ve sought assistance, generally from people outside of the organisation, to help me with particular things that I’m working on.

Working long hours (almost 70 hours per week) facilitated his rise through the organisational ranks, and his family relationship allowed him to do this.

**Challenges**

Tony saw his challenges as dealing with people and having the right team. Although he worked around 70 hours per week and had never used any kind of FWA, he did not refer to work-life balance as a challenge. He explained how his supportive wife helped him to achieve his current position. When their children were younger, his wife decided to suspend her career to care for them. Tony was the “main worker” in their family. However, he noted that he could not have worked “such ridiculous hours” if his partner did not support him.

**Future Career**

Tony had always proactively sought career progression. However, he was content as CFO at Hospitality and was not seeking further progression:

I’m very happy being a CFO, but as it’s a Top 50 company, I made the decision a few years ago that I wanted to be a CFO and I’ve gone … I’ve absolutely
worked through my career to get to the position that I am, and I enjoy the role
that I do, and that’s what my focus is.

5.3.4 Daniel

Daniel was a general manager (Tier 3) at Hospitality. He was married, 47 years
old, and had two children. He is representative of group of male general managers who
were recruited three years ago at one of the Hospitality properties.

Achieving a Senior Position

Daniel started his career 30 years ago as an undergraduate accountant, and after
his graduation, he moved through the management ranks in various organisations. He
was directly recruited into the general manager position, as he had worked in the same
position in his previous company.

He received a great deal of support in his previous organisations and this prepared
him for further progression. Daniel revealed that having a supportive family and
supportive leader facilitated his progress. His mentor in another organisation prepared
him for more opportunities. Daniel stressed the importance of mentorship and coaching:

My business coach was good; provided a little bit of focus on me with some
specific issues, and my mentors, they were just there just to bounce ideas off,
help keep me centred in my thinking and provide encouragement.

Challenges

Daniel saw his challenge as influencing employees and managing change.
Although he did not mention working long hours as a challenge, when prompted, he
remarked that “It is another challenge”. He worked 55 hours plus each week, plus some
shifts at the weekends. He did not have a work-life balance and had never used any kind
of FWA. He reported that his wife was understanding and supportive, and that if she did
not support him, he could not have reached this position. However, he said he would
really like more time to exercise.
**Future Career**

Daniel had actively chosen career progression, and had always planned for further succession in his career:

I know what I want to do and where I want to get to, but I might be a little different to others. I don’t directly push for the sake of pushing, but I find what’s worked for me is demonstrating what I can do—and other people see that, and then I become in demand. So, it’s more a pull-type thing that’s worked for me rather than a push. I prefer to demonstrate what I can do and where I can have value than necessarily push and talk about it. Of course, I want others to see that I can do well and perform, because I have a sense of achievement.

Daniel was aware that he wanted to progress to the next level soon; however, he was open-minded about the position or role. He was confident that he was capable of handling anything.

I tend not to get too caught up on that level of detail; I know that I want to get to this next sort of role. I could be running any one of the line of businesses here or outside the organisation. The key point is, the focus is, what I’m doing today that gets me to that, because if I don’t do well in my role today I won’t go there. So ... that’s what I’m saying: you don’t want to get too caught up on what that next role is. You’ve got to be centred here today, do a great job, and be focused on what you’re working on today with others in the organisation. That will take you to that next role and career move.
5.4 WOMEN AT UNIVERSITY

5.4.1 Clara

Clara was a professor and head of school at University. She was 47 years old and married with one child. She had worked for University for two years. After graduation, Clara worked as a practitioner in her field for some years, and then decided to commence a PhD. She taught at the university during her PhD, and after graduation got a postdoctoral position. Since then, she had held management positions at four universities in four states in Australia before commencing at University, and each time she was presented with different opportunities. Clara is representative of a group of women who were recruited externally to University and who had moved organisationally and geographically because of their husband’s career.

Achieving a Senior Position

Clara commenced as an associate professor at University and then moved to deputy head of department and then a head of school. Prior to this she worked an associate professor at another university where she was promoted to head of school based on her research skills, and then head of the research group: “I have moved to four universities, lived in four different states, and each time I was presented with different opportunities at each university”.

Challenges

Clara saw her main challenge as frequent mobility as a result of her husband’s moves for his work. Although this mobility was challenging for her, most of her opportunities arose as a result of these moves:

My challenges have been mainly associated with changing universities, getting to know the important people, the right people at the university that I go to, and

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7 In Australian universities, the industrial awards structure specifies five academic levels: Level A: Associate Lecturer, Level B: Lecturer, Level C: Senior Lecturer, Level D: Associate Professor, Level E: Professor
having access to them so that they can get to know me and understand… I’m actually quite a shy person and I find it difficult to talk to people who I don’t know, so that’s been a personal challenge for me.

Clara had spent an excessive amount of time applying for positions after these moves. Although she had mostly progressed to a higher position, she occasionally had to accept a move to a lower level, as she did not have a choice.

In addition to the challenges of mobility and frequently looking for a new position, Clara accepted the long-hours culture of senior positions, “I’m prepared to actually work long hours to be able to get things under control”.

**Future career**

Clara faced many challenges when moving to different universities, but she now preferred to stay at University, “I’ve lived in every state of Australia. Now I would like to stay in one place for a period of time, and I’m actually happy in this position”. However, she was looking for opportunities:

I know that my contract is for a defined period of time, so I suppose I need to also think about what’s next, and if you ask me about what’s next, I would actually have to say something that’s career-progressing—not going back to a standard academic appointment, because I don’t think that I am ready in my life to go back and do the standard research and teaching.

**5.4.2 Elena**

Elena was a professor at University, she was 50 years old, married, and had one child. She commenced in a lecturer position at University in the 1990s and progressed through the academic ranks. She is an example of participants who progressed gradually within University.
Achieving a Senior Position

Following her postdoctoral fellowship in the US, Elena applied for a position at University as a lecturer, and over the 18 years of employment was promoted to senior lecturer, associate professor, and then professor, and was recently appointed (following the interview) to deputy head of school (research). Elena was promoted to professor four years ago; the most challenging part of her career had been the transition from associate professor to professor. Elena discussed some of the strategies that assisted her promotion to professor. First, she believed that it was necessary to build a supportive network:

Applying for the position was very strategic in terms of developing a support network with other people who were applying, [and] approaching people who were more senior who had been promoted already. Particularly men who had done a very good job at presenting their material, and asking if I can (sic) access their applications so I could use that as a model.

She stressed the importance of developing good applications, as she believed women were not very good at it:

Spending a fair amount of time on the application… first of all, to put the factual information in…and then work out better and better how to present the argument in the case and take out the ambivalent language, the hesitancy, the apology, and use much more assertive… [use] authority of terminology in presenting that case.

Challenges

Elena’s main challenge was the assumption that science is a male workplace:

I’ve been in this institution for over 18 years. When I arrived, I was the only woman in my area. In the sciences, it’s still very much—even more—male-focused than some of the other disciplines at [the] university… and the outcome
of that is very obvious in the lack of change in senior levels. We’re still massively behind other parts of the university.

Elena elaborated on how this male model of success impacted her personal life. She had to adjust her family life to fit her career:

Career opportunity affected the timing of when I had a family. It affected the number of children I had. I had one. I didn’t have her until I was in my late 30s. It affected taking leave and going part-time. So, in that sense, I had to adjust my family to fit the career, because of the expectations and the lack of structural support around those career steps, that meant that it would be difficult to have done it beforehand, and then also I had to have delays in my progression associated with that.

**Future Career**

Elena had chosen a career path that enabled her to balance her life and her work. Therefore, she always had to “choose” which career path fit with her family responsibilities:

There are some positions that have been offered to me… [that] I’ve not gone ahead with because of saying, “Okay, that’s not something that works with my strengths”, and also, that’s something that would impose, impinge, on my family life and [on] my other roles by having a lot of extra work outside of normal working hours.

However, she was aware of potential opportunities for further career progression:

There is a range of different roles, such as deputy heads of school, heads of school, deputy directors of research centres, directors of research centres—but there are also lots of other roles around the university for which I can make a contribution.

Since the interview, Elena has been appointed to Deputy Head of School (Research).
5.4.3 Hannah

Hannah was a pro vice chancellor (PVC) at University at the time of the interview, and she was subsequently promoted to deputy vice chancellor (DVC) after five years of the PVC role. She was 58 years old and had one child. Hannah started as a dean at University and progressed to DVC within eight years. At the time she became DVC, all of the other DVCs were men. Hannah’s story, in part, is a unique example of women at the executive level, because she was the only woman in a DVC position at University. Hannah is representative of women at the executive level who were recruited externally to University at a lower level and progressed though University’s ranks.

Achieving a Senior Position

Hannah began her academic work as a research assistant in a laboratory, tutored at various universities, commenced a PhD part-time and completed it when she was 35 years old. She was a level A lecturer, but over a period of about five years took her first management position. That led to a faculty deputy dean position, and then to acting pro vice chancellor learning and teaching. She moved to University as dean academic in a faculty and subsequently progressed to PVC, and was then appointed DVC in 2017.

Hannah stated that she took her first big step when she applied for a position as professor, when she was a senior lecturer:

It was a big step up and very high risk, because I went to establish a new school…but at that stage… [X university] didn’t have permission to establish that school so it was high risk. I agonised for probably a month as to whether or not I should go, and there are all sorts of reasons why I shouldn’t have, but in the end, it was probably the best decision I ever made. It was tough, particularly in the first twelve months, for all sorts of reasons, but I wouldn’t be here now if I hadn’t have (sic) done that, I’m pretty sure of that.
She also stressed the importance of having mentors to assist in career progression:

I have a whole range of mentors. So, I have a professional mentor, a woman, who I meet with regularly, who challenges me and coaches me and does all of that. I’ve had a number of male mentors in my career who’ve given me advice about where I should be going, the next career moves. I have some very good mentors here amongst the senior executive who, perhaps not so much now, but when I first took up this role, spent an enormous amount of time getting me orientated to show me where the bear traps are, giving me advice, giving me assistance.

Challenges

Hannah saw her challenges as managing a wide range of functions, “There’s a lot of management functions with being a pro vice chancellor; so you have to balance the budget, you have to make sure that you abide by University policies; you do all that sort of thing”.

She worked 60 to 70 hours a week, but she had accepted the culture of working long hours:

I think my biggest problem is that I try to do too much at once; so, I’m somebody who wants to get things moving quickly and the good thing about my role is being able to make a big difference, so I like to do those new things, activities, that will make things better. But it is quite challenging to have the time to think that through carefully when you get 150 emails a day and they’re sort of the small things that… the management side of things encroaches on the leadership side of things; so, I guess I think that’s where it’s a big challenge.

Future Career

Hannah had actively chosen her career progression, and still looked for more progression. At this stage, she believed her career development was exceptional and it had occurred through mentorship and her networking with senior executives, “I think
career progression at this stage is so specialised that the way you learn is from the people who’ve gone before you. So, being able to talk to those people is important”.

5.4.4 Carolina

Carolina was a director (HEW level 10+) at University in an administration section. She was 35 years old, married, and had a two-year-old child. Before moving to University, she worked for another organisation. She started as a supervisor at University, and after six years had progressed to a director position. Carolina is a unique example of a woman in a senior management position at University who had a young child.

*Achieving a Senior Position*

Carolina progressed from administration roles into management roles in other organisations. She moved between six organisations before commencing at University. Initially, her first management position was in change management at her previous organisation, and after moving to University she moved to training and development and then to projects and planning activities. After she gained her first managerial position, she had many internal promotion opportunities within University. Carolina had a supportive manager and she had also been nominated by her manager to attend the “Women in Leadership” program. In her current role, she reported to executives whom she believed could offer her more opportunities.

*Challenges*

Carolina’s main challenges were her age and her care responsibilities. Carolina commented that because she was young, older staff had reacted to her differently:

> I am relatively young and I’ve been very lucky to move up to different opportunities quickly. I’ve had reactions to how quickly I’ve moved up, so it’s

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8 In Australian universities, the industrial awards structure specifies an 11 step structure of Higher Education Worker (HEW): level HEW 1 is the lowest level, raising to level 10, and level 10+ the most senior administration staff.
been, it’s been interesting for me to have that experience and notice how people react around me.

After her maternity leave, Carolina said that she had “no choice” but to go back to her position full-time, otherwise she would have been moved to a different position. In order to not lose her position, she “chose” to return to work full-time:

I had identified that I wanted to have six months leave and return for three months at 80 per cent and then go full-time, and I took that plan to my supervisor…[who] said you can do that, but you won’t be coming back to this job. I thought, I want to come back to this job. I worked really hard to get here, and I thought, well, I’ll take 12 months off, and then I’ll return full-time, and so I put in that plan. While I was on maternity leave, I wasn’t actually disconnected from the University. But shortly into starting my maternity leave, I realised that I didn’t want to be away for 12 months and I approached the University to ask to return early.

Carolina returned after eight months leave. Her concern about flexible leave arrangements and working part-time was that “You’re generally not given the big projects because they need someone there all the time, though you might miss out on those projects”.

Carolina also stated that the long working hours associated with her position was another challenge for her with a two-year old-child, “I work maybe 55 hours a week, maybe more, so I will work a standard work day here, and I’ll also go home and work at home”.

**Future Career**

Carolina had always proactively sought career progression, “I actively pursued that kind of outward progression and more opportunity”. She worked hard to achieve
good results and to be recognised by executives for more opportunities. Although she was new to her current role at University, she was preparing for another promotion:

I tend to progress more quickly than others, so I expect that I’ll have maybe a couple more years before I’ll be looking to push further than this, but ultimately in this role, there’s a lot of things that need to be done to support the organisation. So, I’ll be working on those at the same time as getting my experience up and starting to think about where I go from here.

She believed that connecting with the executives of the organisation had played a significant role in her career progression. In her current position, she reported to the executive, which she believed would facilitate more opportunities for her.

5.4.5 Grace

Grace was a deputy director (HEW 10+) at University in an administration section. She was 51 years old, married, and had two adult children. She had worked for University for more than 28 years. She progressed very quickly in the early stages of her career; however, her progression was affected after having children, and she reverted to a lower level (HEW 9) for a time. Grace is an prime example of the group of women at University whose career progression suffered due to her care responsibilities.

**Achieving a Senior Position**

After completing a degree, Grace worked in a small organisation, where she attained a management role. She applied for a position at University because there were no career opportunities in the small organisation. Although the university job was at a lower level and lower paid, she made the decision to move, “I actually made the choice because I believed in larger organisations, I would have more opportunities to progress. That was one of the reasons why I came here”.

She made a quick progression at University before having a child, “During five years I had gone from a level HEW 6 to HEW 10. That is pretty quick career
progression, of course”. Changes occurred when she had children, “The thing that happened then is that I had three children. That significantly slows down your career progression after that point. I came back to my substantive position, which they made a [HEW] 9”.

**Challenges**

Grace’s challenges revolved around her having children. After she came back from maternity leave, she was downgraded to a lower level for years, and after her child-bearing years were over, she progressed:

> I had my last child in 2000, but 2000 to 2003, I think it was, career-wise, a very dead period for me. As I said, I went…from [a HEW] 6 to level 9, but from 1994 to 2006 I didn’t have a career move, and then from 2006 to 2012 I made the next move [to level 10].

**Future career**

Grace believed that she did not have any chance to progress further within University. Administration staff are promoted up to a certain level of management, but then the University’s executives are predominantly academics who come from a teaching and research background. Another difficulty for administration staff is that they need to apply for a position to reach a higher position, unlike academic staff who can be promoted up to professor without the need for a specific position to be advertised.

### 5.5 MEN AT UNIVERSITY

#### 5.5.1 Raymond

Raymond was a professor and dean academic in a faculty at University. He was married, 53 years old, and had four children. He had worked for University more than 20 years. Raymond is representative of a group of men at University who progressed through the ranks at the University. After doing his post doctorate at another university,
he started as a lecturer Level B at University. Ten years after his commencement with University he had progressed to dean academic, a quick progression.

**Achieving a Senior Position**

Working very hard (“too hard”), and not maintaining a work-life balance allowed him to progress quickly from a lecturer position to a dean academic role. His first senior position was head of school, and he held that position for five years, and was then invited to apply for dean academic. He emphasised how taking opportunities that were offered to him was important in his career:

I always had taken on the next opportunity or challenge, I’ve never said no to anything, I don’t think. So, I think it’s important to basically be prepared to have a go… So, I think the important message is about opportunities as they come around, grab them with both hands. And when you do get an opportunity put [one] hundred and ten per cent into this.

**Challenges**

Raymond revealed that his main challenges in his current position were work-life balance, heavy workloads, and no flexibility. Working 60 to 70 hours per week and trying to balance work and life was frustrating:

You’ve got to be able to deal with enormous workloads. You’ve got to be across everything, you’ve got to have a very good memory. I mean every email—I get 50, 60 emails a day, and every one’s got to be read and every one’s got to be remembered. You know, so if you walk in and I don’t know what you’re talking about then, you know, it’s not good. So, its huge workloads, yeah, you’ve gotta be committed. You can’t do these jobs and not be totally committed to them.

Raymond considered that technology adds more pressure to work-life balance, “We all have this damn thing [mobile phone] that goes with us everywhere, and you’re
constantly getting emails, and, you know, checking stuff. You don’t put it down. Even when you go on holidays, it follows you.”

He believed that other occupations were different:

I’ve got a friend who’s a vet, and when he closes his surgery at five o’clock in the afternoon, everything goes on to emergency response and another vet picks up so he can go home and relax. He goes away on holidays, he hands his pager across, he hands his phone across, and he goes away and he’s relaxed. Academia is not like that. You’ve always got research going on, you’ve always got administration going on, you’ve always got timeline pressures, you’ve always got emails coming through, and you have always got to travel overseas to attend a meeting.

Raymond’s wife also worked full-time. While he had always progressed in his job, his wife’s job has had “ups and downs”:

We had four children. She went out of the workforce for eight years. So, we had four kids in six years. And then I think when my youngest child was two or three, she started back part-time. I’m a very active father, so I’m involved very much in my kids’ lives, but especially when they were younger, I mean, it’s harder for a mum. Kids need their mum.

**Future career**

Raymond’s contract as a dean was due to conclude soon. He was not sure what he was going to do after that. The career path was not clear at University because there was no succession planning after passing a certain level. He was contemplating a variety of options:

I really have a [of] couple choices. I could continue, probably, to be dean academic. I enjoy the job, and you know, I’m really young. I could choose to go into another high management job, and maybe seek a pro vice chancellor, executive dean-type role somewhere, or maybe this university. Or I could go
back to my research lab, and continue my research program, which is still a very important part of my life and I’m still passionate about the research I do and so, all those things for me is a career progression. I’m quite happy being an academic doing research. I like it. It’s good. I can still go back and teach.

5.5.2 Rudolf

Rudolf was a professor and dean academic at a faculty at University. He was 49 years old, married, and had three children. After completing his PhD in Australia, he moved to the UK to undertake post-doctoral work. He returned to Australia and commenced his academic career in a level A position in the 1990s. Following this, he joined University in a level B position. Subsequently, he was promoted through the levels to a professor. Rudolf is representative of a group of men who progressed though the University’s ranks, but he is an unusual example of men who decided to step down from a senior position because of work-life balance.

Achieving a Senior Position

Rudolf’s path to a senior position occurred at one university. His promotion to level D (associate professor) was based on his research, but his promotion to professor and then appointment as dean were heavily reliant on his community engagement activities:

I was actually appointed to level E based on service without ever holding a head of school position, and after that, again based on my service. I’ve been elevated to a dean’s position without ever having held any of the senior positions in the university or in the school or anything else. So, it’s a little unusual to get to the dean’s level without having done any of that.

Challenges

In the current position, he had back-to-back meetings, and “It is a very demanding position”. He explained further about the management culture and norms within University and how frustrating the compliance aspect of the role was:
Senior positions are not attractive roles in this university. They’re extremely compliance-driven, and management-driven. They don’t allow enough time; they put so many extra burdens and responsibilities onto heads of schools and deans and so forth. There’s very little time left for the strategic thinking; there is limited scope for delegation. Seriously, the risk to the organisation—if it’s not me signing a bit of paper, what’s the risk to the organisation? It’s zero! This place, compliance-driven, says it must be the dean who signs off on unfinalised grades. I don’t sign off on all the other grades. Why do I have to sign off on those ones? Why do I have to sign off on every single student issue? Why am I the decision-maker on certain things, when… when clearly there are people who know this stuff better than I do within the organisation. It’s because it ends up being very management-driven and very compliance-driven rather than leadership-driven. The other thing about the management roles in this University, it’s largely introspective. There are very few roles that are outward-looking where we’re making [a] significant impact outside of the university.

