

**THE INFLUENCE OF A SINGLES-FRIENDLY CULTURE ON  
EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANISATION**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
award of the Degree of Master of Business Science in Organisational  
Psychology**



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**2009**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, sincere thanks are due to my supervisor, Jeff Bagraim, for his guidance and perspectives during the completion of my research. This helped me gain deeper insight into my research topic and provided clear direction. My thanks also go to the staff and lecturers in the Department of Organisational Psychology (Faculty of Commerce) at the University of Cape Town for helping me clarify my research topic at its initial stages, and the assistance and guidance throughout.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to the particular organisations for providing me with the opportunity and flexibility to regularly meet with my supervisor so that I could have successfully completed my research. Thank you to all employees from these two organisations that participated and supported my research.

Lastly, thank you to my family and friends for the constant support and encouragement throughout my research. It helped me complete my research to gain new insight and knowledge. I could not have made it without your support.

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## ABSTRACT

There is limited research that explores the work-life issues of single employees. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between a work-life culture that supports the work-life balance of single employees and organisational commitment. A total of 46 single employees providing Information Technology consulting services in the Retail industry completed a self-report questionnaire. Firstly, it was found that perceived organisational support mediated the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment for single employees. Although all five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture correlated with affective commitment, no significant relationship between any of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and continuance commitment were found for single employees. Differences in the perceptions men and women had regarding equal work expectations were found.

## INTRODUCTION

Employees are making a conscious choice to marry later in their lives or not to get married at all (Henricks, 2007). Over the past years, this has provided the labour market with an increased number of single employees or employees who are planning to get married later in life. Similarly, the numbers of both single and married employees who choose not to have children are increasing (Henricks, 2007). This can be understood as a global phenomenon which is influencing the world of work. These changes in people's lives and family choices have an impact on the labour market and demographics of employees entering organisations. A trend analysis conducted regarding global mobility of employees, shows that about one third of the expatriate workforce are singles employees (Smerd, 2007). It can be deduced that there are a greater number of single employees present in organisations than what there was in the past. Also, there is a greater number of singles who are applying to join organisations.

Single employees want and value different things as opposed to married employees, and therefore organisations need to establish a work-life culture which supports and helps single employees to balance work and life (Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga, 2007). Employees with families seek benefits from an organisation which will help them balance the responsibilities of work and family (Balmforth & Gardner, 2006), such as an on-site day-care centre. However, this particular type of benefit will not help single employees to balance work and life responsibilities, because these employees do not have obligations specifically related to family or children. However, they may have other life responsibilities which they consider important, and would appreciate if their organisation recognised this personal value.

Organisations need to take into account employee work-life issues, needs and values in order to ensure employee well-being (Mauno, Kirnunen & Pyykko, 2005). Organisations need to consider the values and needs of both their married

employees with families and single employees. Different work practices for employees with families and single employees can be introduced which will help them balance their personal and work responsibilities. However, the organisation needs to make an effort to recognise these different values and needs of their employees. Organisations can show support by providing a benefit such as flexible work practices for all employees in the workplace, where the needs of all employees are addressed and which will allow all employees to coordinate their personal lives with their work lives (Boushey, 2008).

Even though the number of single employees is increasing, many organisations still continue to overlook the specific work-life issues, needs and values of these employees and fail to develop singles-friendly programs (Strout, 2003). The workforce demographics and needs of employees are changing faster than what organisations are able to react to. This slow-responsiveness or non-responsiveness from organisations to the changing demographics and needs of their employees may result in employees having a sense of resentment towards the organisation as well as employees who use family-specific benefits (Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998; Young, 1999). For example, this resentment could be as a result of single employees having to change their personal plans because they have to cover for married employees with children who have to attend to their children's needs (Seligman, 1999). Single employees also do not benefit from particular family-friendly benefits, such as a day-care centre. This resentment is referred to as the 'family-friendly backlash'. To avoid this resentment, organisations need to create a work culture and environment which is sensitive to the needs and work-life issues of single employees.

An organisation's environment plays an important role in shaping the perceptions of work-related attitudes which can be positively associated with satisfaction and commitment to the organisation (Gordon, Whelan-Berry & Hamilton, 2007). Therefore, there is a positive relationship between work-life culture and organisational commitment. In order for employees to be more committed to an

organisation, an appropriate work-life culture needs to be present which meets their personal needs and addresses their personal work-life issues. In the case of single employees, this relates to a singles-friendly culture.

A “single employee” is an employee who is not married or is not co-habiting with a partner. Single employees include divorced or widowed employees because these employees are considered to be not married. This definition of a “single employee” will be used during the study to differentiate between single employees and those employees who are married.