His main challenge was work-life balance. He had been in this position for three and a half years. He intended to resign at the end of the year (after four years as dean) because he wanted to spend more time with family. He said, “I put my children ahead of my career. I’m just gonna go back and be a normal academic”.

I don’t see my kids nor contribute to their development as much as I’d like, so I need to get that time back. I’ve made the decision. Currently, I work between 60 and 70 hours per week. I don’t answer emails during the day ‘cause I’m back-to-back meetings from 8 o’clock often through to 6 o’clock. Pick up the kids, get the kids dinner, kids to bed, answer all my emails up to midnight, and start the day again basically. Try and keep my weekends free, but that doesn’t always happen.
He explained that there were no FWAs in the dean’s role. He would have liked to have flexibility to pursue his research. Working only as a professor would allow him to work more flexibly.

**Future Career**

For Rudolf, career development was not about “climbing the ladder”. He was passionate about his academic role, especially teaching:

> My career development is about not getting bored in a job and being able to reinvent myself, and be passionate about what I do. I want to be able to have the freedom. Only in university systems you would (sic) get this freedom. The freedom to reinvent myself. That’s reinvigorated my career. So, it’s not so much career development in the way that you’re asking, climbing the ladder. It’s career development in reinventing my career, but still being able to do it within the constraints of the university.

He knew that his decision to step away from the role of dean would hinder his management career progression, but he intentionally made that decision:

> It’s a positive choice because I’ve got a family that’s growing up. I don’t regret making that choice. There are people that are surprised that I resigned. They asked if I would go on and become a pro vice chancellor or a deputy vice chancellor or something like that, but I made the decision.

### 5.5.3 Jack

Jack was a deputy vice chancellor at University. He was 59 years old, partnered, and had three children. He joined University three years ago in the DVC role. Jack is representative of the group of men who moved geographically several times for career progression. He had moved between six different institutions, and every time progressed to a higher position.
**Achieving a Senior Position**

Mobility, networking, and mentorship were the three main elements that facilitated his career progression. He started as a research assistant and became a junior lecturer, senior lecturer and professor, head of school, dean, and deputy vice chancellor, moving between six universities in different cities and countries before joining University. With each move he gained a promotion.

He believed that his opportunities were created through networking. He had good role models and mentors and supportive supervisors. He also had leadership coaches and invested in leadership development courses.

**Challenges**

The main challenges for Jack were around timing and location and moving to six different universities:

I’ve gone through in my career development, a lot of moving around, a lot of quick steps up. But I went through a separation from the mother of my three children when I first came to Australia, and it’s probably made me less able to move around since then than I would have done before and may have been a cause of me being less rapid in my progression, which is like me putting myself in the situation that women might be in all the time. Maybe that’s an unfair thing to say, I don’t know what it’s like to be a woman trying to make a career. I can only imagine.

Another challenge for him was the managerial responsibilities that he believed were different from an academic position:

Rising to a role of professor, actually, how little I knew about management, because I think academic work is not much about management. There’s an element of project management in it, but there’s very little exposure to the need to [be] managing and leading people and managing budgets, and managing complexity and managing uncertainty involved in those things. When I first
became the head of school I found what I thought was going to be an easy transition to be an incredibly difficult one, because of how little I knew about management and how poorly being an emerging academic prepared me for management.

Jack believed that senior roles were associated with a long-hours work culture and he said that he needed to be connected all the time, “[It is] difficult to define when you are working and when you’re not working. I guess I would say typically 60 to maybe 70 hours a week might be typical”.

**Future Career**

He had actively chosen career progression. He was looking for further progression but he said that at this level he did not need any development programs. Instead he needed to build his relationships:

No more professional development than I feel that I’m able to gain from the networks and the supportive environment that I’m part of. Now I think I’ve learnt the skills of equipping myself and surrounding myself with networking opportunities and a guiding culture to help me make those decisions myself now. I see my role now, with its exposure to complexity, diversity, and variety…

**5.5.4 Jordan**

Jordan was the chief financial officer (CFO) at University. He was 41 years old, married, and had two children. He had moved between four organisations, every time progressing to a higher position. Before moving to University, he was a CFO of another organisation and reported directly to the CEO and the group’s board. Jordan is representative of men in University who moved to different locations and organisations, and as a result of that, progressed gradually to executive positions.
Achieving a Senior Position

Mobility, mentorship, working long hours, and a supportive wife all assisted Jordan to achieve a senior position. Jordan had been geographically mobile and had moved to different organisations to achieve higher positions. He had good mentors who inspired him and considered him an excellent leader.

After graduating from university, he started work as an auditor and changed organisations several times until he gained a management position. During 2008, due to the global financial crisis, many private businesses suffered, including his company. His previous organisation contacted him and offered him a position in the US. Jordan decided to move because he did not want to be a “stay-at-home dad”. His wife left her job because they wanted to move. Although she also found a position in the same company, her career progression suffered because of the decision they made:

She left the …[company] partnership. To be honest, worst decision we ever made. We should’ve stayed in Australia, and she should’ve stayed a partner at … and moved through [hierarchies] at … but to be honest, that was something I couldn’t handle because I wasn’t going to sit at home and be a stay-at-home dad, so that was a conversation we had some time ago. So, it’s just a trade-off we made.

He explained in more detail that it was his wife’s choice to make the trade-off because of their family responsibilities. From his point of view, the biggest issue for women, including his wife, was the time that they take off from work to engage in family responsibilities. He elaborated more on his wife’s decision-making:

My wife was a partner of … [organisation] so both of us worked there, I then went into … [organisation] I’ve had a very successful career. My wife, she was probably the youngest female partner at … [organisation] admitted in a decade. And so, she had quite a successful career too. So, if I just compare and contrast the two of us, we’re very similar individuals. She was very successful but then
she decided to leave that, where we went to move to California, so she essentially put her career on hold for a period of time. She could be probably very senior in ...[organisation] now if we stayed in [Australian city] ... that’s a personal decision that’s impacted where she’s ended up.

However, his wife went on to establish her own accounting company in order to have a more flexible work life.

**Challenges**

Jordan said that he did not face any challenges. However, when I prompted him about work-life balance he admitted that he left his previous organisation because of work-life balance:

> One of the reasons why I left my previous job, [was] 'cause I was finding myself, I wasn’t home very often, travelling a lot and one of the reasons for looking for something different is to try and get somewhere where there is a bit more of that balance, so I moved to University.

Jordan believed University was more flexible than his previous organisation. At University, he worked around 55 to 60 hours weekly, while at his previous company he worked much longer hours, and he had to travel often.

He divulged that being a leader in a big organisation requires a lot of time and most senior leaders were not able to have work-life balance:

> The CEO at... [previous company], his family life wasn’t great because he just focused all on... [company]. So, he was great as a leader and he helped really drive the team, but that’s 'cause he was always there, so his personal life suffered a lot.... To be honest, if you don’t have the balance, you actually burn people out around you. They might enjoy it for a couple of years, but then it gets very hard.
**Future Career**

Jordan had always actively chosen career progression. He always sought feedback from his managers, “To make sure that I’m aligned with them, so, it shouldn’t come down to six or 12 months performance reviews. You should know what your boss thinks and expects all the time”. He was happy as CFO at University, and he was not currently seeking further progression.

**5.6 REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION**

Each of the stories of these managers is unique and each participant had their own story of transition into senior positions. However, there were some similarities in their career paths; all referred to the long-hours culture in management, the role of mobility in their careers, focusing and planning for their career, and the part that a supportive manager and/or a role model played in their career progression. All of the women and men in the two organisations, Hospitality and University, talked about the long-hours culture as a non-negotiable aspect of their senior role. Most had worked in different locations, although a few had stayed with one organisation in one location. All managers at University talked about the role of geographical and organisational mobility on career progression. All of the men in Hospitality also talked about mobility; however, only a few women in Hospitality talked about this. There were women whose careers may have suffered because of staying in one organisation for a long time, as their transition to management took many years. All of the women discussed family care responsibilities. However, many men discussed this only when prompted. Family care responsibilities did not have the same impact for men as for women.

There were some differences in the narratives of women and men. Most men in the two organisations had actively chosen career progression, although their career paths were not always clear. They planned, asked for support, found mentors, and applied for positions even though they were not 100 per cent qualified for them. They knew their
managers supported them when needed. Women typically did not have a career plan and they assumed that their transition into senior positions had been by accident or chance, or in a few cases, as a result of their partner’s moves, not their own intentions. Women’s career journeys were mostly interrupted by childbearing and care responsibilities. The majority of women managers who were interviewed either had adult children or had chosen to have only one child. There were a few women who had children when they started their career and their progression had been affected because of that. All women discussed family care responsibilities, and their role. However, men mostly stated that they had a supportive wife who cared for the family while they focussed on their career.

There were some differences between the two organisations. Hospitality had a very limited number of women in general management and executive positions; thus, most of the interviews were with women in the lowest (third) tier of management, with only one woman in a general management position. Most women at Hospitality started in a front-line customer focused position and progressed through the organisational ranks. It took a very long for them to achieve a senior position (Tier 3 of management) and some of them believed that there was no opportunity for progression in Hospitality.

Most male senior managers at Hospitality were recruited externally and a few of them had progressed through the organisational ranks. Those who progressed internally received support from their senior managers, so they progressed very quickly and achieved higher levels of management than women. Comparing Edward and Alison, for example, shows that while they had both worked at Hospitality for a long time, Edward had the support of his manager and had been given opportunities for progression and achieved an executive role. Conversely, Alison was given an acting role only when the organisation was desperate and did not have anyone to fill the position. Alison filled the general manager position several times but every time someone else was recruited externally and she was still in Tier 3 of management.
University was slightly different. They had more women in senior roles and two women had progressed to the executive level within the last year. Thus, some of the stories were based on women who reached executive positions. In addition, there was a woman director (Carolina) at University who had a two-year old child. Although she faced challenges, she managed to return to her management position after her maternity leave. Women who progressed to very senior positions were mostly recruited externally. Men’s at University’s progression was very similar to the men at Hospitality. Some of them progressed through the organisational ranks and others were recruited externally, while those who were recruited externally progressed faster and reached higher levels.

All of the interviewees in both organisations talked about the high demands of being a senior manager. They stated that working long hours was the non-negotiable feature of a senior position. All of the women’s challenges revolved around not having a work-life balance. However, some men did not consider it a challenge and they saw the challenges as issues related to the job, such as influencing and managing people, and only commented on the long hours culture when they were further prompted by the questions.

This chapter sets the scene for the following two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7). The stories presented in Chapter 5 show that, generally, there were some similarities and some differences between women and men and between the two organisations. The narratives revealed details of the working lives, and for the women, the interface with family responsibilities. Some themes that emerged, such as working long hours, mobility, and focusing and planning their career, are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 develops the themes from these narratives and answers the question regarding what managers think is required to reach senior positions. Chapter 7 further discuss the concept of the “ideal manager” as the pre-eminent barrier for women’s advancement to senior positions.
Chapter 6: Achieving Senior Management Positions: The Importance of the Masculine Career Path

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Most of the senior roles in Australian organisations are dominated by white, Anglo-Saxon men (Southpommasane et al., 2016; WGEA, 2017). They are the people who construct and (re)construct what constitutes a senior management position, and consequently, who constitutes an appropriate senior manager. The participants’ stories presented in Chapter 5 outlined the experiences of selected female and male senior managers in two organisations.

This chapter elaborates on the major themes that emerged from the experiences of the women and men who achieved senior positions as they explained what is required to achieve seniority. Interviewees identified that working long hours, geographic or organisational mobility, an unbroken career path focusing on career versus family, and actively seeking and planning for career advancement were essential for their progress into senior positions. These were common between both women and men in the two organisations. This study focused on those women and men who had achieved senior positions, and the interviewees therefore had to accept the aforementioned non-negotiable model of a manager. In both organisations, these standards had affected the (re)production of masculinity, which privileges men over women.

6.2 WORKING LONG HOURS

All senior managers at both University and Hospitality responded that working long hours was a non-negotiable aspect of a senior role. Women and men talked about the long hours involved in their role. Almost all of the men mentioned that they worked around 55 to 70 hours per week. It was evident in the interviews that all male senior
managers had accepted working long hours; and that none used FWAs when holding a senior role.

The average working hours for most women was around 55-65 hours per week in both organisations. Working hours were a little higher at University, largely because the women interviewees at University were in more senior positions compared to those in Hospitality. Three women at University worked 65-70 hours, all in pro vice chancellor positions or higher. Women interviewees at Hospitality were mostly in the third tier of management. Only one woman, who was in a general management position, worked longer hours than the others. In comparison to men, women in senior roles stated that working long hours was challenging, especially when they had family responsibilities. Most of the women in both organisations who had progressed into senior positions stated they did not use any kind of FWAs, as they believed it hindered career progression.

6.2.1 Male Managers

_Hospitality_

Hospitality is a 24 hour, seven days a week business. Two-thirds of the managers interviewed talked about the long hours nature of their business, all reported working long hours, and most said that they worked around 55 to 70 hours per week. Men at Hospitality had accepted the long hours culture. Edward (Chief Operating Officer) worked 60 to 80 hours a week:

I don’t believe there is work-life balance. I am happy with my work-life style. I think work-life balance is a personal thing, I don’t sign up to the view that work-life balance is 40 to 50 hours plus. Home time, it’s whatever that person feels comfortable with… the hours put into work is (sic) consuming sometimes, it’s that part of deciding to be a senior executive.
Bradley (GM) talked about the culture of too many meetings and the 24/7 public relations relationship with guests, especially at weekends:

We are a culture that has a lot of meetings and in our business it’s also about PR with the guests on the property 24/7. Once you get to my level, you’ve got your day in the office, there’s hours afterwards where you need to talk to your guests, and in between that you’ve got to meet your team.

Hospitality offers FWAs; however, what was evident in the interviews was the acceptance of working long hours and not using FWAs when holding a senior role. All Hospitality interviewees stated that, in reality, these arrangements do not fit the demands of senior positions. Interviewees emphasised that FWA policies were more explicit and usable for non-managerial positions and there were no specific FWA policies for senior positions. Instead, flexibility for them was something that needed to be negotiated with their manager. Bradley disclosed that he did not have a work-life balance, “So, I make sure all my team balance their lifestyles, but I’m the worst leader when it comes to a balanced lifestyle”.

Kevin (GM) explained that in a managerial position they did not have a “switch off”. Kevin worked an average of 45 to 60 hours each week:

But having said that – the 45 to 60 hours, sometimes your mind never switches off, so you’re always working. I’ll have ideas while I’m doing something on the weekend, or while I’m driving to work and you quickly get in the office and you do this idea, and you turn it into a project… There’s a lot of thinking time that goes in a managerial position, and that’s not always captured. But in terms of attending meetings, attending presentations, just getting your work done, preparing board papers, working through those, it’s a ten, eleven hour day.

Working long hours was the norm for male managers at Hospitality and many had accepted the difficulties associated with it. Most mentioned that they had a partner who
supported them so they could focus on their career. For example, Daniel (GM) said, “I think if my family didn’t support me to do that, then that would be the point where I would say, no I can’t do this. If something were off the rails at home I wouldn’t be doing it. I wouldn’t be in the job that I am in now”.

**University**

Senior academic positions have the reputation of involving long working hours (Bagilhole & White, 2008). The interviews confirmed this, as most managers at University stated they worked an average of 65 to 70 hours per week. The interviewees admitted that they had accepted the long hours work culture of senior roles. Two-thirds of the interviewees mentioned that they usually worked at night after their wives and children were asleep.

Although universities offer a wide range of FWAs, none of the senior managers utilised them. All mentioned that, in reality, these arrangements did not fit with the demands of senior positions. In many situations, even if the interviewees were willing to share care responsibilities with their partners, they did not have the time to do so. They disclosed that their spouses shouldered the domestic and care responsibility, while they prioritised their career. Aiden (head of department [HOD]) believed that leadership roles required time outside the nine-to-five day and availability twenty-four hours a day and taking care of children has the same demands, so it is not possible to balance these two, “I have someone at home who supports my family and me. But certainly, I think if a person who has to do a leadership role didn’t have that support, then the responsibility of caring for family would really be a challenge”.

Jason (HOD) believed that managers had to take on additional responsibilities because universities have very limited resources:

Many of my colleagues who are managers will take additional responsibilities on themselves because their workforce has already got more than they can
handle. So, you’ll find that most of the managers in the school do more hours than their subordinates (I said the term subordinate but I don’t like the term). Mostly so that they’re not pushing more responsibilities back on their subordinates.

Only two men at University said that they were not seeking further career progression into senior roles as they wished to achieve a better work-life balance. They stated that they would prefer to focus on their professorship not leadership.

6.2.2 Female Managers

*Hospitality*

Most of the women at Hospitality were in Tier 3 of management. They worked an average of 45 hours a week, and in addition, they stated that they needed to be connected through emails and phone calls, which added at least another 10 hours to their work a week. Diana (senior manager) stated that, “At the moment I probably work about 50 hours, plus I do a lot of email checking and work outside of that as well at home that is pretty nonstop, and I get calls as well on weekends and nights at all kinds of times”. Some said that long hours were not a challenge for them and said they worked around 40-45 hours per week. However, their challenge was working night shifts, especially for those who had family responsibilities.

Most of the women at Hospitality said that technology and the nature of their business did not let them disconnect from work, even when they were not physically at work:

You don’t really have a switch off! I have two phones, one’s my personal, one’s my work and I’m expected to sit across feedback that comes through… Something’s going off at 3 o’clock in the morning, then I’m wanting to know what it’s about… and something happens on Sunday, so, I probably don’t have a switch off. If you asked my children, I don’t switch off (Sofie, Senior Manager).
Alison (senior manager) commented:

As a senior leader I am expected to work longer hours. There is no 40 hour week, we are expected to be visible outside of business hours. For me [as a single parent] that is extremely difficult. Physically, I am at work about 45 hours a week, but then I go home and at least two hours a day I am on emails and responding to things. So, it’s that part that is not measured in hours… So, physically I am on property for 45 hours per week and I guess realistically I do another 10 hours a week at home.

For Flora (senior manager), it was a similar situation:

Well, my contract says 40 plus reasonable hours, but if I include this (gestured to her phone), [which] is like with me all the time, it comes to bed with me, it’s on the bedside table. It’s the first thing I reach for in the morning to read my emails. Because I am an operations manager I have to keep it on. If something serious happened throughout the night I will get called. So, I probably say that I am at work for at least 50, and then there would be another at least another 10 hours [per week] at home. And the days off, I still have to be connected to work, I still have to be reading my email and touching base with the guys at work.

Rose (senior manager) talked about the extra hours associated with her role:

We usually do the five-two rotations, so five days per week, two days off. So, my standard week should be about forty hours. But I say with the stuff that I do, I’m responsible for… that would require me to stay back an hour or two or come in early for an hour or two to catch the other shifts. So, on a normal day, it’s eight hours, but sometimes it’s maybe ten-ish and do my reporting, that’s probably another hour or two on top of my shift.

Diana (senior manager) claimed that senior positions were associated with working long hours, so she reflected that “I have caught myself numerous times saying
that I don’t know how I’d necessarily be doing this job if I have a child”. Diana was single and she said she had never used any kind of FWA.

**University**

Similar to their male colleagues, working hours for women in senior positions at University were longer than those in more junior position. The three women interviewed in PVC roles regularly worked 70 plus hours a week, including the travel associated with their role. Zoe believed in “Work-life blur not work-life balance”, as she said “You accept that there is no definite edge between ‘now I’m working’ and ‘now I’m not working’ and it is more of juggling around”. Zoe (PVC) explained that working long hours and travelling were a part of her role:

> My job involves a lot of [interstate and overseas] travel, so I would be away a lot of weekends. I don’t count up the hours. Technology means that you’re only away, but my phone is always with me, so there are emails, phone calls. Even if I’m not there necessarily sitting with a pile of papers, I think my family would say that I work a lot of hours actually.

Hannah (DVC) worked 60 to 70 hours a week. She had accepted that having an executive position demanded working long hours and she was able to do this because her child was grown and she did not have any care responsibilities. Natalie (director) also worked long hours, “I work ridiculous hours, I work from about 7:30 till about 5, a quarter past five, every day, and then in the evening from about 8:30 to 10:30”.

Zoe and Natalie took very short parental leave, but when they had newborn children they were not in a senior position. Both of them said having a supportive husband also assisted them to spend long hours at work and not need to use FWAs. They both believed that FWAs were not usable in senior positions.
6.3 MOBILITY

Mobility was identified as important in assisting most of the women and men in attaining senior positions at both University and Hospitality. Interviewees at both organisations said that to develop leadership skills and gain broader experience it was necessary to have a range of management and leadership experiences, including internationally, interstate, and in different organisations.

Three-quarters of the men interviewed explained how geographic mobility and moving between organisations had positively influenced their career path. They believed that to keep climbing the career ladder, it was necessary to be flexible in location and they agreed that mobility of some kind (geographical or organisational) was crucial. The remainder claimed that staying in one organisation could hinder career progression. All of the men had moved in order to progress their own career. Even if they moved to a position at the same level, they saw it as career advancement, as it offered more opportunity.

In comparison, the majority of women interviewed, at both University and Hospitality, stated they had rarely moved for career progression, and if they had moved, they had other reasons, such as to follow their husband or to immigrate for family reasons. For this group of women, mobility was not an intentional strategy of career advancement, therefore, it has not always been an upward progression. Only one director (administration) and two academics from total of 13 women at University moved intentionally to further their own career progression, and from 14 women at Hospitality only two intentionally moved for career progression.

6.3.1 Male Managers

Hospitality

At Hospitality, the transition of male managers into senior positions consisted of movement between different properties in the Hospitality companies: through different
organisations, different states, or countries. Most senior managers believed that continuous learning through university education and moving between organisations was a critical part of self-development. Seven out of nine senior managers believed that being geographically mobile had a positive impact on their career progression into senior positions. As Kevin (GM) elaborated, “If you stay in one organisation too long, you’re not gonna learn. Therefore, you have to be prepared, for your own learning, to move around properties and start to learn and progress that way, which is exactly what I’ve done”.

Daniel (GM) explained how moving between six different enterprises in different industries gave him a profile to progress into his current position as general manager:

I … [moved] through the finance ranks within different organisations [in different industries]… [moving to another company], which was a completely different company, it brought a lot of leadership capabilities. So, I think that was a crossing point for me as well, to move to a larger organisation.

Bradley (GM) also described how moving interstate and internationally helped him to move into the senior ranks:

I started in …[country], and then moved into a junior management position by the time I left …[country] to join…[organisation] in … Australia, which was a floor manager role in…[hospitality industry]. I became one of the senior managers for international business. I was in that role until I became the assistant manager, and I moved across to… [another organisation in the hospitality industry] in another state in Australia, where the CEO asked me to assist in setting up a new property and then later to… [take on] the role of VIP business, so I ended up VIP manager. I was promoted to a higher position in … another state, then became a general manager… From that point I went overseas, and I ended up becoming the vice president, and then I moved from VP to the president, and managed the operations across four properties. In
between all that, I did a little shift over in America. And some shifts in China…

Then I came back to Australia into a general management position in this organisation.

William was the only interviewee who was not a white, Anglo-Saxon. He had two university degrees and had moved around the globe to develop his career. He believed mobility was necessary for career progression:

I went to … [country], for me [these were] learning curves … like working in [the] American industry and then coming back to the Australian environment and working here. Then going into Asia. I worked there with a different set of teams and people.

**University**

As discussed in Chapter 5, Jack, a deputy vice chancellor, emphasised the importance of mobility in career progression:

Having had to go from [one city to another], through six different institutions, I don’t think I’d be in the position I’m in now if I’d stayed in the same [organisation] all of the time, but I think I’ve had to be prepared to be flexible in where I’m prepared to go to advance.

He said, “It’s sometimes easier for a male and a father to make those sorts of locational and organisational changes than it might be for females in many relationships”. He commented that he was divorced from the mother of his children because of his frequent moves.

Joshua (director of the HR department) explained how working internationally in countries, including the USA and UK, gave him a profile for career progression, “If you can be seen to be working at an international level on projects … then that gives you a profile. I was prepared to travel a lot to be able to do big projects”.
In addition to geographical mobility, moving between organisations had an important role in the career journeys of male senior managers at University, “Getting internal promotion is a very tricky thing. It’s always a lot easier to move between organisations (Jason, HOD)”.  

6.3.2 Female Managers

*Hospitality*

Only two women (from 14) at Hospitality stated that they had intentionally moved for career progression. There were three women who moved for other reasons, such as to follow their husbands (Sofie) or to immigrate (Rose and Sophie). However, these women were sometimes forced to start from a lower position.

Barbara was the only female general manager (tier 2) at Hospitality. Her strategy for progression was mobility both organisationally and geographically to progress into a senior position:

I worked for various companies in various roles in Australia and also overseas. I started in operational roles working in hotels, and restaurants, and then moved into human resources career, started at the bottom and most recently transitioned [to] the general manager position at Hospitality. I’ve had lots of opportunities to move within companies, as well. So, when I work for a company, I’ve had two or three different positions within that company before moving out of that company. I think that that’s been very valuable for my career to not just keep moving too quickly, but to solidify my strengths, and then try something else within the same company ‘cause you have a bit of comfort around what you’re doing, and then move to the next company after that.

As discussed in Sofie’s story in Chapter 5, she moved states to follow her husband; however, this move also helped her to progress in her career:

My husband wanted to move, and I was pretty settled, so it was who would find the job first, and I happened to find one, and then it just helped my career. He
wanted to move and I moved with him to …[state] had a great opportunity there. I was quite settled in …[state] my partner wanted to move again…

Although mobility was challenging for Sofie, this assisted her progression and each time she moved, she always found a higher position, “I’ve travelled around probably to build my career and get exposure, I would never have achieved the current position had I not moved”.

**University**

Almost all of the female participants at University had experienced mobility at a certain level in their career. Only three women (Hannah, Zoe, and Carolina) from 14 moved because of their own career, others moved for a variety of reasons, including their husband’s move (Clara) or immigration (Fiona). However, their mobility was not always associated with an upward progression, and sometimes they had to accept a lower position because of not having any other choice.

Fiona (HOD) was the only woman in the sample at University who was not from an Anglo-Saxon background and who had moved to different organisations, industries, and countries for career progression. She started her career in India [her home country], and when she moved to New Zealand she started at the bottom and then progressed. On arrival in Australia she started from a lower position once again. Fiona emphasised that her family moved with her:

I did start moving into managerial roles in India and then I moved to New Zealand. I started again as a …[junior], and moved jobs [and organisations], and moved from a junior role into a senior role. I’ve been in the same role throughout, just moved between different industries. In Australia, I started off as a … [junior] again, moved into a senior role, then moved into middle management role and then director, and that was over a period of 14 years. Then
moved to University about six months ago and I came straight into a head of department role.

Clara’s story in Chapter 5 revealed that she had followed her husband to different cities. Every time they moved she had to look for a new position and sometimes it happened to be at a higher level and sometimes at the same level as before:

I think I have been lucky to be in the right place at the right time for me to be able to progress. I don’t think if I had stayed in one university that I would have actually got (sic) as far as I’ve got (sic) today because I think that sometimes opportunities are limited if you don’t move. I think one of my greatest skills is having the experience of working elsewhere, which makes it more attractive when I apply for a job.

Zoe (PVC) is an example of women who had been proactive in their career. She was in the same position at a different university in another country but she decided to move to University because she thought she would have more opportunity in a bigger organisation.

Only two women (Grace and Elena) progressed internally through the organisational ranks. Grace, whose story appears in Chapter 5, started at a very low level and progressed through the organisational ranks; however, her career was affected after having children. Elena’s story is also discussed in Chapter 5, and she progressed from Level B to E and recently to deputy head of school.

6.4 UNBROKEN CAREER PATH

The findings within the two organisations show that all of the male senior managers interviewed took no time off during their career. All mentioned choosing career advancement over family as a necessity to attain senior roles. In contrast, for women, focusing on career meant juggling family or sometimes deciding not to have any children or limiting family size. Women usually faced different challenges in their
career progression, with the majority taking primary responsibility for childcare. They faced having to make “choices” about their working arrangements in a way that men did not. Some chose to take career breaks or alter their patterns of working, while others did not, often because of the fear that deviating from the established model of a career, which was based on men’s unbroken career paths, would have negative consequences for them.

6.4.1 Male Managers

*Hospitality*

All of the men at Hospitality stated that they had an unbroken career path. Almost all of them mentioned that they had a supportive wife who took care of family responsibilities so that they could focus on their career. There was only one general manager who said he shared care responsibilities, “I have got a couple of young children and my wife works three days a week, I drop them off three days a week when they have to get to school and my wife picks them up”. None of the senior managers used any kind of FWAs while they were in a senior position, and they did not mention that it was a challenge for them to balance career with their personal life. When prompted about the question of family responsibilities and the use of FWAs, the majority of men replied that they did not need to do that because they had an understanding family or their wife took care of family responsibilities. As discussed in Chapter 5, Tony (CFO) worked around 70 hours each week:

> For me to actually be able to do the role that I’m doing, and spending the hours that I do at work, I’ve got a great partner that…looks after the kids… herself. [She] has said, “I’m happy to not push my career and I’m happy to spend a period of time looking after the family”. And to me, that is the core role: if not more important than what I do.
Tony also commented on lack of childcare support Australia, “Access to good childcare is really difficult in our country right now. While there are plenty of childcare facilities available, that have huge amounts of money that you need to spend”.

Kevin (GM) also stated that his wife took care of family responsibilities when he focuses on his career:

My wife is also an accountant. We’ve got the understanding that my career at the moment takes precedence, in the nicest possible way, so that if there is an emergency with the children, she’d be first to attend to it so that I don’t have too much disruption in my day. Not having family support or childcare available has made it tougher for us.

*University*

As with Hospitality, all of the men at University had unbroken career paths. Most of the male senior managers reported that they had an understanding wife (in all cases it was a wife) who took care of the family and other responsibilities while they were busy with their career. Jack (DVC) believed that as the breadwinner of his family he was expected to focus on his career, “I think I’ve probably taken a career development path that’s been expected of me [male] by others, and I imagine it’s a developmental path that’s expected less often of others if they’re female”.

Jason (HOD) stated, “If you want to achieve higher ranks in your profession, you needed to work hard and make trade-offs for your career. If you had a family the pressure would increase”. However, he believed that it was easier for men than women:

The pressures for males without direct care responsibilities are less. You (sic) got a partner who looks after the kids. You can still indulge [in] your career and make your best efforts to be a part of the family. So, for me that was get up, work, come back from work, spend time with my family, and when my daughters and my wife went to bed, I’ve worked through to quite late in the
night, and then we repeat the pattern. So, I was able to maintain my connections with my family while still working harder than I should have done.

Jordan (CFO) believed that to progress you needed to make trade-offs and focus on your career:

You have just got to work out what trade-offs you’re willing to make. You’ve gotta be prepared for the decision that your kids are going to go to childcare or have a nanny. It can be the male or the female who makes that, or both.

However, as discussed in Chapter 5, Jordan’s wife, who also had a career, made the trade-off for the family, because as Jordan stated, “I am not a stay at home dad”.

Although the majority of men at University indicated that they had a supportive wife who took care of family responsibilities, there were two men who preferred to continue their career as a professor and not a senior manager as a result of family responsibilities. After several years in a management positions they had chosen family over further career progression in management. They believed that they did not have flexibility in management positions, so they preferred to be a professor in their department. When asking Jason (HOD) if he was looking for further progression he responded:

No, not actually. I left … university in the… [another country]. I was head of quite a large discipline that was a very big university and I came to here, which is a much smaller position, much easier position. I’ve been trying to take a step back and restart and try to get back down again, mostly for the work-life balance …the pro vice chancellor invited me to become head of school and I haven’t applied. I didn’t really want to.

As noted in Chapter 5, Rudolf (dean) was resigning from his management role because he wanted to have more flexibility and pursue his career as a professor.
6.4.2 Female Managers

Career progression was different for many female managers. Almost all of them mentioned that because they were the primary caregivers of the family they had to make a “choice” about career progression and their advancement usually stalled as a result of care responsibilities (discussed in detail in Chapter 7).

_Hospitality_

Most senior female managers at Hospitality were either single, partnered without children, or had adult children. Barbara (GM, Tier 2) said she worked longer hours compared to other women who were in the Tier 3 of management. However, she said because she did not have any children she could spend longer at the workplace. She believed that FWAs were only acceptable for women who had children.

Some women had suffered discrimination because they had children and when they were pregnant. Their immediate manager had displayed discriminatory behaviour and been against their progression in the organisation because he believed that as a woman their social responsibilities were to take care of their children. Flora (senior manager) believed that most of the senior male managers in the organisation had a cultural view that flexible work does not fit with the responsibilities of senior roles. However, she believed that after having a child, women were more committed to their career. She mentioned that some of her staff had been more productive when they worked part-time, “We have one female manager that works three, 10 hour shifts a week, she does more in those three, 10-hour shifts than most of the full-time senior managers do”.

At Hospitality, one interviewee who had used FWAs was prevented from progressing in her career. Anna (assistant manager, Tier 4) deserved to be promoted according to her (female) managers, but she had to stay in lower positions because she was using FWAs at the time. Anna had a newborn baby and worked part-time. She
reduced her working hours as a matter of “necessity” rather than “choice”, as her husband had the same position and they worked in the same organisation. Anna stated:

The last promotion I went for was this role that I’m in now and the reason why I’ve stuck with this position for so long, for six years, is because I had maternity leave and I work part-time. I haven’t progressed since then. I haven’t chosen to… Career progression for me may be something I consider once I finish having children.

She commenced part-time hours to take care of their children, which made her ineligible for promotion to a more senior position and she believed that it was natural not to progress because she worked part-time and had care responsibilities. Yet her manager, Flora (senior manager), praised her skills and abilities:

Anna is amazing, she has such a strong impact on the team. She is very much focused on how things look and the experience of the guests. There aren’t enough people like that, and it’s very important that this business retains her and does what it needs to do in order to bring her back and in 10 year’s time, have her operating at…[a] senior level.

University

Women senior managers at University acknowledged that their industry had a variety of FWA policies, but that they did not always translate into actual practice. Isabella (PVC) emphasised the role of the line manager:

University has got great policies around gender equity, but how things get implemented and interpreted can vary, and that can vary from manager to manager. And that’s where I think some people’s fundamental personal views or assumptions or values can actually get in the way of implementing what I think are really good policies.

The women believed that career breaks hindered women’s career progression, so most had decided not to use any FWAs in order to progress in their career. As seen in
Chapter 5, Carolina (director) was in a senior management position and was reluctant to utilise family-related flexible leave policies for fear of losing her position and being demoted to a lower level. Carolina, who had a two-year-old child, said that after her maternity leave she had “no choice” but to go back to her position full-time, otherwise she would be moved to a different position. Women like Carolina, who took career breaks, reported that their career prospects were jeopardised or suffered greatly. Women believed that if they took time out of their career, they would not be given any further opportunities in their career. As in Chapter 5, Grace (deputy director) said that having children had an impact on her career progression. In the early stages of her career she was able to progress very quickly to higher positions; however, after having children she did not have any career moves, “I came in 1989 at level HEW 6 and by 1993 I was at level 10 position…, which is [a] pretty quick career progression…. Then I had three children. That significantly slows down your career progression after that point”.

Academic women also faced specific issues around the quantity and currency of their research. Zoe (PVC) commented:

I think where it’s challenging for academic women in particular, is that you do get promoted on getting research grants and doing publications and things. So, if you take periods of time for parental leave, nobody else is getting you the research grants or doing the publications, so you get these blocks in your career. And it’s very difficult to even make up that time again.

She explained she did not “choose” to use any form of FWAs because:

I’ve never had anything particularly put in place for me. I have three children. So, when I was pregnant with the first two, actually, I was doing my PhD and lecturing full-time, so I didn’t have any flexible work arrangements. After they were born, I did consider going part-time, but the department at the time couldn’t guarantee that I would only work certain hours. So, the timetabling
was all done centrally for the university, and so there would be no guarantee that my lectures would be at the times that I wanted them, so I didn’t go part-time, I stayed full-time.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Elena (deputy head of school) chose career progression, but explained it had a significant influence on her personal life:

I had to adjust my family to fit the career because of the expectations, and the lack of structural support around those career steps that meant that it would be difficult to have done it before hand. Then also I had to have delays in my progression associated with that.

Although Clara (HOD) had a supportive husband, she had to make the decision about her career when she had school-age children:

It [career progression] did take a while, and I didn’t [progress] to the next position [as it] would’ve involved travelling, so I let my management know that I’m not willing to travel until my kids had (sic) finished school… Yeah, potentially if I didn’t have the kids, I may have moved, I may have been promoted at least, maybe two years before when I did get promoted.

6.5 PLANNING A CAREER

Planning for their career was one of the major elements of career progression for both female and male senior managers. The interviews revealed that those employees who actively pursued career progression had a plan beforehand. As one of their strategies, they asked their manager for more work or for challenging tasks and projects that assisted them in achieving a senior position.

All of the women interviewed, with one exception, stated that they applied for a position only when they were 100 per cent sure that they were qualified for the position. Conversely, men mentioned that they put their hands up for any opportunities, even if they assumed that they had 50 per cent of the qualifications. Men talked about how they
had the capacity and the attributes to progress, whereas many women spoke about being “lucky” to get a position. No man commented that it was “luck” or “by accident” that they had progressed. Most of the men mentioned that they had a plan to progress and they were strategic in their planning. They prepared to clearly express their interest in progression to their managers or supervisors and asked for their advice on further progression. In response, their manager gave them the opportunity and exposure to big projects, and consequently opportunity for advancement.

6.5.1 Male Managers

Hospitality

All of the men interviewed at Hospitality had planned their career progression and none mentioned that they gained management positions “by accident”. They were confident when applying for a job and believed that their success was a matter of their own hard work, competence, and intention for further progression.

Daniel (GM) was assertive in his career progression. As we saw in Chapter 5, he wanted to progress soon to the next level, “I know what I want to do and where I want to get to … I have a sense of achievement”. Daniel planned to progress, and part of his planning was taking “large projects”, because “It’s been those larger activities that I think has (sic) developed me as a manager, as well as leader”. Kevin (GM) started in labouring jobs and from that point he knew what he needed to do in order to have a career path. So, he planned to study and prepare himself for a management position. Kevin was always looking for career progression:

You have to look for the opportunities and you have to speak to express your interest. So, for me personally, I’ve been on the lookout where there have been gaps and where I could add value, and I’ve had discussions with my manager at the time … saying this is what I can do in that space, and I think I’ll be really good at it, and this is why, this is what I’ve done before.
Daniel and Kevin are examples of men who believe it is important to express your interest for further progression and look out for challenging projects to facilitate career advancement.

Jasper (senior manager) was relatively young, in his 30s, and he believed that he had been given the opportunity to experience different management activities. He received exposure to different projects that prepared him for his career, “My manager wanted me to develop, and by doing that I learnt how to plan, and how to communicate better, how to negotiate, how to influence”. Tony (CFO) reflected on his career progression plan, “I think more of my career progression was probably me tapping people that I had a lot of respect for to ask them if they would be willing to be a mentor for myself and help me develop my career”.

Men at Hospitality mentioned that they raised their hands for any opportunities. William (senior manager) said, “Even having 50 per cent of the job requirement is enough to apply, the next fifty percent you can learn after starting your job”.

Bradley (GM) stated:

People believe once you become a manager, you’re supposed to know everything. And that’s not true, but that’s the honest belief that has always run throughout our business. And you learn the business as you go through the difficulties in the business. The reality is, you only become a manager through day-to-day stuff, because you only know what then.

Edward’s (COO) story, presented in Chapter 5, revealed that he was very confident in his competencies and assertively said that “I suppose my ability to lead and change is what initially drove my managerial exposure and then senior leadership roles”.