The aim of this study is to understand the work-life issues of single employees, and the impact of a singles-friendly culture on employee commitment to the organisation. There is limited empirical research which aims to address this gap in literature with regards to work-life issues of single employees (Brandi, 2008; Casper et al., 2007). This study aims to add to this body of knowledge. In comparison to the research conducted by Brandi (2008), the present study primarily focuses on the impact and validation of a singles-friendly culture, as defined by Casper et al. (2007). The participants of the study were limited to only include employees from the Information Technology industry, in order to specifically understand the work-life issue related to their work environment. Additional focus was also placed on understanding the relationship of a singles-friendly culture to continuance commitment.

By understanding what single employees want from a work-life culture, organisations and management are able to develop their culture, practices and policies in line with these findings so that it helps to ensure that single employees achieve work-life balance and are committed to the organisation. From a theoretical perspective, the research will provide insight into the relationships between the different concepts and how a singles-friendly culture is defined.

This dissertation starts with an overview of literature which helps define key concepts of work-life culture and the theoretical correlations to outcomes and other concepts; followed by a method section which provides the research design and materials used to collect all necessary data, a results section which provides an analysis of the data into comparable and meaningful information, and finally a discussion section which explains why particular results were found.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are an increasing number of employees who choose to marry late or never, and an increasing number of married and single employees who choose not to have children (Henricks, 2007). CBC News (2007) also reported Canadian census data showing that the numbers of unmarried people over 15 years outnumbered the number of married people. Similar results in South Africa show there is an increase in the number of single person households over the past few years (Pirouz, 2004). There has also been an increase in the number of women who are entering the world of work (Casole & Posel, 2002, as cited in Pirouz, 2004; Statistics SA, 2008). This data reflects a global phenomenon that indicates that there is a change in workforce demographics world-wide.

There are a greater number of single employees entering the world of work. Organisations need to be aware of this emerging trend because the values of single employees are likely to be different from the values of married employees with families (Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga, 2007). For example, employees with families may consider spending time with their family personally valuable and important. However, single employees may not value this, and would want different opportunities or organisational benefits. Just as organisations would consider and support the work and family obligations of married employees or those with young children, it is important for organisations to consider what single employees hold important and that they also have personal obligations outside of work.

### **Work-life culture**

In order to achieve work-life effectiveness and a balanced work-life for employees, organisations need to create a work environment and culture that is supportive of employees who have obligations outside of work (Koppes, 2008). This includes supporting the different roles employees may play in their lives. For example, a woman may be an employee at work, and the same woman may also

play the role of a mother at home. Much research has been conducted to understand the implications of a family-friendly work environment (Allen, 2001) and the value of providing effective work benefits and practices for employees with families and family responsibilities (Parker & Allen, 2001). However, limited research has been conducted to investigate the work-life practices offered to employees who do not have a family or young children, and the result this offering would have in terms of organisational outcomes and benefits. Casper et al. (2007) performed a study which explored the dimensions to measure a singles-friendly culture of an organisation and aimed to define this construct and the organisational outcomes it provided.

It could be understood that organisational culture plays a vital role in the effective utilisation of work-life policies and benefits in support of work-life balance. It relates to how individuals, such as supervisors and managers, support employees to achieve work-life balance and the general assumption they have about doing so. An understanding of organisational culture does not reside with the tangible, observable phenomenon, but more with the underlying assumptions associated with it (Schein, 1990). Organisational culture is "the pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integrations, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1990, p.111).

There are three fundamental levels to organisational culture and the way it manifests itself (Schein, 1990). The first level includes the organisational artefacts which are observable. This level includes items, artefacts and clearly observable behaviour one can physically view in the organisation. In a work-life culture this will include the work-life policies or flexitime policies to help facilitate work practices in support of employees who have other non-work commitments. The second, deeper level of organisational culture emphasizes the values the

organisation holds. In a work-life organisational culture, this level of culture would include aspects such as the redefining of the organisational values which contribute to the way the organisation should operate in support of work-life issues. For example, a value that the organisation cares about is its employees and their well-being. The deepest level of organisational culture is the underlying assumptions of the organisation. These assumptions refer to the causal thought processes of individuals in the organisation regarding the outcomes of establishing a work-life culture that will benefit the organisation and its employees.

Further research in the field of organisational culture (Schein, 1996; Wu, 2008) also explain culture as a common shared set of values and assumptions among critical masses of people in the organisation. There are a multitude of outcomes which can be realised from creating an effective organisational culture to meet organisational goals (Wu, 2008). These outcomes include employees working towards achieving the organisational goals, mission and values. These help facilitate required behaviour and commitment from employees to ensure success and productivity. Groups of people or employees have their own set of values and assumptions within the broader organisational culture. These groups of people form a culture based on similar experiences which form common assumptions and values. Therefore, employees with families or single employees with similar experiences will relate to a family-friendly culture or singles-friendly culture respectively and therefore determine how supportive the organisation is towards their non-work obligations. Based on these elements of organisational culture, work-life culture can be understood as the extent to which an organisation is sensitive to the fact that employees have responsibilities outside work, and provide practice which aims to balance employee work and life obligations. Work-life culture has two components: A family-friendly culture to establish work-life effectiveness for employees with families (Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999), and a singles-friendly culture (Casper et al., 2007) to achieve work-life effectiveness for single employees.