University

Most men at University actively chose career progression. None of the men had unplanned careers. When an opportunity arose they applied for the position, without considering whether they would able to do all of it. Raymond (dean) said:

The opportunity comes up, you gotta be ready to go for it, you gotta be ready to change, and you gotta be ready to admit that you’re starting again here. I [have] done just (sic) head of school, I’m on top of that and know [how] that school runs. I’ve been doing it five years, (the school’s running) really well and then you take on the deans role. You realise this feels very different, the skills that you apply to one school don’t work in another. So, when you get to my role… you really gotta approach each of them as a little bit different… I had to really learn a lot about how to manage [people].

Raymond emphasised that his career progression was a matter of his capabilities, hard work, and taking opportunities, and his response was similar to others interviewed:

I think I work very hard… And always kind of had a take on the next opportunity or challenge, so if anything comes my way. I mean I’ve never said no to anything I don’t think. So, I think it’s important to basically be prepared to have a go.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Jordan (CFO) was always looking for career progression to achieve his goal, he said:

I’m always actively seeking feedback from them [my managers] to make sure that I’m aligned with them. So, it shouldn’t come down to six or 12 months performance reviews. You should know what your boss thinks and expects all the time. So, part of it [career progression] is about not being ignorant to that relationship. You need to manage your boss, as well as manage yourself.

Jack (DVC) also stated that he had always planned for his career, “I have been sure at the stage in which I’ve sought to take the next step, that was the path to take”.

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Aiden (HOD) stated, “I think the biggest important thing for me was that I took the opportunity. So, the opportunities presented themselves, and I took them, I applied for them, and I was successful”. He reached a senior position five years after finishing his PhD, when he was a senior lecturer:

An opportunity came up when the head of school required someone to take on the role of deputy head of school, and that was for this campus at University. And I decided to take on the opportunity and I enjoyed it. I stayed for a year then I applied for the position of head of school once my tenure [was] completed. So, my beginning into the head of school role started very early. It started when I was a senior lecturer.

Aiden actively chose career progression and his challenge was “Keeping the momentum of career progression”. He stated, “I liked the idea of progressing and I liked the idea of leadership… I wanted to [progress] and I put [in] a lot of effort to try and pursue that career progression, not only the academic ladder, but also the leadership ladder”.

6.5.2 Female Managers

**Hospitality**

Career paths for most of the women at Hospitality started with a front-line customer-focused position and progressed through the career hierarchy. However, when women reached certain levels of management their career progressions stalled. Women were promoted within the organisation, but it took them longer to get to certain levels of management. Most of the women were in Tier 3 of management, with only Barbara (GM) at Tier 2. There were few women who did not commence in front-line customer-focused roles, they were in the HR department and the other was in the finance department.
Women at Hospitality talked about being “lucky” in gaining senior positions and not believing in their capabilities. Seven women said: “I was really ‘lucky’, I was in the right place at the right time”. Most women expressed no planned career goal and that they were “lucky” that they reached a senior position. Flora (senior manager) moved when she got bored, “I have been lucky that regularly I have had opportunities to apply for more senior roles. I have applied and I have just been lucky that opportunities have come along, I guess I am sort of driven by boredom”. Although Anna (assistant manager, Tier 4) knew that she had the knowledge, she still believed that she was “lucky” to be chosen for the position:

I was lucky enough to be chosen for the … [supervisory position], so I think that built my profile…, and I think that helped me get to that next promotion phase. When I was in that role, I was given the opportunity to work in … [section], so I was training new dealers, and that was great for my profile, and it also gave me a great understanding of the rules and procedures.

Amy and Alison moved when a position became available. Amy (HR manager, Tier 3) was the only external applicant for the position and she mentioned, “I was lucky to secure an administrative role in HR, initially in one of the international hotels. I did that for a while and then I was told that there was a position going here and I applied”. Alison (senior manager) also stated:

My career has been not planned, I have always been happy in the current role. I have never had much ambition to move forward… I’ve seemed to be in the right place at the right time, and obviously I have applied for the role and I have been lucky to get it. But it was never a career path that I was taking.

Most of the women wanted to be sure they could do the entire job asked of them. Sue (senior manager) elaborated:
I only put my hand up for things when I know 100 per cent that I will be able to do it, rather than stretch myself a little bit. I think I possibly have missed out on opportunities because I haven’t just thrown myself completely in it, well not blindly, without hesitation, and just make, I’ll sort it out.

Julia (senior manager) talked about her feelings when she applied for a new position:

The next step for me would be general manager position. I am like “Oh Gosh! That sounds so big” and I visualise myself as a little girl and I forget that I have got all this experience. I already have 600 people reporting to me and I do a pretty good job, but for some reason my natural inclination is just to go “Oh, I don’t know if I can do that”.

Flora (operations manager) elaborated on this issue:

I have a hazy theory that a woman is less inclined to apply for a role if she somewhat doubts her ability, whereas a man will go “I don’t know how to do that, but I will wing it”. I am a prime example of that, I am my own biggest self-doubter. I have got people coming to me saying, “You absolutely should apply for this”, and I said, “Oh, I don’t think I can do that”.

Family care obstacles could also impact on career. Erika (senior manager) knew there was a career path and she was enthusiastic to apply for promotion; however, she said that, “I was given the opportunity to apply for the role, however, I didn’t. I know that’s where I want to get to, however, I have to look at where I am at the moment and my requirements with a young child”.

A few women at Hospitality talked about planning for career progression. Only Rita (senior manager) had a specific career goal:
I’ve been quite fortunate actually. I’ve kind of always set high achievements for myself and I have actually always reached and gotten there. I’ve set myself a goal and I’ve worked hard and I’ve gotten that goal.

Rita said she have been “quite fortunate”, which is a variation of “luck”.

**University**

Some women at University stated that they had planned their career. Carolina and Grace had actively chosen career progression, but they faced a lot of challenges when they had children. In Chapter 5, Carolina (director) explained that she asked for challenging tasks to show her managers that she enjoyed doing more and she was prepared for further progression. Grace (deputy director) made a deliberate decision to move to University:

> I made the change to come to University because the organisation in which I worked was a very small one and there weren’t a lot of career opportunities. I applied for a position here that was lower in pay, but I made the choice because I believed in larger organisations I would have more opportunities to progress.

Some women mentioned that they planned to progress by accepting challenging projects that facilitated their progression:

> I went to establish a new school…but at that stage… [X university] didn’t have permission to establish that school, so it was high risk… It was tough, particularly in the first twelve months for all sorts of reasons, but I wouldn’t be here now if I hadn’t have done that, I’m pretty sure of that (Hannah, DVC).

Although a few of the women mentioned that they had planned their career, most stated that they did not plan to obtain a senior position:

> So, I started off as an academic staff member at another university and had moved through lecturer, senior lecturer, and so on, and then was appointed as academic dean and I did that role for about two years. And University had then...
established [a new] pro vice chancellor position. I applied for that, not really expecting to get it, and got it. So, I was the inaugural pro vice chancellor there for nearly seven years. Was very happy in the job… More a series of interesting opportunities that have come along my way, rather than necessarily any plan (Zoe, PVC).

Like the women at Hospitality, many women referred to the concept of “luck” in their career. Clara (HOD) said her transition to a senior role had always been “by accident” and she had been “lucky” and that most of the times she had progressed to a higher position whenever she moved with her husband to a new state. However, there were examples where she was first recruited for the same level and then progressed further:

My transition into a senior management position has been a little bit by accident. It has been based on opportunity. I think I have been lucky to be in the right place at the right time for me to be able to progress.

Clara used the word “lucky” several times in her interview and she did not have a career plan to progress. She said in response to numerous questions, “I haven’t chosen career progression actually, I fell over it”. She also stated, “My transition to senior positions has been by accident, and I have been ‘lucky’ enough to get it”.

Natalie (director) also mentioned that her career was not planned and she was lucky:

My first senior position (HOD) was out of nowhere. I didn’t think that I could do the job and I didn’t want to do that job, but the way that it was put to me after I said no initially, “Then think about who else would do that job”, and… I realised that it would be better for me to do it even if I did it wrong. So, that was probably a pretty pivotal point in my career. I have been very lucky along the way… Then, I kept sort of leaping up to the next one and next one and next one, so there was no intent to part of my path.
6.6 CONCLUSION: THE MASCULINE MODEL OF MANAGER

The themes discussed in this chapter described the model of a manager, which is a historical male working model, the full-time breadwinner with a wife at home looking after the children.

Both women and men managers regarded long working hours, mobility, unbroken career path, and planning for career and actively looking for career advancement to be critical characteristics of a senior management positions. Working long hours was the non-negotiable aspect of senior positions. Senior roles were seen as high demand positions that required trade-offs. This characteristic has remained the sticking point and there has been no reconstruction of what a senior role entails. It was evident in the interviews that all male senior managers had accepted working long hours when holding a senior role. Women also accepted this, and worked long hours. They worked not only in the office, but also at home and were contactable when travelling.

An unbroken career path was another characteristic of senior management positions and also critical to achieving a senior position. Almost all of the male senior managers interviewed took no time off during their career. While focusing on career for women meant juggling family or sometimes deciding not to have any children, or limiting family size. Women faced having to make “choices” about their career progression, because the majority took primary responsibility for childcare at same point in their career. A few chose to take career breaks or alter their patterns of working, while most did not use any kind of FWA, often due to the fear that deviating from the established (masculine) model of a career would have negative consequences for them.

Most of interviewees explained that mobility facilitated their career progression. Men believed that it was necessary to be flexible in location to keep climbing the career ladder and they agreed that mobility of some kind was crucial. Men mostly moved strategically. Although they sometimes moved to the same position, their move was an
intentional plan that assisted them to advance their career. On the other hand, women moved mostly for reasons other than career progression, such as following their husbands or immigrating for family welfare.

Female and male managers identified planning for a career and actively seeking career advancement was another essential characteristic. Those employees who actively pursued career progression had a plan beforehand. Most of the men had a strategic plan for their career. They also expressed their interest in progression to their managers or supervisors and asked for their advice on further progression. In comparison, most women expressed no plan for their career and many women spoke about being “lucky” to get a position.

These five major characteristics of non-negotiable long working hours, mobility, an unbroken career path, focusing on career versus family, planning for career, and actively looking for career advancement, constitute a masculine model of a manager. Interviewees in this study still claim that they could not achieve a senior position without these characteristics, because candidates for management positions are measured against these characteristics. This was the model that emerged from all interviewees, with both women and men. Indeed, none of these insights are new and they have been well established in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. All interviewees had to be able to conform to this model. These characteristics therefore form the “ideal manager”, a concept discussed in Chapter 8.
Chapter 7: Challenges to Career Advancement for Women

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the challenges women face as an impact of the masculine male model of the “ideal manager” discussed in Chapter 6. This chapter focuses specifically on the challenges women face progressing to and remaining in senior positions. The chapter compares the experiences of the women and men in these organisations and draws out the themes that challenge women’s career progression. Although this chapter is focused on the women’s perspectives, it also includes men’s perspectives, as they are the dominant group in senior positions. As a result, they shape the instrumental characteristics of the ideal manager; and hence, play a major part in women’s experiences.

This chapter commences with a discussion of the attitudes and beliefs about women in management of the men who were interviewed and describes their stereotypical view of management. This is very important, because in addition to the themes discussed in Chapter 6, it informs the climate in which the women interviewed worked, revealing insights into how the ideal manager concept is shaped. This section also includes some of the issues women face in their everyday interactions and how they reflect the masculine model of the ideal manager. This chapter then discusses some difficulties the women faced managing their work and life. The impact of gender and age and their interactions are discussed in relation to the experiences of the few young managers and focuses on the issues faced by some older female managers. Finally, the chapter discusses the impact of support on women and men’s advancement and contrasts the experiences of women and men managers.
7.2 MEN’S ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

The stereotypical view that managers are men was an obstacle for women’s career progression. Most of the senior men interviewed took women’s slow progression or lack of desire for senior positions as the woman’s “choice” and “natural” because of their role in child bearing and their social role in child caring. What one male manager at Hospitality referred to as “traditional female traits”, was seen by a number of men as disadvantaging business outcomes and causing damage to the business. For the male managers who were interviewed, the ideal manager was not specified by gender; however, there were implications that it is a man, because they are assumed to be able to make trade-offs in the best interests of the business.

Hospitality

Three-quarters of the male managers interviewed at Hospitality said that their business was gender balanced. The senior male managers believed that having women in senior roles was essential, but they were afraid of the disadvantages that they thought this may have for their business. They believed that it was not applicable to facilitate FWAs in a 24/7 business. Bradley (GM) said, “We support women whenever we can, but not at the expense of business failure in the future”. He said, “We have supported many women to get into senior positions, but what we ended up with was a lot more of what people call the traditional ‘female traits’, that cause damage to a business when they go there”. Bradley elaborated:

I do have a part-time female manager that currently works Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and already we have seen some of the issues where the rest of the team are waiting to see their manager, but their manager is not in until the weekend. [The] problem is, that the team member is off for those days. So, there’s only one possible day they can actually catch up with their manager.
Mathew (GM) referred to Hospitality as a family friendly organisation; however, this contrasted with his explanation that, “We have a view that we [organisation] are family friendly, which I think is great…but we don’t have part-time hours or flexitime, or anything like that. I don’t think that would work in our organisation”.

Tony (CFO) believed that the “old stereotype” is the main challenge for women to progress in their career. He said, “The old stereotype is that our wives used to stay at home and look after the kids”. Raymond (GM) also stated:

I’ve also worked with a lot of females who operate at my level and they seem to be capable of doing that, although I know there are other challenges. It is perceived that women are the caretakers and men are the breadwinners.

Senior men at Hospitality regarded women’s slow progression as a lack of desire for senior positions, due to their roles in child bearing and child caring. For them, the ideal manager was someone who could commit themselves wholly to the business and not to the family; and this meant working full-time, including not using FWAs. Tony said, “If you are an ambitious female leader and are the primary carer at home, it is a really hard life”. He considered that the recruitment of women with family responsibilities was the challenge for 24/7 business and leaders in decision-making positions. Edward (CFO) stated, “The board needs the confidence that the senior managers are able to make trade-offs to run the business”. Bradley (GM) said, “It is challenging to have a 24/7 business and keep the female and male ratio balanced”. Tony said, “It’s not an easy stereotype, so much of our own history, that it gets passed down through generations”; however, he thought the future could be different:

Let’s get out of that stereotypical way of how we work in this organisation. Do we need to have our leaders here, 50, 60 hours a week working? Can they work from home? Can they telecommute? Can they work between certain hours on a
given day to be able to work through family life as well? I think they can, we’re just working on it, [and] many other corporations are working on it.

There was only one male manager at Hospitality who seemed to be aware of that women had to operate within a different environment to get into senior positions. Daniel (general manager) stated:

Women need to put themselves in men’s shoes to try and understand them and they probably have to... I think they do have to try harder, because they [are] just having to deal with that environment. I don’t think I really appreciated it earlier in my career, but I certainly do see it that women do have to try harder and think ahead more. I probably don’t have to think out as many steps.

University

Mike (HOD) believed that women were more likely to take care of the children and this had consequences for their career progression:

In academia, the career expectation is you’ve had a teaching and research career, and that’s important to prepare you for a senior role. If you have career breaks for families, and that’s much more common that women would’ve done that than men, then that is likely to interrupt or slowdown that progress, making it later or [taking] more years for a woman to get to that position.

Women were viewed as a liability because of their caring commitments. Luke (associate director) stated that:

Women look after children to a large extent, so I’ve seen where people have been on 80 per cent working, four days a week, and they’ve gone to apply for a higher role, actually, they’ve been told, “No you can’t”. And the reason they’re doing the fractional appointment is because of family, whereas it doesn’t happen with men. There are not many men on fractional appointments, so it’s a lot safer to have a male rather than a female.

Charles (director) saw the issue as “obvious”:
It’s still obvious in the workplace, the people who have the young children and have to go at a moment’s notice or they’ve gone off to have a kid, and you just know they’re going to come back for five years at three days a week, so, yeah, it’s the women. It’s not the men. So, the women get adversely impacted by that.

Jack (DVC) believed that as the breadwinner of his family he was expected to focus on his career, “I think I’ve probably taken a career development path that’s been expected of me by others, and I imagine it’s a developmental path that’s expected less often of others if they’re female”.

The male managers interviewed believe that women could not make good senior managers because of their role in child bearing. From their point of view, having women in senior roles was disadvantageous to the business, as it is socially accepted that women are the main carers of the family. Their perspectives shed light on some of the challenges women face due to this stereotypical view.

7.2.1 Women’s experience in the organisations

The women interviewed in senior positions gave a brief insight into their daily practices. Although their everyday interactions were not the focus of this study, the following describes some of the challenges women face in senior roles. The senior women interviewed commented that they were not taken seriously, they were not heard in meetings and boardrooms, they faced discriminatory behaviours, and they were discriminated against when they had children. They described how they had to interact to fit within the masculine model of the ideal manager and “to be taken seriously”. This contrasted with the experiences of the male managers interviewed.

*Hospitality*

At Hospitality a number of the women managers interviewed recounted that they were not listened to in meetings and in the boardrooms. Alison (senior manager) had
been in several management roles had faced barriers with the culture in boardrooms many times:

I wasn’t being listened to. I felt like I couldn’t open my mouth at the table because I wasn’t being taken seriously and quite often I’d just be talked over or kind of dismissed. And for me I lost a lot of confidence

Julia (senior manager) said that when she participated in board meetings she was not heard. She stated that although they were friendly, the “boys’ club” culture still existed:

I went to a meeting of my shift and my peers on the same level as me, and I’m the only woman, there are seven men. So, it’s still a very much talk about the footy and the soccer, and there’s still that boys thing, and sometimes they say things. I look at them, and say, “Did you really just say that [laughs]. You can’t say that anymore. 20 years ago, you could say it, but not anymore…”

Julia believed that women need to prove themselves more than men, “We [women] need to show that we are good and we are in this position because we deserve it, not because we are women”.

Some women recounted how these views had an impact on them. Clare (senior manager) talked about her male manager’s attitude at Hospitality that belittled her attempt to become a manager:

When I was pregnant, I received bad comments from my past bosses [at Hospitality]. For example, one of my bosses said “Why would you do that, you’re only going to go off and have baby anyway”, and that kind of thing. So, I’ve come across my fair share of struggles within that time.

**University**

Elena complained that the alpha male model of success within the science group of University was defined by the male research model:
At the level of heads of schools, heads of research centres, and especially in the sciences, because the number of women in those positions is very low, there’s still very strong gendered issues in that, and a male focus of expectations … it’s been very focused on a male research leader, alpha male model of what that means, and how that succeeds.

Natalie (director) mentioned that friendly behaviour could be misinterpreted as not being leadership material:

A fellow came to meet with me when I was a head of school. He was late and he came rushing up and I felt sorry for him. I asked him to sit down for a moment and catch his breath. I asked him if he wanted a drink or cup of tea. I got the drink then sat down and started a casual conversation with him while he got himself composed. After a few minutes he turned around and said “That’s all very nice but where is Dr…? [Natalie] I have an appointment with him”. I thought it was a bit embarrassing. I smiled at him and said “Actually, I am Dr…, you are here to meet with me”.

She stated that she had to change her behaviour in order to be “taken seriously”:

I’ve adjusted my language when I am talking to people to recognise that my consultative approach isn’t the same as consult seeking. I am not looking for everybody to agree, I look for their advice and input so the decision can be made, so we can move forward.

Natalie also explained about her experience in meetings:

I’ve gone to a meeting before where I had my managers with me who were older than me and there has been an automatic assumption that they are the ones who are in charge. Fortunately, most of the male managers that I’ve worked with have been tactful enough to just slide them across, by hand gesture or by looking to me that helps people to understand that they are misdirecting the attention and they should be actually talking to me instead.
Grace (director) talked about the discriminatory behaviour for women after maternity leave:

I can remember the first performance review that I had after I came back from maternity leave with the first child. [My] performance review said “Current staff has suffered [mentally] from giving birth”. There is a view that if you become a mother then your brain must have turned to a fool or something.

7.3 MANAGING FAMILY

As discussed in Chapter 6, most women and men interviewees emphasised the importance of an unbroken career path and focusing on their career. All of the men had a wife at home to take care of family responsibilities so that they could focus on their career progression. However, this was not the case for women, the majority of whom took primary responsibility for childcare and only few of them shared the care responsibilities with their husband. The women in the two organisations stated that their workplaces were now more supportive of women with care responsibilities compared with 20-25 years ago, when some of them joined these organisations. However, balancing family and paid work was still a challenge cited by most of the women interviewed.

In this context, the availability of childcare is important; however, most interviewees commented on the lack of good and affordable childcare in Australia. Some managers whose partners also worked full-time hired a nanny, despite the high cost. Sofie (senior manager) said that organisations need to bring a childcare on site or help subsidise it, because, “I worked nights and weekends. I didn’t have to pay the child carer because [if you have to pay childcare] suddenly you’re paying more in childcare than the income you’re bringing in”.

Different attitudes to women and men as carers remain. Flora (senior manager, Hospitality) described the different attitudes clearly:
It is quite simple. Carer responsibilities have a large impact on career progression and it depends how much support you have. I am seeing more of it, that he’s a stay-at-home dad, and when you hear that, it’s like “Oh!” and you look at him to see what he looks like. You wouldn’t do that to a woman who is a stay at home mum, you don’t even think of it. But a guy, it’s like, “Which one?”, and you really want to know how that relationship works.

Interviewees believed that the “stay at home dad” was not the norm in Australia, that it was still socially accepted that men are the breadwinners and women are the carers. Therefore, women took major responsibility for childcare. Kevin (GM) explained that although his wife worked as an accountant, his career “takes precedence”, so that if there was an emergency with the children, his wife was the first to attend. This let him avoid any kind of “disruption” in his career. Kevin said, “Not having family support or childcare available has made it tougher for us”.

As a consequence of social and family arrangements, the senior women managers interviewed faced having to make “choices” about their care responsibilities and career in a way that the senior men did not.

**Hospitality**

Julia (senior manager) said 20 years ago when she had children there was “zero consideration”:

When I first had my children, it was very different because my children are now 21 and 23. My ex-husband worked here. I had two children, a three-year old and a baby, working night shift. He worked night shift, and there was no consideration whatsoever. We had a babysitter at night, and we would get by, and we would just tag team and try and stay during the day until we went back at night. So, that was only for a short period of time, that’s what shift work was.
Despite changes at Hospitality over time, there are still some basic issues that the women interviewed believed needed to be addressed. The interviews showed that family responsibilities were still one of the main challenges for women, which impacted on their career progression. Most of the women at Hospitality, especially those with dependent children, complained about juggling work and family. Most of them reported they did not have family support, that there was no childcare facility on site, and the organisation did not subsidise childcare. Rita (senior manager) had a school age son, “I make it work by having a nanny. If you have children, you also need to juggle the financial aspect of that and how you are going to pay for a nanny, because I can’t do this job without that”. Alison (senior manager) had two school age children:

As a senior leader you are expected to work more… I don’t have parents that can look after my children. I don’t have a partner that can stay home and look after my children. I have to find a babysitter or find someone to look after my children if I am to do both [career and care]. It’s hard.

Flora and Anna were the exceptions, as they had supportive families who took care of the care responsibilities. Anna (assistant manager, Tier 4) and her partner both worked at Hospitality; however, she had decided to work part-time, thus slowing down her career to become the main caregiver:

My partner works at Hospitality as well. He needs to be available 24/7, so, I rely on my parents to help look after my son when we’re both working. But because I always finish at midday every day, I need to have a nanny to take care of my son in the evenings. My current morning shift status [part-time arrangement] helps me to still spend time with my son in the afternoons, no matter what day I work. I’m lucky to have my family to help me.

Flora believed that it was difficult for a woman aspiring to management to go at the same pace as a man if they did not have support:
I have supportive parents-in-law … because I’ve got a seven-year old son. They have allowed me to go back full-time when my son was still relatively young, which has made a huge difference…Women, in my opinion, will always be the main, have more of a care factor… and I am just so lucky that my parents-in-law are retired school teachers. I know that my son is in good care.

The senior women managers interviewed still juggled how to combine their work and care responsibilities, as many were the main caregivers. The senior women managers interviewed with care responsibilities needed to manage their work and life in a way that their male counterparts did not. Most of senior women managers did not have any family/partner support and they were required to think about alternatives, such as childcare, a nanny, or working part-time.

University

Hannah (DVC) was concerned about these issues, “I think we need to do some things around allowing women to take time out of work for childbearing and not impede their careers too much when that happens”. She elaborated:

I think when you’re rearing children and so on; it’s extraordinarily difficult to progress in your career. If you’re out of research for a period of time, it knocks your track record. It’s very difficult to get back on track, and we lose a lot of women because it’s just simply too hard.

Isabella (PVC) stated that if you did not have a support it was really challenging to advance your career:

Certainly, parenting and working is a big challenge, and when I was doing that, there was no real formal childcare. That stuff is really huge, I have had three children, and that never was easy, and also there’s always that whole guilt, that women still feel guilt. I can totally relate to that, dealing and juggling the home and the demands of work. I think that’s really a big challenge.
University currently has a childcare facility at only one of its campuses, so staff from other campuses face the lack of onsite childcare facility. Grace (deputy director) said, “I had childcare on [this] campus and took my child for childcare, and that’s a definite advantage to someone pursuing career, but not all employees or students [on other campuses] have the same access to those facilities”.

Elena (deputy head of a department) believed that University could still improve their support for women with care responsibilities, especially by providing childcare on other campuses, as well as addressing other issues:

It was just perverse, when so many other places have changed their entire attitude. The federal parliament doesn’t yet have a childcare centre, but it allows women who have young babies to at least bring them into their office. There’s debate about whether they should be allowed to be on the parliament floor if they’re breastfeeding, which they should, but that actually is more flexible than this university’s policy at the moment.

Having a supportive husband also served an important role in women’s advancement. Natalie, Zoe, and Clara were the only women interviewed who had their husbands’ support. Their husbands supported them and took time off from their work when they had children. Their husbands also shared family responsibilities, allowing these women to pursue their careers, in other words, assisting them to fit within the masculine model of organisation or ideal manager. Natalie (director) believed that she would not able to spend such long hours at work if she did not have her partner’s support:

I am in the very privileged position where if I need to work a 70 hour week, I can, because I know that everything is being looked after by my partner. My husband taking that decision to be that support… I’ve got a couple of small children now. I’ve got primary school age children, but I’ve got to the point that
my husband being (sic) prepared to step back from his career and take the lion’s share of parental responsibility, which is a gift.

Natalie stressed the importance of having a supportive husband and the impact it has had on her career advancement:

There are lots of people that don’t have that opportunity. Expectation often still sits where the female partner would take the lion’s share of keeping the home fires burning and that’s also another reason why we need a shift in our language about carer responsibilities. For instance, gender roles, because we can push and encourage men to see that they have respect and the same concept [about] career opportunities. Later, if they choose to divert and put more attention into the family front, then we create an environment where people would make those decisions in a different way.

Clara (HOD) had a supportive husband who assisted her progress in her career, as she was the main breadwinner of the family:

Family support is really important, because I couldn’t do this job unless my husband was supportive, and I’ve got a son who is 10 years old and I need to work long hours. I need to think how I can have a work-life balance as well. My husband had jobs where he’s been made redundant, so he’s had periods in his career where he hasn’t worked, and so I’ve been the primary earner in the family, and I think if I wasn’t career orientated, then, financially, our family would have suffered.

Zoe (PVC) said:

My husband, at the time when the children were small, was very understanding of my job. It was when I was an academic, not yet [in] a leadership or management position. But we shared childcare and parental leave actually between us. I was earning more than he was, so I actually continued working
and he took leave. So, I took some leave initially, but he was on leave longer than me.

This situation was similar at both Hospitality and University, where juggling work and family was a challenge for the women interviewed. Although University offered a childcare facility at one of the campuses, there was nothing available at the other campuses. At University, more of the women interviewed had the support of their husbands; however, these women were the main breadwinners of the family.

7.4 INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND AGE

As a result of family responsibilities, women are frequently not able to progress at the same pace and with the same ease as their male counterparts. Most women in both organisations stated their progression had stalled during their childbearing years. Most of the women interviewed had achieved their senior roles when they had fewer family responsibilities, which meant they were usually promoted later than their male counterparts. As a result, they were older than the male managers interviewed when they reached senior positions. However, even if the women interviewed were younger when achieving their senior positions, they still faced resistance from their older colleagues (especially men) because they were young, female, and in a senior position.

7.4.1 Older Managers - Women

The women interviewed stated their career progression generally stalled when they had dependent children. However, the interviews showed that even when they had adult children and no care responsibilities, they were still confronted by challenges, such as their age. Eva (senior HR manager, Hospitality) noted that, “We have a particular bias toward mature workers”.

Sofie (senior manager, Hospitality, 55-year-old) said that despite Hospitality’s business growing, she believed she was not progressing to a higher level in Hospitality because of her age. She no longer had care responsibilities, her children were adults,
and she was able to spend more time at the workplace. But “Hospitality is looking to the younger generation for new opportunities… Honestly, I don’t think I [will] progress more in this organisation. I don’t think I’ll be supported to get to the next step, so I’ll have to create it myself”.

At University, Elena (Deputy, HOD) delayed her career progression because of her care responsibilities. She was now 50 years old and was just recently promoted to deputy HOD. She believed that care responsibilities impeded her progression, especially when she compared her career journey to that of her male colleagues.

Some of the male senior managers interviewed at University believed that the ages of 25 to 40 are critical years for progression, a period of life that is usually the childbearing period for most of women. As stated in Chapter 6, Jason (HOD) believed the most critical age of career progression for him was between 24 to 40 years:

If you’re gonna be sort of successful or obtain the highest ranks within an industry or a profession, you’re gonna do that by the age of 40. So, between 25 and 40, about 15 years [is the time] to flourish your profession. For me it (sic) was the most critical years. That’s exactly when you’re having family, when you’ve got young kids, possibly recently married. So, the pressures on you to be successful are often internal pressures. And you contradict the pressures to be [with] your family. So, you’ve got this real tension between family and work in the ages of about 25 to 40.

7.4.2 Younger Managers - Women

Age was not only an issue for mature workers. It was an issue for younger managers as well, especially young female managers. Anna (assistant manager) was 31 years old, and she said:

Every time I progress to the next level, when it comes to promotions, I get a bit of resistance from other team members and employees. Usually ones that have
been working here a lot longer than I have, and also because I’m one of the younger managers, as well. So, sometimes the older team members are resistant to taking orders from me.

While she was not considering career progression at the moment as she had small children, “Career progression for me may be something I consider once I finish having children”, the danger here is that she might then not be eligible for progression, and this time due to her age.

Women at University believed that there was a culture that admired maturity; thus, younger women who were trying to establish a career faced resistance from mature male colleagues, especially when the young woman had care responsibilities. Carolina (director) faced some difficulties because she was a young female senior manager. Some of her colleagues, mostly men who were in the same office for a longer time, had bad reactions to her promotion, as they thought that it was their chance to progress into higher level, “I think my age is a challenge, because I’m relatively young, and I’ve gone up relatively quick in this organisation”. Natalie (director, University) also had the same experience:

I’ve also had challenges along the way, given the gender issue around it. Particularly early on, within that first step of being head of school. There were older men in the area that were there for a long time and that felt by the virtue of longevity and nothing else, that the position was theirs by right and they couldn’t understand why a younger woman was in that role instead of them.

Grace (director) stated that age was a challenge for her when she was younger and had to manage a large number of subordinates, “I was only 29, so managing such a large group of staff at that age when many of them where older than me was quite challenging”. Her progression slowed down in her childbearing years and she had now been in her current position for a while without progressing.
Age was not only an issue for women at Hospitality, Jasper (30 year old, senior manager, Hospitality) who was the “youngest” manager at his level said:

I think age is one of my big challenges. When I was first moving into leadership roles, I was often told “You’re very young”, all this sort of stuff. I remember applying for a role, and my general manager at the time saying, “Oh look, the reason you didn’t get it is because you’re very young”. I always hate it when a person says age is why you’re not being promoted or stuff like that.

However, he commented that people react differently to him now after he changed his behaviour:

Now, I think people look at me and they don’t know that I’m younger. I act a little bit older, I speak well, I present well, and I’m quite assertive when I need to be. So, I think [that] all [of] those characteristics, they don’t look at my age because they think that I’m older. A few years ago, I wasn’t as assertive, maybe, I was a bit more timid, and maybe that was the actual real reason I wasn’t given the opportunity, but yeah, I always looked at it and thought [that] I always hate when people say, [your] age is why you’re not being promoted, or stuff like that.

The senior women interviewed stated that the intersection of gender and age was a challenge. Older women managers, especially at Hospitality, believed their opportunities were now limited because of their age. Although it was a bit different at University, many of the senior women managers explained that they had delayed their career progression due to family responsibilities.

Younger women and men managers also stated in the interviews that they were not taken seriously and that older employees behaved badly toward them and did not listen to them. However, the male young manager (Jasper) changed some characteristics in order to fit into the male image of a manager (who is older).
7.5 ADVANCING THE CAREER

In the interviews, all of the senior managers were asked about the opportunities that they received that they thought helped them to achieve a senior position. Two major issues emerged. First, they all spoke about taking on an acting role or being given big projects. Secondly, they mentioned receiving personal support or advice about their career from their senior manager. Interviewees variously described their senior colleagues advice, support, sponsors, advocates, mentors, and networks. While these terms were identified and differentiated in the academic literature (Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004), interviewees did not display this level of understanding and these terms were used interchangeably. Once again, there were differences in the experiences of women and men, which spoke to how they advanced their careers.

7.5.1 Acting Role

Male managers interviewed at both organisations mentioned that taking on an acting role assisted them to gain a senior role. They said that when they were given a chance by their senior manager to act in a temporary role, they believed if they performed well, their manager would offer them the same or similar position. This was, however, not always the case for the women managers. Women were not usually given the opportunity to act in a higher role, or if they did it, it did not always lead to advancement. In a similar way, men also talked about being given big projects to work on which, once again, if they believed they performed well, they would more likely be offered a higher position. Women, in comparison, were rarely given the same opportunity, especially if they were using any kind of FWA.

Hospitality

The male senior managers interviewed believed that once you broke into the ranks of senior management, your transition into positions happened more quickly. “I’ve been
down that path where it’s very difficult to break that mould. Once you break into it, it becomes a lot easier, but breaking into that is really hard” (Matthew, GM). Some of the male managers interviewed at Hospitality talked about the importance of taking on an acting role before getting into the actual position. Most of the men considered acting roles as an opportunity for further career progression, a way for their managers to assist them to progress to senior roles. Edward (COO) said:

I was offered an opportunity to play a senior role. I [had] never managed that before, but one thing that I did know is that I had the senior’s complete support. It worked out quite well, and they offered me the role. So, I went from having limited senior management executive exposure, to basically, meeting with vice presidents and CEOs and managing directors of companies. So, from that, they gave me quick exposure to executives and that was quite a quick transition.

However, when women received the opportunity to take on a temporary role it did not seem to assist them with further career progression. Alison (senior manager, Tier 3, Hospitality) is an example of this. She had performed in a senior role (Tier 2) several times, but was never promoted to the higher role on a permanent basis. She had worked in this organisation for more than 26 years, performed as an acting general manager on three different occasions, but had not been promoted to the higher level (Tier 2) and was still in Tier 3 of management. She explained that her first opportunity was when the general manager (Tier 2) and operational Manager (Tier 3) of the organisation were made redundant and she was the only person who could do the jobs. The managing director asked her to take on the acting role because he knew that no one else could do the job:

I was more or less acting in a general manager’s role and in the operations manager’s role through enormous changes within the business. So, at that time the managing director was very supportive of me and always told me “I’ve got
your back, you just go and do what you need to do, I’ve got your back, I support you”.

Instead of promoting Alison to fill the positions, the organisation recruited another general manager. Another two general managers were also recruited after this, and every time they left, Alison took on the acting role. In contrast, as discussed earlier, Edward, a 37 year old executive manager (Tier 1) had progressed into an executive role after performing in various acting roles.

Most of the male managers interviewed at Hospitality mentioned that they were given big projects, which when they performed well, led to promotion. Joshua (senior manager) observed:

My [previous] general manager [was the one] that exposed me to different things… He involved me in projects and activities that helped me to develop certain skills… and by doing that I learnt how to plan, how to influence. I think that exposure was a really big thing that I was given during my career progression. Even here, I’m exposed to things, and I’m empowered to be exposed to things, which I think is a really big thing.

**University**

The interview profile at University was weighted toward academic positions, which do not as readily lend themselves to acting positions. As a result, only one senior woman manager identified an acting role as an issue. Interviewing more University administrative staff may have provided a wider experience with acting roles. Most of the women and men at University stated that when they took on an acting role, it usually assisted their progress into a more senior role. For example, Hannah spent a year as acting pro vice chancellor in her previous university but did not gain the PVC role there; however, when she moved to University as a dean academic, she transitioned to the PVC role after three years as a dean.
Natalie (director) was an exception. She was said she was given a senior acting opportunity, but it was always a very “big messy” position:

It always was about a big messy problem that needed to be solved. Prior to this job, I was approached by my previous university to work with them for six months to try [to], what I call it, “knock things into shape”. They had a big problem that had to be solved, and so that took me out of academia entirely. The job that I had was equivalent to the deputy PVC role here. They wanted me to move across into the research offices, they had a different name then, and try pulling them into shape. I said I would do it for six months and at the end of six months they realised that I couldn’t walk away, because I had asked them to completely restructure and realign [the office]. There are a lot of people who are going to be impacted, so it is little bit rude to go and put people upside down and not stay and see it through, so I ended up staying in that role for about five years.

Men at University said that they needed to create the opportunity for themselves, win grants, and manage projects. This gave them the profile to progress to management roles. Mike (HOD) said:

You probably start off managing research projects, where there’s just you and the students, and eventually I was managing multi-million European projects with fifteen different partners in fifteen different countries… So, I guess eventually it got to the point where having made that transition to managing the research laboratory as the director, then I took on the responsibility in the main department.

7.5.2 Support for Career Advancement

As mentioned earlier, interviewees in this study used the terms mentoring, sponsorship, advocacy, and networking interchangeably, although there is extensive literature that focuses on each of these separately (Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004). The
importance of having a mentor or sponsor and an influential network, which assisted the women and men interviewed in achieving career progression, has also been discussed in various literature. As precise details about mentoring and networking were not the focus of this study, these issues are presented in the context of actions that assisted the interviewees’ careers. This discussion emerged when the interviewees were prompted to consider the opportunities that assisted their career progression to senior positions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, both organisations facilitated some kind of formal networking and mentoring programs specifically focused on women’s advancement. Their organisational policies demonstrated that mentoring and networking arrangements were essential for career advancement, with women seen as disadvantaged because they did not have the right relationships in the organisation. However, the interviews disclosed that it was the informal networks and mentors that assisted their advancement, not the formal ones developed by the organisation. This was especially the case for the male managers interviewed, because they had more influential informal networks, such as the “old boys club”. The existence of an “old boys club” and nepotism were considered by female senior managers to be barriers to reaching senior positions.

Almost all senior managers, female and male, in both organisations mentioned they had a mentor at certain points in their career. Some of the mentors were internal and some external to the organisation, sometimes the mentoring was formal and sometimes informal.

**Male Managers**

Male senior managers in both organisations stated that it was crucial to have the right connections in the organisation and those who had support stated that it had assisted their progression. They explained how having their manager’s support, usually a more senior male manager, assisted them to progress in their career.
Hospitality

The male managers interviewed explained that having their managers’ support assisted their transition into senior roles. Daniel (GM) said, “The higher I move, it’s important that I have the right relationships, and I’ve built my relationships in a more strategic way, that benefits myself, my team, and what I’m trying to achieve”. The interviewees stated that having support was critical to progress to higher levels, however, it sometimes translated into other exclusionary forms of support, such as nepotism and the “old boys club”. Lachlan (GM) stated, “The biggest challenge getting into senior positions is nepotism – when you’ve got friends that sit in different areas that only bring in their friends. This company here is very guilty of such a thing”.

Gary (GM) mentioned, “Some of the steps that we have here traditionally, is staff used to be promoted from inside, so if you wanted to be a senior supervisor or assistant manager, it was all “tap on the shoulder”. Bradley (GM) noted that, “The senior level for management here are probably still holding the old-school view of ‘it’s a male dominated business’. Most businesses are still down that path”. All male managers at Hospitality said they were supported to get into a senior position. Jasper (senior manager) was mentored by a senior manager, “They exposed me to different things that I wouldn’t normally have been exposed to. They involved me in projects, and involved me in activities that I guess helped me to develop certain skills”.

William (senior manager) had a similar experience:

I was lucky to get very good mentors, who were pretty much high up in the industry, within the company… and had massive experience and a very different perspective. So, they coached me from the skills point of view, but at the same time, from a leadership point of view, so when they mix it together.
University

University had an objective system of promotion; however, a degree of subjectivity still existed. Joshua (director) acknowledged, “There are boys’ networks in all organisations, so those challenges still remain”. Jason (HOD) observed that, “If the people who are going to be on the promotion panel like you, your chance of being promoted, even in an objective system, is higher than if they didn’t like you”.

Jack (DVC) said having a support network was vital in advancing your career and recognised that:

Some of the networking opportunities that I’ve taken advantage of are sometimes more easily available for males than they are for females. I think that some of the development support that I’ve taken advantage of is sometimes easier to obtain and to make use of when you’re a male, rather than a female.

Joshua indicated the importance of having a supportive network, especially within the university industry, “I got an opportunity of working (sic) with very senior people very quickly, so I’ve always been a great believer in progressing ones’ career to actually build the networks and the universities, because it is a fairly tight community”. Joshua (director) elaborated that:

I’m sure that by virtue of my work coming to the attention of very senior people I was able to ask those people to be referees for me for more senior positions. So, I know a lot of senior people, which is very helpful in terms of applying for opportunities and seeking their support, or also just keeping in touch with people, because networks are very important. So yes, and those people, thankfully, think well of me and have supported me. That’s why I’m here.

Joshua added, “If women wish to choose career progression, they need to keep their networks up as much as they can. I think they have to get a good mentor who can
mentor them on how to manage their career”, something which he acknowledged had benefited him.

Matt (dean) talked about the importance of “who you know”:

Over time, there were career pathways that I was able to take advantage of. So, part of it for me is being in the right place in (sic) the right time, but part of it’s been having perhaps a couple of people who thought that I might be able to contribute in some way to the organisation.

Male managers interviewed at both organisations stated the importance of having the right relationships for getting into senior positions. They also noted that these opportunities were more available to men than women, specifically some informal form of support, such as “tap on the shoulder”, nepotism, and the “old boys club”.

Men at Hospitality reported that their industry had a reputation for nepotism, where male managers in senior roles recruited their own friends for senior positions. Yet, male managers at University also commented that despite having a very objective system of promotions within the organisation, there was still a degree of subjectivity and an “old boys club” also operated.

**Female Managers**

Most of the women managers interviewed talked about the planned or formal mentorship or networking developed by their organisation. Many believed that these initiatives were ineffective. Some women had found a mentor outside their current organisation, with the mentor encouraging them to apply for senior positions. A few women managers interviewed at Hospitality also commented that their manager assisted them to progress.
**Hospitality**

Sofie (senior manager) explained “I had fabulous male manager who really helped, supported, and backed me”. Barbara (GM) explained that the impact of having an advocate and network assisted her to progress into senior positions:

Most of my roles that I’ve gotten over the years have been through people approaching me. So, calling me for another position and taking me with them, or recommending me for roles. So, if I look back at my career, the majority of my opportunities have been given through people that I’ve worked with in the past, as opposed to me looking online for a job and applying for that role. So, it’s been through my work that people have recommended me for jobs.

Advocates can be either male or female, but because the higher levels of both organisations were male dominated, it was often a male advocate. Sue (senior manager) stated:

If senior people believe in you, it gives you that extra confidence to progress.

For me, a lot of it is about confidence. It’s not about ability. I think a lot of women have a lot of ability, but I think it’s untapped in terms of what they can do.

Networking opportunities were limited for women managers, but especially for those with caring responsibilities. Anna (assistant manager) said:

Ever since I’ve had my son, I don’t really have time to attend a lot of outside of work functions. In saying that, I’m going to one next week, but it’s just, when I have the time, I will try to go…

Mentoring programs in Hospitality are badged as the Networked Connection Program, where a middle manager is paired with a very senior manager in the business. Flora (senior manager) explained about her assigned mentor relationship:
I was very fortunate to be partnered up with… [male executive at Hospitality]. He has been a fantastic support in mentoring me, in advising, mainly in supporting. The big difference is that he has given me the confidence where I didn’t really have anywhere near that level of confidence before.

Julia (senior manager) explained how her immediate manager encouraged her to apply for a position.

My mentor, my immediate [male] manager said to me, “If you put your hand up, there’s always something that you can do”. They [mentors] push you a little bit, and get you out of your comfort zone, and now you should be doing this, and you need to extend yourself, so that’s good.

**University**

Hannah’s story, as discussed in Chapter 5 revealed that she had a range of different mentors who facilitated her career progression:

So, I have a professional mentor, a woman, who I meet with regularly, who challenges me and coaches me and does all of that. I’ve had a number of male mentors in my career who’ve given me advice about where I should be going, the next career moves. I have some very good mentors here amongst the senior executive who… spent an enormous amount of time getting me orientated to show me where the bear traps are, giving me advice, giving me assistance.

Elena (deputy head of school) explained more about developing networks, especially with male colleagues:

Applying for the position was very strategic in terms of developing a support network with other people who were applying, approaching people who were more senior who had been promoted already. Particularly men who had done a very good job at presenting their material…

She also alluded to the critical role of international networks, “If you’ve gone to international conferences and built up those networks, that contributes to your
international profile as a criterion for success”. Elena talked about having a supportive male colleague who could play an important role in a woman’s career progression:

I have very good supportive male colleagues and having mentoring from all senior male colleagues is critically important. At a very practical level, it’s things like being… sharing the applications, and CVs, so I can see those models, but it’s also about empowering and giving those (sic) critical advice about where next in your career, what next to do about how to be strategic, but also to feel at personal level valued and affirmed and remove that feeling of isolation.

Clara (HOD) believed that advocates were important for career progression:

I have got quite a few advocates for me in this particular university. One of them who is higher up in University supported me a lot to apply for this position. I honestly could say that if I didn’t have that person’s support… I think it would have been more difficult for me to become successful in gaining this position. He not only read my application and gave me feedback, [he] also had a general discussion with the higher people within the University and planted the seed that I was thinking about the… [position]… I do acknowledge that further up, the University is very male orientated and that having a male advocate can assist [career progression], because obviously there’s discussions at a more senior level and they are mostly males.

Zoe (PVC) commented that when she was pro vice chancellor in … [another university, another country] she saw the advertisement [for PVC at University], she commented, “I sort of thought about it, and then I talked to my mentor who I had respected, [and asked] their opinion about it. And I think if he hadn’t encouraged me, I don’t know if I would have applied for it or not”.

Although women also acknowledged the importance of having the right relationships, few stated that it had assisted their career. Women senior managers
mostly talked about the formal and informal mentors who had encouraged them to apply for positions, while male senior managers discussed the importance of having a powerful network of those in higher levels of management.

7.6 CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF THE MASCULINE MODEL OF “IDEAL MANAGER”

As discussed in Chapter 6, most of the senior managers needed to meet the requirements of masculine model of manager or ideal manager in order to achieve senior positions. This chapter discussed the challenges women faced to fit within the masculine model of ideal manager.

In discussing the attitudes and beliefs of the male managers interviewed about women’s advancement, the challenges women faced resulted from the stereotypical view that men are the legitimate ideal managers and breadwinners of the family, with women the main caregivers. One male manager at Hospitality referred to “traditional female traits” and believed that advancing women to senior positions was disadvantageous for the business. Other male managers at both organisations also referred to the damaging outcomes of having women in senior positions, as they believed that the ideal manager should be able to make the trade-offs in advantage of their business. Therefore, for them, women were excluded from their construction of the ideal manager. As a result of this stereotypical view, women faced discriminatory behaviour in their daily interactions. They were not considered legitimate ideal managers, not “taken seriously” in meetings and in the boardroom, and they had to prove themselves more than male managers.

Managing care responsibilities and the family was another main concern; however, this was mostly in relation to the women managers interviewed who wanted to be considered for a management positions. Most senior managers said that being able to work long hours, especially for those with a younger family, required the support of
their partner/family, or choosing to send their children to childcare or hiring a nanny. Because of the high cost of childcare in Australia, this required a consideration of the financial aspect, as Hospitality did not have an onsite childcare and University only had one childcare centre on one campus.

Most of male managers had a supportive wife who cared for the family while they focused on their career. In contrast, the women managers mostly had limited or no support in their care responsibilities. As few had a husband who was supportive, the women managers had to make “choices” about their career progression and managing their family in a way that men did not have to.

The intersection of gender and age also brought some challenges for the women managers interviewed that were not faced by men. The older generation women managers claimed they were slow to progress into senior positions compared to their colleagues. At Hospitality, the older generation (older than 50 years) of managers said that they had no more care responsibilities and they could therefore focus on their careers. However, they were faced with a second challenge, they were not considered ideal candidates for senior positions at this time because of their age. The younger women generation (under 35 years) who had achieved senior positions said they faced resistance from more mature employees. In comparison, only one male manager, Jasper (30 years old, Hospitality) said he faced challenges because of his age, which he overcame by behaving more “assertively”, so that others took him “seriously”.

Support and advice for career advancement was cited by the interviewees as important for career advancement. All of the managers talked about taking on an acting role or being given opportunities, as well as receiving support from a mentor, sponsor, advocate, or network that also assisted their progression into a senior position. As men dominate the senior positions in many Australian organisations, their networks exist in greater number and are more powerful than those for women. Most of the male
managers interviewed were supported by their influential connections to achieve senior roles, while few of the women managers had this influential support.

This chapter concludes the empirical findings section of this thesis by elaborating the challenges women managers face as a result of the masculine model of the ideal manager, the following chapter expands the concept of the ideal manager and discusses the impact of masculine model of the ideal manager on women’s advancement, with links to these themes within the literature. The particular focus is a discussion of further development of concept of the ideal manager.
Chapter 8: Discussion: The Concept of the “Ideal Manager” and its Impact on Women’s Career Progression

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Women face a number of personal and organisational challenges in their bid to reach senior management positions. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the interview data revealed that women frequently do not receive the same opportunities as their male colleagues. When they do, however, a woman’s experience of the outcome may not lead to the same career rewards as her male co-workers. In addressing the research question as to why there are so few women in senior management in Australia, this chapter analyses and incorporates Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) ideal worker theory and extends its application to develop the concept of the ideal manager. The themes emerging from the interviews with women and men in senior management positions were analysed using the concept of the ideal worker in the previous chapters. The findings revealed that there was an image of the ideal manager that reinforced why women are not seen as qualified for, or capable of, the demands of senior positions.

The chapter is presented in the following manner: firstly, by presenting a discussion of the ideal worker concept, which is extended to encapsulate the concept of the ideal manager. The masculine characteristics of the ideal manager, which are drawn from the interviews, including accepting the inevitability of long working hours, needing to be geographically and/or organisationally mobile, and a planned and uninterrupted career are then discussed. The impact of the ideal manager on a woman’s career progression is then examined, focusing on how the construction of the ideal manager jeopardises a woman’s career development and progression. Men’s attitudes about women in management and the experiences of women in senior positions and
their everyday interactions are also discussed; particularly, the impact and intersection of gender and age on women’s advancement. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the gendering process and its effect in both organisations.

**8.2 ACKER’S CONCEPT OF THE “IDEAL WORKER”**

Joan Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) framework, with its focus on the social construction of gender to clarify structural and cultural issues hindering women’s advancement in organisations, was used in this dissertation to examine the low number of women in senior management roles in two Australian organisations. In understanding organisations, the image of the ideal worker, the characteristics of which are abstract and neutral in the organisational context, resemble the image of a man rather than a woman (Acker, 1990). Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) concept of the ideal worker is an unencumbered worker, someone who is totally dedicated to work and with no family responsibilities. She believed the ideal worker is more likely to be “A man whose work is his life and whose wife takes care of everything else (Acker, 1992b, p. 425). Acker’s definition and concept of the ideal worker used in this study are of managers and the practices that women and men in senior management, including those they identified as critical to achieving a senior position.

The ideal manager is distinct from the concept of the ideal worker in emphasising the masculine aspects of behaviour. It includes the characteristics described above of having and expecting to work long hours, needing to be geographically and organisationally mobile, focusing on their career without career breaks, and having a planned career path while proactively seeking career advancement.
Focusing on this ideal enables organisations, in the minds of senior executives, to recruit senior people willing to make the sacrifices necessary for the economic success of the organisation. Billing and Alvesson (2000) stated that dominant economic and political interests have sought to take control and keep the hierarchies gendered as a matter of instrumentality and result orientation.

The ideal manager is usually constituted by men and by masculine values and norms, and women are therefore not seen as qualified for the demands of senior positions. Burton (1991, p.2) claimed organisations are ‘saturated with male values’ such that many practices have developed within organisations that reflect patterns of behaviour that have segmented opportunity structures and privileged men who conform to traditional patterns. This is reinforced by the practice whereby those people who commit more to the job and who desire more responsibility and authority achieve senior positions. The ideal manager is not only a male with a full-time and life-long job, he...
also has a wife in his life that takes care of his personal needs and his children. The reality of life as an ideal manager, however, can be difficult, as seen in some of the dilemmas faced by the interviewees. The findings showed that Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) framework was applicable and could be extended, because only those women who accepted the masculine characteristics of the ideal manager achieved senior roles. Those who worked part-time or used flexible work arrangements to focus on family were sidelined, or otherwise accepted that they would not be promoted or reach senior positions.

The ideal manager career path was valued highly and it was the accepted and taken-for-granted norm in both organisations. Women and men who desired to progress to senior positions needed to fit within this masculine career model. The characteristics of the ideal manager were common to both organisations and it was the dominant model of career transition within the two organisations. However, this masculine model of career progression and development involved challenges for women and impacted on their careers far more than for men.

The concept of the ideal manager is deeply gendered, as it is premised on the notion that it is a man whose life is his work and he has a wife who takes care of everything else. Both organisations, especially University, seemed gender-neutral; however, the ideal manager model still referenced a traditional male career path, with little consideration (or care in some instances) that women also have jobs and want to progress. As discussed in Chapter 5, Grace who is a deputy director (HEW 10+) at University progressed very quickly in the early stages of her career, however, her progression was affected after having children, and she reverted to a lower level (HEW 9) for a time.

The concept is gendered, because women are expected to “fit into” the expected career trajectory with limited awareness of, or provision for, family circumstances.
Sofie’s story discussed in Chapter 5 is another example of the impact of family commitments for this Tier 3, Senior Manager in Hospitality. Despite having most pre-requisites for senior management, her career suffered when she became a single parent. Sofie had been proactive in her career progression and geographically mobile, but she was still not optimistic about her further career progression. She believed that her gender and her age hindered further progression at Hospitality.

These aforementioned characteristics of the ideal manager and its impact on women’s career advancement that emerged as themes in the interviews are discussed in more depth throughout the chapter.

8.3 MASCULINE CONCEPT OF THE “IDEAL MANAGER”

As Sinclair’s (2007) stated, “In order to understand women’s exclusion from leadership roles, we need to look at men’s experiences”. This study examined the experiences of both women and men senior managers and their views of what is required to succeed in a senior position. With men occupying senior leadership positions in large numbers in Australia, it is important to understand how they view leadership and what is necessary to become a senior leader. As Acker (1992a) stated, “Gender is difficult to see when males dominate the central institutions” (p. 567).

The majority of senior managers in Australia are men; thus, the construction of the ideal manager is heavily influenced by their experiences and worldview. The men senior managers interviewed reinforced the masculine norm of the ideal manager; in particular, working full-time; not taking career breaks or using flexible practices; working long hours; mobility, including strategically for career purposes; and focusing on their career with someone else (wife/nannies/childcare) taking care of family responsibilities. Etzkowitz and Gupta (2006) stated that many women managers carry a heavier work burden than most men, which they called the “triple burden” of home, career, and an often-sexist workplace.
The relationship between senior positions and men is highly gendered because it is derived from the masculine nature of managerial functions (Kerfoot & Knights, 1996). While social expectations have identified the masculine identities associated with the characteristics of senior positions (Knights & Tullberg, 2012), this has affected the production and reproduction of masculinity and privileges men over women in senior positions. Competitive pressure also causes organisations to employ those workers who they can take advantage of, whether because of their gender, ethnicity, age, or other factors (Billing, 2011). An “Attractive candidate for a managerial job is constructed as an individual who is willing to accept the rules of the game” (Billing, 2011); that is, those candidates who are willing to travel a lot, to be available all the time, and to work more than normal hours fit the ideal manager model. Most of the men managers interviewed in both organisations seemed to have accepted the “rules of the game”, as most stated they had accepted the long hours required in their senior roles.

More than men, women need to demonstrate that they have the characteristics of the ideal manager; that is, that they are, as Acker (1990) commented, unencumbered by a life outside of work, as these attributes are highly valued and regarded as “natural” for managers. Only Barbara, a general manager at Hospitality, had achieved the Tier 2 level of management, and as she stated, she did not have any care responsibilities and could focus on her career. Women in senior management at University stated they had delayed starting a family to enable them to focus on their careers.

Kerfoot and Knights (1996) stated that because the nature of management discourse and practice is gendered, all candidates for managerial jobs are judged against a single masculine measure of competence. This means women need to display traits associated with the common yardstick of masculinity, especially when they seek to compete with men for managerial positions.
For men, the ideal manager is someone similar to them who reflects and reinforces masculine material-distinctive practices in the organisation (Hearn, 2014). This confirms the concept of homosocial reproduction in organisations, which has affected the reproduction of masculinity and privileges men over women in senior positions (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). The majority of male managers interviewed were supported and given opportunities by their male senior managers to achieve senior positions. Research shows that the top levels of management have been shaped by the homosocial networks (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Helms, Arfken, & Bellar, 2016; Kanter, 1977; Lipman-Blumen, 1976), which have a strong interest in and constantly confirms their masculinity. This phenomenon has reinforced and reproduced the masculine norms and values in society and in organisations (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). Homosocial networks were vibrant at Hospitality, with the practice of nepotism and the existence of an “old boy’s club” confirming this phenomenon. Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of both organisations played an important role in performing masculinity. Within the hierarchy, women are a minority and they have to comply with the norm of the ideal manager in order to attain a senior position.

8.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE “IDEAL MANAGER”

Drawn from the interviews, the characteristics associated with the ideal manager (see Figure 8.1) included the characteristics of having and expecting to work long hours, needing to be geographically and organisationally mobile, focusing on their career without career breaks, and having a planned career path while proactively seeking career advancement.

8.4.1 Long Working Hours

Tomlinson and Durbin (2010) argued that working hours in managerial careers tend to be longer and cultural expectations of time and commitment in senior roles follows the “male model of working” (Lewis, 1997), which includes long, unpredictable...
working hours and networking out of hours. Many researchers have discussed that senior positions are associated with long working hours (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b; Billing, 2011; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Hearn, 2014; Liff & Ward, 2001). Baker (2010) stressed the importance of the long hour culture in senior positions and argued that organisations reward working long hours.

All women and men managers interviewed for this research believed that working long hours was a non-negotiable aspect of a senior position. Male managers averaged working hours of between 55 and 70 hours per week and commented that they had accepted those hours as part of being in a senior role and none had used FWAs. In contrast, the average paid working hours for women, in both organisations, was between 55 and 65 hours per week. The average working hours for men was higher than for women, possibly because the men were at higher levels of management than women, indicating that the expected working hours increased with progress through the organisational ranks.

However, the working hours for women senior managers at University were higher, possibly because the women interviewees at University were in more senior positions compared to those in Hospitality. Three women at University worked 65-70 hours per week, and all were in PVC roles or higher. Women interviewees at Hospitality were mostly in the third tier of management. Only one woman, in a general management position, worked longer hours than the others.

Most of the women in both organisations who progressed into senior positions stated they did not use any kind of FWA, or used it minimally, as they believed it hindered career progression. Organisational practices, policies, and interactions are based on the material concept of life, which reinforces discrimination by the masculine images of work and the ideal worker (Acker, 1990). These instrumental goals of
organisations facilitate new measures of competence without considering gender, and these practices generally limit women’s advancement (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Working long hours, which encourages the use of “face time” at work, is considered an indicator of commitment (Maddock & Parkin, 1994; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; French & Sheridan, 2009). Women are frequently criticised, as they have limited time to spend at work due to their family responsibilities (Sheridan, Pringle, & Strachan, 2009). Women with care responsibilities at both organisations were not given more opportunities because men senior managers assumed that women with care responsibilities were less committed to the organisation because they were not able to work long hours. One male senior manager at Hospitality described this as “traditional female traits”, which he stated was disadvantageous to the business, because for him, working long hours was an indicator of commitment. Those not able to commit to long hours or who needed to use FWAs found their progression stalled. Anna (associate senior manager, Tier 4) from Hospitality was an example. Described by her manager as competent and talented, she was not able to progress to the next level (Tier 3) due to her care responsibilities. For Anna, the next career step would come when she had finished childrearing. Grace, a deputy director at University, commented that her career had also been affected after having children. She returned for a while to her substantive position, and it also slowed her progress because she used FWAs.

Long working hours impacted on women’s advancement more than men. Most of the men said they had someone at home who took care of family responsibilities so they could focus on their career. Acker (2009) believed that “At least eight hours of continuous work away from the living space, arrival on time, total attention to the work and long hours, if necessary, are all expectations that incorporate the image of the unencumbered ideal worker, implicitly a man”. Acker (2009) also noted that work demands have become even heavier for professionals and managers with new
communication tools that allow employees to work around the clock and new expectations of long hours in the office. Women and men managers in both organisations in this study also stated that in addition to working long hours they always needed to be connected to their work. This was challenging for both organisations. Hospitality was a 24/7 business with women and men managers commenting that they do not “switch off”. Women and men interviewed at University also faced the same challenge.

8.4.2 Mobility

Organisations increasingly look to the external labour market to fill high-ranking positions, because the traditional notion of long-term loyalty between organisations and employees has weakened, (Gorman & Kmec, 2009). This study revealed that the ability to be geographically or organisationally mobile was another characteristic of an ideal manager. Some researchers have discussed career and occupational mobility (Fuller, 2008; Kahn, 2012; Kanter, 1976; Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010), which refers to career promotion within one organisation. However, in this study, mobility refers to organisational and geographical mobility (Gorman & Kmec, 2009), which often leads to progression. Mobility was also discussed as one of the characteristics of the ideal manager. Most men interviewed in both organisations commented that to develop leadership skills and gain broader experience it was necessary to have a range of management and leadership experiences, including internationally, interstate, and in different organisations.

As discussed in Chapter 6, mobility was identified as an important aspect of progression, which assisted both women and men to reach senior positions. Most of women and men managers interviewed who had been mobile observed that geographic mobility and moving between organisations had assisted their career advancement.
Those who remained in the one organisation observed that it had stalled their career progression.

Motives for mobility varied for the interviewees. Mobility for men typically represented a strategic move. Men senior managers mentioned that they were always looking for new opportunities to keep climbing the career ladder, and thus emphasised that it was necessary to be flexible about location. For them, mobility was a strategic intention for progression to a higher position. Some moved to different organisations at the same level, but added that the new organisations unlocked more opportunities for advancement. As discussed in Chapter 6, Jack (PVC) at University and Bradley (GM) at Hospitality, explained the role of mobility in their career progression. Jack (DVC, University) believed that in order to progress, locational flexibility was important, but recognised that “It’s sometimes easier for a male and a father to make those sorts of locational and organisational changes than it might be for females in many relationships”.

Most of men interviewed had a wife who followed them when they moved and commented that their wives supported them even if they had their own career. Jordan (CFO, University) said the decision to move was negotiated between himself and his partner, whom he had met when they worked in the same (previous) company. Both had the same educational qualification when they began their professional career and were recruited to the same level in the organisation. When Jordan was offered a position overseas, his wife left her job and followed him.

In contrast, few women interviewed moved for career progress, and when they did, they stated that their initial purpose was for career progression. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, Clara at University and Sofie at Hospitality moved to follow their husbands. Both said it was challenging to find a position each time they moved. Sometimes they would find a position at a higher-level, while other times they had to
begin again at the same or a lower level. As discussed in Chapter 5, some of the women interviewed moved because they wanted to immigrate for family welfare - Fiona (director, University) and Rosa (senior manager, Hospitality) both migrated to Australia. Before migrating, Fiona had moved to different countries and sometimes she had to begin her career anew. She was a senior manager in her home country, but when she moved to New Zealand she started again, and then when she moved to Australia her career resumed but at a lower level.

The interviews showed that it was mostly men who initiated movement, whether they were the male senior managers interviewed or the husbands of women senior managers who decided to move and the women followed them. Moreover, some of women managers (Clara and Sofie) whose stories were recounted in Chapter 5 followed their husbands despite being the main breadwinners of the family. This was as the result of social construction of reality and social expectations of a woman.

Locational changes can be a challenge for both women and men; however, it seemed that it was easier for men than women. Men were proactively chasing career progression and were flexible about locations; however, this was not the case for women, as they prioritised their family over their career.

8.4.3 Unbroken career path

Interviews with male senior managers in the two organisations revealed that almost all of them had taken no time off during their career. Women managers in contrast, had largely taken primary responsibility for childcare. In organisations, a gender subtext equates that part-time or flexible jobs are mostly for women, with these jobs mostly available in low qualified and dead-end-jobs that do not offer career opportunities (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a, 2012; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010; Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010).
Some of the women managers interviewed “chose” to take career breaks or alter their patterns of working, but the majority decided not to use any form of FWA. This group believed that deviating from the established model of a career, based on a male unbroken career path, would have negative consequences for them. The concept of “the mummy track” describes a situation faced by some women interviewed, with Grace at University, as discussed in Chapter 5, as an example. The scenario is that women in senior positions request part-time jobs after having a baby, and since senior positions are not usually available part-time, they take on lower level roles. Therefore, mothers seeking part-time or more flexible working hours can “be shunted off the main track into a side-track” (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a, 2012).

The majority of women in senior roles rarely used career breaks, and those who did reported that their career prospects were jeopardised or suffered greatly, with Ann at Hospitality, as discussed in Chapter 6, as an example. The women interviewed believed that if they took time out of their career they would not be given any further opportunities to develop their careers.

In spite of these heavy career demands—and the increased participation of men in childcare, women still do more of the childcare and domestic work at home. As a result, many women professionals and managers carry a heavier work burden than most men (Etzkowitz & Gupta, 2006). Women managers interviewed believed that the “stay at home dad” was not a norm in Australia and it was still socially accepted that men were the breadwinners and women were the carers.

Most of women managers interviewed faced more challenges because they “chose” not use any FWAs or used them minimally. The senior women managers believed that women’s careers did not always fit the traditional model of an unbroken career, but taking a break would jeopardise their careers. As discussed in Chapter 5, despite Carolina (director, University) being eligible to take one year of maternity leave,
she decided to go back to work after eight months, because she understood that if she continued her career break she would lose her senior position. This reinforced for her that an unbroken career path was essential for gaining and keeping her senior role.

Another way of dealing with the issue for some women was to not have children or to limit their family size. As presented in Chapter 5, Hannah (DVC, University) decided to have only one child because of her career. While Elena (deputy head of a department, University) stated that a career opportunity affected the timing of when she had her family and the number of children she had. In contrast, this was not the case for any of the men. All said they had a supportive wife who took care of family needs so they could focus on their career, and they did not need to use any kind of flexibility. This indicates that the career model that favours the unencumbered ideal manager plays a role in pushing mothers from the workplace (Wilhoit, 2014).

8.4.4 Planning for Career

Jung and Takeuchi (2016) stated that career goals traditionally referred to internal and organisation-based career planning; however, recent studies have signified the importance of individuals setting career goals and devising strategies for achieving them. This emphasises the importance of individuals’ career-related self-management behaviours, even across organisational boundaries. The women interviewed described their career paths as “unplanned”, while in comparison, none of the men described their careers as “unplanned”.

The male managers interviewed were actively looking for “success” and they mostly had career goals. They had various strategies to achieve their plans, such as requesting more challenging projects and conveying interest in career progression. They noted that in this way, their abilities and interests would be recognised by their manager, which Jung and Takeuchi (2016) argued was setting goals for career advancement. Male senior managers interviewed said that they had always sought career advancement and
they believed that it was something that was expected of them because they were men. They had a long-term plan for promotion, they were confident that they were capable and reliable workers, and believed they deserved advancement. However, in taking this path, Jack (DVC, University) acknowledged that it was a career that was not always expected of women.

Almost all of the women managers appeared to have accidental management careers, because they stated that they generally had not planned—and were not encouraged—to be managers. Balancing career and family responsibilities was a consideration when planning for their careers (Ozkanli & White, 2009). All but one of the women interviewed commented that they applied for a position only when they were 100 per cent sure they were qualified. Women usually assume that they are not suitable for senior roles, and are therefore reluctant to apply for higher positions (Ross-Smith & Chesterman, 2009).

Conversely the men mentioned that they put their hands up for any opportunities, even if they only had 50 per cent of the qualifications. Men talked about how they had the capacity and the attributes to progress, whereas many women spoke about being “lucky” to get a position. No men commented that it was “luck” or “by accident”, that they had progressed. Most of the men mentioned that they had a plan to progress and they were strategic in their planning. They were prepared to clearly express their interest in progression to their managers or supervisors and asked for their advice on further progression. In response, their managers gave them the opportunity and exposure to big projects, and consequently the opportunity for advancement.

In their study of male and female executives, Lyness and Thompson (1997) reported that challenging job assignments and transition to new job responsibilities were specific developmental experiences that facilitated their progression. However, access to such opportunities was not similar for women and men. Women had less access to
challenging work assignments and were less likely to be given assignments that were a
high risk to the company (Lyness & Thompson, 1997). Access to big projects and
challenging jobs was also not similar for the women and men interviewed in this study.
Women were not usually given the opportunity to act in a higher role or if they were, it
did not always lead to advancement. In contrast, men also talked about being given big
projects to work on, and once again if they believed they performed well, they would
more than likely be offered a higher position. Women, in comparison, were rarely given
the same opportunity, especially if they were using any kind of FWA.

Baker (2010) stated that the perceptions and actual experiences of career support
and family circumstances are often gendered, influencing ambition for career
progression. Women interviewed in this study did not seem to have the expectation that
anyone would recognise their abilities. If an opportunity arose, or if someone nominated
them for a position, they considered it to be “luck”, and because of how they perceived
a career to be constructed they believed that they were not perceived as the ideal
manager, and that no one would see them as competent. For example, as management in
Hospitality was male dominated, there was nothing in the organisation’s management
structure to convince women that they could achieve a senior position

8.4.5 Focusing on Career versus Family

Women in both organisations faced similar challenges related to balancing work
and family. The interviews revealed that most women in senior levels “chose” not to
use any type of flexible work arrangements or to use them minimally in order to not
jeopardise their career progression. The women (usually in middle management
positions) who “chose” to use flexible work arrangements to assist with care of children
felt that their career progression had stalled when they changed from the pattern of full-
time work. As Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a) noted, “They [women] were shunted
off the main track into a side-track” and had used an “off-ramp” (Hewlett, 2007), they
opted out or were sometimes pushed out from the main track of full-time career to accommodate childcare (Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2017; Stone, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 6, Anna was a talented worker, but she was not eligible to apply for a higher position because of her care responsibilities and because she worked part-time. These types of organisational behaviours reinforce a gendered labour market, regardless of the claim of absence of gender (Ridgeway, 2011), because men are considered as the reference point and women are continually considered to fall below this reference or are labelled as “others” (Brink & Benschop, 2012).

Billing (2011) believed that the gendered character of the manager is supported by two factors that influence the gendering of the position: the gender connotations of care responsibilities and of competence. These hidden connotations produce and reinforce unequal opportunities for women and men to attain highly qualified or management jobs. Family care obstacles impacted most of women senior managers’ careers. Erika (senior manager, Hospitality) knew there was a career path, and she was enthusiastic to apply for promotion; however, she said that: “I was given the opportunity to apply for the role, however, I didn’t. I know that’s where I want to get to; however, I have to look at where I am at the moment and my requirements with a young child”. Women in senior roles did not use any kind of flexible work arrangements due to the fear that deviating from the established masculine model of a career would have negative consequences for them. Senior women believed that it was challenging to maintain career progression and accommodate childcare through flexible work arrangements, and as a result, many had decided not to work part-time.

Jacobs and Winslow (2004) argued that it is not feasible for most academic women to wait until they have tenure before starting a family due to age constraints, yet having a family earlier can “derail” the tenure process because of taking “time-out”, even though leave provisions may be available. Indeed, Elena (deputy head of a
(department, University) acknowledged that she had delayed having a family due to career progression.

This study suggests that women underutilise work-family policies due to a complex web of interlocking systemic, social, and institutional factors (Waters, 2006). They remain on the main career track, and do not use flexible work arrangements to meet ideal manager expectations.

**Discourse of Choice**

Managing careers in senior positions was a particular challenge for most of the women managers interviewed for this study. It involved making “choices” at the outset of their career, navigating their way through the high demands of senior jobs, and as a result, making strategic “choices” about further career progression. “Women’s choices” occur in circumstances not of their “choosing” (Lewis & Simpson, 2010, 2015), and the choices faced are limited and come with potentially negative consequences. In contrast, the majority of men do not face these “choices”.

Women faced having to make “choices” about their working arrangements in a way that men did not. The interviews revealed that men were still more likely to take little or no time off for childrearing, and prioritised their careers over family responsibilities. Women were more likely to use flexible work arrangements, or be faced with a “choice” about working arrangements, career progression, and family care, a “choice” that most men did not even consider. Women were apt to describe irregular or reduced working hours or years as a matter of “necessity” rather than “choice” (Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond, & Hosking, 2006).

It is obvious that gender stereotypes still favour men over women. The concept of “traditional female traits” presented in Chapter 7 explained a situation where senior male managers at Hospitality believed that having women in senior roles was essential; however, they were concerned at the disadvantages this may have for their business.
The power of pre-judgement and gender stereotypes is so strong that at various points women who are highly qualified are deemed unsuitable for advertised senior positions and where the job requirements, in fact, seemed to vary according to the applicant’s sex (West & Lyon, 1995). All of the male interviewees mentioned choosing career advancement over family as a necessity to attain senior roles, and for them it was not really a choice, it was just expected that they would make an ideal manager.

Most interviewees emphasised the importance of family/partner’s support in career progression. The majority of men had someone at home to take care of their family responsibilities so that they could focus on their careers and progression. However, this was not the case for women, as mentioned earlier, as the majority of women took primary responsibility for childcare, with only a few sharing care responsibilities with their husbands. Yet, most of the interviewees believed that the “stay at home dad” was not the norm in Australia and that it is socially accepted that men are the breadwinners and women are the carers. Therefore, women needed to either have a supportive partner/family or send their children to childcare. Women were also faced with having to make “choices” about their care responsibilities in a way that the men were not.

For women, the contemporary experience of disadvantage is often justified through recourse to the rhetoric of choice (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). The discourse of choice explains the frequent inequalities between men and women, blames individual women, and explains women’s disadvantages in terms of their “traditional choices” (Lewis & Simpson, 2015). However, the discourse of choice ignores the structural and systemic elements inherent to the gendering process of organisations and the notion of the ideal worker, which creates inequality in organisations.

The notion of choice “individualises” women’s positions, placing on them the responsibility for their situation, and allowing the broader organisational and social
context to go unexamined (Lewis & Simpson, 2010, p. 167). This research suggests that women underutilised FWA legislation due to a complex web of interlocking systemic, social, and institutional factors (Waters & Bardoel, 2006). In order to meet organisational expectation, they did not to use flexible work arrangements. The women’s “choice” was thus constrained, as Lewis and Simpson (2010) stated.

8.5 MEN’S ATTITUDE AND BELIEFS ABOUT WOMEN

In this study, the stereotypical view that men are ideal managers was an obstacle for women’s career progression. The men interviewed believed that women were not able to make the trade-offs in the best interests of the business. Paludi (2013) argued that the stereotypical view that women are caregivers and men are breadwinners makes men more legitimate as workplace leaders than women. Therefore, women are often considered poor applicants for the job as an outcome of this stereotype (Paludi, 2013). Men continue to perceive women as the rearers of their children; thus, they find it appropriate that women should sacrifice their careers to raise families. The men interviewed in this study perceived the women’s slow progression as a lack of desire. One male manager at Hospitality deliberately told a female manager (Rita, senior manager) “Why would [you] like a management position, you are going [to go] off and have a baby anyway”. This attitude firstly belittles women’s attempts to be managers, and also serves to legitimise a woman’s choice of maternity leave (Schwartz, 1989). By the same token, men who might want to take leave after the birth of a child know that management is likely to see such behaviour as a lack of career commitment, even when their company’s policy permits parental leave for men. What one of the senior men at Hospitality perceived as “traditional female traits” seems to remain socially accepted behaviour in Australia, as it was referred to in some way by most of the men in this study.
The barriers to women’s leadership occur when potentially counterproductive layers of influence on women—maternity, tradition, socialisation—meet management echelons pervaded by the mostly unconscious presumptions, stereotypes, and expectations of men. As a result of this stereotypical view, women faced discriminatory behaviour in their daily interactions. They were not considered as legitimate ideal managers, were not “taken seriously” in meetings and in the boardroom, and they had to prove themselves more than male managers. Such interfaces do not exist for men and tend to be resistant for women (Schwartz, 1989).

**Legitimate Leaders**

The notion of the ideal manager makes men seem more legitimate as leaders than women, as most of the interviewees argued that the stereotype of men as breadwinners and women as caregivers was influential. These beliefs develop a hierarchical pattern of social interaction through which men exert more influence and exercise more leadership (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Ridgeway, 2011). As a consequence of stereotypical views, such as “traditional feminine traits”, women are seen as less competent and less suited to leadership than men (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Heilman, 2001). However, when women are successful, their capabilities are devalued and their success is attributed to external factors (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Heilman, 1983, 2001). This study confirms to the “think manager - think male” concept (Schein & Davidson, 1993; Schein, 2007) and shows that this concept is still relevant in Australian organisations and it remains a strongly held attitude among male managers.

Benschop and Doorewaard (1998a, p. 790) explained that hegemonic power processes (re)produce consent or compliance within the dominant organisational discourse and the acceptance of day-to-day practices, in spite of the possible disadvantages of these practices for some persons involved. Female managers need to have the masculine characteristics of the ideal manager to be accepted. As demonstrated
in many ways by the organisations in this study, women who wanted to have paid work and who had care responsibilities were considered to be on the “mummy track” and given low-level positions or their career progress was slowed; even when the organisation promoted gender equality, an issue discussed in more depth later.

Women have to prove themselves more than men and are often overlooked due to the overrepresentation of men on decision-making boards. In such a position, men are considered the reference point, and women are continually considered to fall below this reference or labelled as “others” and less suitable for senior positions, which leads to an underestimation of the number of women suitable for senior positions (Brink & Benschop, 2012). It is obvious that gender stereotypes still favour men over women.

**Gendered Organisations**

Gender discrimination is rooted in the collective, organisational, and historical processes that differentiate women and men (Connell, 1987). The term “gendered organisations” is derived from the social, economic, and symbolical differences between women and men that develop and change over time (Acker, 1994). Both organisations in this study, especially University, claimed that they were gender-neutral; however, their practices demonstrated that both were gendered. There has been so much work devoted to achieving gender-neutral organisations which do not disadvantage women, and yet this study shows how little has changed. Both organisations claimed commitment to and have directed resources towards increasing women's representation in management, however, women are still in the minority and there are still the same factors at play that were identified 30 years ago.

Gender assumptions stem from the policies and rules in large bureaucratic organisations, and the implementation of these procedures creates gendered differences and inequalities (Acker, 2006). These invisible practices in organisations are referred to as gendering processes (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1994, 2006, 2009, 2012; Benschop, 2009;

Most of the women interviewed at Hospitality were in the third tier of management, with only one woman in a general management position (Tier 2). Mathew (GM) referred to Hospitality as a family friendly organisation; however, this contrasted with his explanation: “We have a view that we [organisation] are family friendly, which I think is great… but we don’t have part-time hours or flexitime or anything like that. I don’t think that would work in our organisation”.

University was slightly different. Compared to Hospitality, University had more women in senior roles and two women had progressed to the executive level within the last year. However, compared with male managers at University, fewer women who had reached higher ranks were had dependent children. Only one woman director at University, Carolina, who had a two-year old child, had reached a senior position. Although she faced challenges, she managed to return to her management position after her maternity leave. Men are still more likely to take little or no time off for childrearing and prioritise their careers over responsibilities for children or their partner.

The barriers to progression were remarkably similar for women from both organisations, despite the different industry context. Sexism and gender stereotyping existed in both organisations. In both contexts, it was women who faced inequality when they “chose” maternity leave or a career break. Liff and Ward (2001) argued that organisational cultures, structures, and practices provide the context in which women are not willing or able to work in senior jobs; which is what women described as a masculine culture with the construction of the ideal worker.

Women at Hospitality talked about the masculine culture of their organisation. They stated that the “boy’s club” culture still existed at Hospitality, that at their meetings men talked about “footy” and made some jokes. Julia said: “It’s still a very
much talk about the footy and the soccer, and there’s still that boys thing, and sometimes they say things”. All women mentioned that their industry was completely male dominated; therefore, men were the group who formed the culture of organisation.

The early feminist project was concerned with creating non-hierarchical and egalitarian organisations (Martin, 2000). However, Benschop and Doorewaard (1998b) revealed that gender processes are more complicated and ambiguous than just the hierarchal structure of organisations. For example, with the increasing use of policies, universities in Australia have tried to change the structure of their organisations and create gender-neutral organisations. However, the gender subtext is important in other types of organisational structures (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b). The gendering processes were more obvious at Hospitality, though both organisations were gendered. It was surprising that the interviews revealed that women at University faced similar challenges to those at Hospitality, because University is an organisation that had been awarded Australia’s “Employer of Choice for Gender Equality” award several times. Therefore, it is important to understand other underlying reasons or review the organisation’s structural and cultural behaviour, whether it is an “Employer of Choice for Gender Equality” or not.

The barriers to progression were remarkably similar for women from both organisations, despite the different industry context, as sexism and gender stereotyping existed in both organisations. In both contexts, it was women who faced inequality when they “chose” maternity leave or career breaks. Those who did not have any children or whose children were adults still faced similar behaviour from men, as men in both organisations believed women to be the child rearers. These types of organisational behaviours reinforce a gendered labour market, regardless of the absence

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9 The WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation commenced in 2014 and is a leading practice recognition program that aims to encourage, recognise and promote active commitment to achieving gender equality in Australian workplaces. 
of gender (Ridgeway, 2011). Those people who commit more hours to the job and who desire more responsibility and authority achieve senior positions. The characteristics of the ideal manager for a senior position are most likely to be construed as a man who has a full-time and life-long job with a wife in his life that takes care of his personal needs and his children. However, the reality of life as an ideal manager can also be difficult for women, as was evident in some of the dilemmas faced by the women participants in this study.

Gendering processes are more obvious in the informal aspects of the organisation, where actions are determined by cultural norms, interactions between men and women, women and women, and men and men in organisations, and these processes create gender identity (Pringle, 2008). The culture of an organisation and its impact on women’s career paths, and particularly on whether or not they pursue promotion to senior positions (Liff & Ward, 2001) has also been identified.

Billing (2011) stated that for women managers behavioural and cultural barriers such as stereotypes were the main barriers to the top positions, whereas male executives mentioned the main barrier to the top for their female counterparts was corporate practices, such as promotion and career development. However, the findings in this study confirm that the challenges stem from an array of interconnected sources, including workplace culture, organisation processes, and domestic arrangements within wider society and norms.

Acker (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) believed that the concept of the job is completely and implicitly gendered, while organisational logic presents it as gender neutral. Yet, the gendered concept of a job (which is seen as suitable for one gender) is still common in countries such as Australia, where the labour market has been framed by the long-lasting tradition of men as breadwinners (Strachan, Burgess, & French, 2009). This study confirmed that the concept of the ideal manager is still gendered.
In organisational logic, both jobs and hierarchies are abstract categories that do not have an occupant, human bodies, or gender (Acker, 1990). However, this image privileges men, marginalises women, and maintains gender segregation (Acker, 1999). These beliefs develop a hierarchical pattern of social interaction through which men exert more influence and exercise more leadership (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Ridgeway, 2011).

University had more women in senior positions than Hospitality; however, the challenges women faced in attaining and retaining senior positions were similar. Even though University had numerous gender equity policies, and a dedicated equity section in the human resources department, which Hospitality did not, the effect on women was similar because of who was considered an ideal manager based on characteristics derived from male experiences of paid work.

8.6 FUTURE STUDY

The focus of this study was the career course of both female and male senior managers. However, future studies could consider their life course and the role of managers’ partners in achieving senior roles. All senior managers, especially men, talked about the role of their partners in achieving their senior position. Therefore, future studies could be conducted by focusing on the role that partners play in achieving senior roles, especially for those senior managers whose partners have similar qualifications and work experience. This might clarify the role that partners play in the career progression of their husbands or wives.

8.7 CONCLUSION

This research has provided empirical insight into the issue of underrepresentation of women in senior management positions in two Australian organisations. The study answered the question of why women are still underrepresented in senior management
The concept of the “ideal” candidate for managerial jobs. To achieve this, the concept of the ideal manager, informed by Acker’s (1990) concept of the ideal worker, was developed. In Joan Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) conception of the ideal worker, the person is an unencumbered worker, totally dedicated to work with no responsibilities for family care. The characteristics of the ideal worker, while appearing abstract and neutral in the organisational context, resemble attributes of male rather than female workers (Acker, 1990; Brink & Stobbe, 2014; Smith, 1987).

The women and men senior managers interviewed identified working long hours, geographic and/or organisational mobility, having an unbroken career path, focusing on career instead of family and actively seeking and planning for career advancement as essential for their progress into senior positions. The characteristics identified as necessary for the ideal manager resemble in part Acker’s (1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) dimensions of the ideal worker, but build on this with the addition of further specific characteristics.

The ideal manager is distinct from the concept of the ideal worker in emphasising the masculine aspects of senior positions with aforementioned characteristics. With these characteristics in mind, organisations, in the minds of senior executives, can recruit senior people willing to make the sacrifices necessary to ensure the economic success of the organisation. All senior managers, women and men, needed to meet the requirements of the masculine model of an ideal manager in order to be accepted into a senior management position. If they did not accept these ways of working in the organisation, they did not reach senior management.

The ideal manager is usually constituted by men and by masculine values and norms; thus, women are not seen as qualified for the demands of senior positions. The perspectives of men shaped the instrumental characteristics of the ideal manager and,
hence, played a major part in women’s experiences of achieving senior management roles. Furthermore, women who assume senior positions need to exhibit masculinity in order to be accepted (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Charles, 2014; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Hearn, 1998, 2004; Kerfoot & Knights, 1996; Wajcman, 1999). Despite enormous efforts to decrease the masculinity of management, understanding of leadership retains a masculine concept (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hearn, 1998; Kerfoot & Knights, 1993, 1996; Knights & Clarke, 2014a; Koenig, Mitchell, Eagly, & Ristikari, 2011). Although defined in gender-neutral terms, organisations possess an authority structure dominated by images of managers as masculine (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Kanter, 1976; Knights & Tullberg, 2012; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Women face distinct challenges due to the impact of the masculine characteristics of the ideal manager.

This study clarified why these masculine characteristics created more challenges for women managers than men. This was due to the gendering processes in the organisations and the social construction of women’s and men’s roles. The interviews revealed that there was an image of the ideal manager that reinforced why women were not seen as qualified for, or capable of, the demands of senior positions, and that also had a negative impact on men who did not want to sacrifice their families.

In addressing the dissertation research question as to why there are so few women in senior management in Australia, this study focused on both women and men’s perspectives. As discussed earlier, most of the senior roles in Australian organisations are dominated by white, Anglo-Saxon men (Soutphommasane et al., 2016; WGEA, 2017), they are, therefore, the people who construct and (re)construct what constitutes a senior management position, and consequently, who constitutes an appropriate senior manager. After more than three decades of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
legislations in Australia, both organisations—University with a vast library of policies addressing gender equity issues and enterprise agreement, and Hospitality with its limited range of EEO policies—exhibited similarities in organisational culture, with their emphasis on male work standards/patterns that are preventing women from achieving senior positions.

The findings in this study make it clear that women still face the “triple burden” of home, career, and a sexist workplace (Etzkowitz & Gupta, 2006). Women in this study chose not to take career breaks due to the fear that deviating from the established masculine model of a career would have negative consequences for them. The study also found that senior male managers’ beliefs and stereotypes were the main obstacles for women who desired senior positions. As a result of this stereotypical view, women faced discriminatory behaviour in their daily interactions and experiences and were not considered to be legitimate ideal managers. The study concluded that both organisations were gendered, despite having different culture and structure.

8.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are always different events in the world where only part of the event can be “captured” as a record and certain information is then extracted from it, which is called “data”. Some of these data are better than others; thus, they are stronger and more valid and give more weight to the conclusion (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Thus, as with other research, this study has a number of limitations. For example, this study used only two case studies due to the time constraints of a PhD and difficulty accessing organisations. It was difficult to obtain agreement from the organisations to be part of this research. Interviews were conducted with women and men already in senior positions, and therefore the views of staff who have not reached a senior position, or who have opted out because of the working characteristics of management, were not
included. Furthermore, the ethnic diversity in both organisations was also limited, as most of participants had an Anglo-Saxon background. Senior managers were interviewed for the study; however, lower level managers and staff who embarked on a career path but did not reach senior management were not included. This study interviews senior manager survivors. These limitations lead to numerous paths for future research.

Researching more organisations in different industries could produce a greater understanding of the research problem. An increase in the sample size, especially of administration and professional staff at University, as the data from University was weighted toward academic women and men is another potential avenue for research.

This research identified a number of possible further avenues of study in Australian organisations. For example, extending the study to examine other organisations in other industries, such as finance and banking where the gender pay gap is high, or male dominated industries where women are few in senior management, could generate further insights. The ethnic diversity in both organisations in this study was limited, a characteristic common in most Australian organisations. Studies in organisations with greater ethnic diversity in management could produce interesting insights. Scholarly inquiry could explore the impact of the concept of an ideal manager on the lives and careers of more men, as not all men want this type of work and life. Furthermore, future study could focus on the wives and husbands of senior managers and investigate their role in their partners’ career progression.

8.9 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Policies and practices are required to address senior women’s needs in different areas that impact their career progression. First, most of the women in this study were juggling between their care responsibilities and the high demand of their senior roles. They expressed concern about the lack of good and affordable childcare in Australia.
Women at Hospitality did not have onsite childcare and their organisation did not subsidise childcare. Women at one of the University campuses raised the same issue. Therefore, some women managers interviewed who did not have any family support had to hire a nanny or send their children to external childcare, despite the high cost.

Second, FWAs for senior managers need to be reviewed. Although they have the right to request this, most of the women said that in order to progress to or keep their senior roles they chose not to use any FWAs. Organisational culture around managers utilising FWAs needs close consideration in order to make it practically feasible to utilise FWAs without the perception of damage to career.

Third, while both organisations had developed some programs to support women’s progression, such as leadership programs at University and the MBA program at Hospitality, there was no securing of placement in senior roles after completion of these programs. Women expressed concern about the nomination for these programs, which again was affected by the choices of the senior executives. To achieve gender equality in senior positions, it is also crucial that decision makers, who are mostly men, are aware of the social construction of gender, and therefore support more women and give them the opportunity to achieve senior positions. Organisational members who already have the power play a crucial role in the creation of gender-balanced workplaces that leads to progression of women into senior positions. They play an important role in sustaining and reinforcing the consistent structure and culture of organisation. They also have an important role in deconstructing the concept of the ideal manager and breaking through masculine values.

Finally, the characteristics of the ideal manager revealed in this research need to be openly discussed. Can management positions be performed without all of these characteristics which lead to long hours over the week and career lifetime and exclusion of family, or at the least difficulty in managing family care? The characteristics of the
ideal manager, modelled on the traditional male working life and career path, should be seriously considered and discussed in order to increase the numbers of women in senior management in Australian organisations.
References


Kerfoot, D., & Knights, D. (1996). *the best is yet to come?’ The quest for embodiment in managerial work* J. Hearn & D. Collinson (Eds.), men as managers, managers as men: Critical Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Managements (pp. 288).


Chapter 8: Discussion: The Concept of the “Ideal Manager” and its Impact on Women’s Career Progression


Sinclair, A. (2007). *Leadership for the disillusioned: moving beyond myths and heroes to leading that liberates*


Stone, P. (2007). Opting out?: why women really quit careers and head home


WGEA (Workplace Gender Equality Agency) (2012). Australian Census of Women in Leadership. Retrieved from Australia:


Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet

Griffith University Ethical Clearance
Ref Number EHR/04/15/HREC

Women in Senior Management Positions in Australia and the Concept of the “Ideal Manager”

INFORMATION SHEET

Researchers
Professor Glenda Strachan, and Dr Kaye Broadbent and Ms Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh,
Department of Employment Relations and Human Resources, Griffith University.

Contact information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief Investigators</th>
<th>Student Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Professor Glenda Strachan**
g.Strachan@griffith.edu.au | **Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh**
| **Dr Kaye Broadbent**
k.broadbent@griffith.edu.au | PhD Candidate
| Mobile Phone No: 0421199987 | Mahan.zadeh@griffithuni.edu.au |

Purpose of the research
My goal in this study is to understand and analyse how women progress into senior positions and so I am investigating the opportunities and challenges facing senior managers in implementing good gender equity practices. The research examines the role of men in the organisation play in the progression of women into senior positions, as well as the experiences of women themselves.

What participants will be asked to do
Those line managers, HR and senior managers who agree to participate will be asked to take part in an individual, semi-structured interview with the researcher. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 45 minutes. The discussion will focus on managerial work, the experiences of women and men and the role of organisational policies, programs and culture.
Consent Form
Interviewees will be asked to sign a consent form indicating they agree to participate in this project.
Participating or not participating in the research is completely voluntary; neither participation nor non-participation will carry any penalties or benefits. Participants will be free to withdraw from this research at any time.

The expected benefits of the research
Equal opportunity in senior positions as an HR strategy is a core value for many organisations that links to organisational competitiveness and thus to action taken to embed it into the policies and activities of organisations. This research will provide an analysis of the organisation’s policies, especially those related to women advancement to senior positions, and the possible relationship to the careers of executive women.

Risk to participants
We do not anticipate any risks to participants as a result of their taking part in the interview. The interview does not deal with issues likely to cause personal distress.

Participant confidentiality
Recorded interviews and interview transcripts will be confidential and can only be accessed by the researchers. Since the only reason for producing audio recording is analysing and coding, it will be erased after the process is finished. Participants will be assigned a code name and their identity will not be revealed.

What will happen to the information interviewees provide?
All paperwork and audio records collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location in the Griffith Business School. Data will be retained on the researcher’s personal computer for 5 years after final publication of associated research. The researcher has a password protected personal computer in a room that can be locked. Access to all material will be restricted to the researchers involved in the project. The results of the research may be used in academic publications and conferences by the researchers, and reports to organisations. No identifying details of the participants or their present or previous employers will be disclosed in any publications which result.
Privacy Statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your personal information. However, the information collected is confidential, and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. Your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

Further information or concerns
If you would like further information about this research please contact Dr Kaye Broadbent or Professor Glenda Strachan on the contact details provided above. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research is or has been conducted, you can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on +61 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Feedback
Feedback to participants will be available via a report upon request please contact Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh (mahan.zadeh@griffithuni.edu.au). Feedback to the organisation can be available through a presentation or discussion of findings. In addition, the researcher will present results of this research in academic publications and conferences.
Appendix B: Consent Form

Griffith University Ethical Clearance
Ref Number EHR/04/15/HREC

Women in Senior Management Positions in Australia and the Concept of the “Ideal Manager”

Researcher Team:
Professor Glenda Strachan, Dr, Kaye Broadbent and Ms Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh, Department of Employment Relations and Human Resources, Griffith University.

Contact information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief Investigators</th>
<th>Student Researcher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Glenda Strachan</td>
<td>Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:G.Strachan@griffith.edu.au">G.Strachan@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
<td>PhD Candidate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Kaye Broadbent</td>
<td>Mobile Phone No: 0421199987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:k.broadbent@griffith.edu.au">k.broadbent@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mahan.zadeh@griffithuni.edu.au">Mahan.zadeh@griffithuni.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include an individual, semi-structured interview with the researcher for 45 minutes.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on +61 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

- I agree to being audio recorded during the interview and understand that this will be deleted after transcription.

- I agree to participate in the project.

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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Name
Signature
Date
Appendix C: Cover Letter

To Whom It May Concern

I am a full-time PhD candidate in the Department of Employment Relations and Human Resources at Griffith University and I am writing to you seeking your support for a substantial research project that I am currently undertaking. The project will examine the culture of the organisation and the organisational and managerial experiences of senior managers.

I greatly appreciate your co-operation and I can assure you that the research I am undertaking will provide your organisation truly valuable feedback on HR strategies.

If possible I would like to interview a number of senior and middle managers in your organisation. It would significantly assist my research if your organisation were to participate.

I have enclosed with this letter the overview of my project and an outline of my data gathering process, which involves interviews, and the collection of organisational policies. The confidentiality of you, your staff and your organisation will be respected at all times as the transcripts of interviews and published findings will all be anonymised.

If you have further questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me. Your participation in this project would be greatly appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh
Appendix D: Ethical Clearance Certificate

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This certificate generated on 24/04/2015.

This certificate confirms that protocol ‘NR: Women in Senior Positions in Australia: Rigidity and Stasis to Flexibility and Change’ (topic changed) (GU Protocol Number EHR/04/15/HREC) has ethical clearance from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and has been issued with authorisation to be commenced.

The ethical clearance for this protocol runs from 20/04/2015 to 27/04/2017.

The named members of the research team for this protocol are:

Dr Kaye Broadbent
Prof Glenda Strachan
Ms Mahan Poorhosseinzadeh

The research team has been sent correspondence that lists the standard conditions of ethical clearance that apply to Griffith University protocols.

The HREC is established in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct on Research Involving Humans. The operation of this Committee is outlined in the HREC Standard Operating Procedure, which is available from www.gu.edu.au/or/ethics.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries about this matter.

Rick Williams
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
Bray Centre, N54 Room 0.15 Nathan Campus
Griffith University
Phone: 07 3735 4375
Appendix E: Short Survey: Biography Information

**Date**

**Demographics**

Name:

Sex:

Partnered/Single:

Children:

Age:

**Job History**

Period in paid-work:

What did previously/where?

Changed because:

Current Position:

How many years in management position:

How many years in this organisation:

Employment status: Level:

**Education**
Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview

Transition to management positions

1. Can you tell me about your career and your transition into a managerial position?

2. Can you tell me about your experience of being a manager?

3. What are the characteristics of managerial work?

4. How many hours do you work per week?

5. Can you tell me about the cultures and norms of managerial practices in this organisation?

6. Does getting more women into senior management changes the culture of an organisation? How?

Opportunities

7. Can you tell me about the opportunities that you have had in order to achieve this position?

8. Have you been supported getting into your current position? How?

   a. What support and help did you get?
b. What opportunities, people or situations have assisted you?

9. Have you actively chosen career promotion (If not/reason)?
   a. Are you satisfied with career path to higher position:
      In this organisation:
      In your sector/industry:
   b. What kind of facilities or support would you like to be available?
   c. Do you seek career development guidance?
      1. What sort of professional learning do you need in order to achieve your career aspirations?
      2. Do you know about any better path elsewhere? What?

10. What does your workplace do well in leadership and what do they need to improve?

Challenges

1. What challenges, if any, have you faced in your career – getting to management position?

2. Do female managers face different challenges to male managers in your opinion?
   a. Do you think women experience inequality?
   b. What should be done to eliminate unfair practices?
3. What challenges have you faced in management position?

4. To what extent family care responsibilities impact on career opportunity?
   a. Is it a challenge to achieve work/life balance?
   b. What could the organisation do to help this balance?

5. Have you ever had any kind of flexible work arrangements? Can you tell me about it?

6. How does it work for you in practice at senior level?

7. What do mid-career women need to do in order to achieve their leadership aspirations?

8. What is the impact of part-time job on career development?

9. Can you tell me about the role that male colleagues play in the development of their female peers?

10. How do you think men can contribute to the process of change?

11. Can you tell me how you support your colleagues [employees] in your department?

12. With women’s roles changing so dramatically in the last decade, why do you think the number of women in senior positions is still so small?
13. Has getting more women into senior management changed the culture of your organisation? Can you tell me about this?

Is there anything else that you feel is important that I have missed?