### *Family-friendly culture*

Family-friendly culture is defined as the shared set of assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees' work and family responsibilities and obligations (Allen 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). This culture is understood as the way in which things related to family are supported as opposed to only a set of benefits or work-life programs (Koppes, 2008). A family-friendly culture develops over time as opposed to instantly being present in the organisation (Koppes, 2008). A work-life program with limited scope is implemented, which then is designed to include multiple work-life benefits. Over time work-life effectiveness culture becomes embedded in the organisation's culture and key players, such as managers, embrace it.

A family-friendly culture represents an organisation which supports employees with families to effectively manage and balance demands from both work and non-work responsibilities (Thompson et al., 1999). As part of this culture, employees hold particular perceptions regarding how supportive their organisation is towards their family responsibilities and what the consequences are if they should choose to devote time to non-work obligations. A key element in understanding family-friendly practices or benefits is determining what organisations actually recognise as a family. Rothausen (1999) conducted research to define and measure family and what it means for individuals or employees. She defined four subcategories which explain family and how these relate to understanding the obligations employees have towards family: The first subcategory is the single-item measures which takes into account basic family elements such as the employee being married or having children to take care of. The second subcategory explained that people go through a lifecycle of family, which can be measured. Another subcategory of family focuses on time-based measures for family. This includes how many hours or time an employee spends with family-related issues outside of work obligations. The final subcategory relates to the level of responsibility an employee has towards members of his or

her family. This involves a combination of the number of young children an employee needs to care for, and the role and support they play in those children's' lives. For the purposes of this study, an employee is considered to have a family if they are married or have young children they need to care for.

Thompson et al. (1999) investigated the role that organisational culture plays in ensuring effective work-family balance of employees who have a responsibility towards family members. Thompson et al. identified three reliable measures of family-friendly work culture which reflects the overall supportiveness an organisation has towards employees with families. These measures included: (a) perceived managerial support and sensitivity for family responsibilities of employees, (b) perceived negative career consequences of employees should they devote time to family responsibilities, and (c) organisational demands that employees prioritise which interfere with work obligations.

Perceived managerial support can be understood as the perception employees have of their manager's support towards the balancing of employee work and life responsibilities. Thompson et al. (1999), and McDonald, Pini and Bradley (2007) argued that managers play an important role in the success of work-family programs and benefits that aim to help balance work and family obligations of employees with families. Managers act as agents of an organisation and are in a critical role where they are able to directly influence employees' efforts to use these benefits to balance work and family responsibilities. Therefore, managers and supervisors are critical to the achievement of a work-life balance of employees and a family-friendly culture (Koppes, 2008). Perceptions of career consequences relates to employees' perception about whether using family-friendly benefits will have a negative consequence for their career because they are devoting time to family as opposed to work (Thompson et al, 1999; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Piitulainen, 2005). Negative career perceptions are strongly associated with the under-utilization of work-life benefits (McDonald et al., 2007). Therefore, if employees make use of benefits which require changes in standard

working hours (e.g. less working hours), this has a perceived disadvantage in terms of career development because the amount of time an employee spends on work in support of the organisation's outcomes reflects that they are serious about their career in the organisation. Organisational time demands relates to employees prioritizing work above family because they feel and believe that it is expected of them (Thompson et al., 1999). If the majority of employees are placing more time and effort on work as opposed to family, this is an indication that the organisation does not encourage or support work-family balance among employees with families. McDonald et al. (2007) defined this measure as the number of hours employees are expected to work.

#### *Singles-friendly culture*

Casper et al. (2007) investigated the possibility that a work-life culture consists of more than only a family-friendly component. Casper et al. (2007) examined the extent to which single childfree employees perceived their organisation to support their work-life commitments which were not directly related to family issues. Casper et al. (2007) also constructed a scale to measure the singles-friendly culture of organisations. They achieved this by means of an online survey, and measure development and construct validation from the responses of 543 subjects. Based on Thompson et al.'s (1999) definition of a family-friendly culture, a singles-friendly culture can be defined as the shared set of assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of single employees' work and non-work lives. Casper et al. (2007) defined a single employee as a single adult without children. For the purpose of the present study, a single employee is defined as an employee who is not married or not cohabiting with a partner, and has no young children to care for. A young child, for the purposes of this research, is a child who does not require their working parent(s) to continuously watch over them. Therefore, a young child is considered a child younger than 6 years of age, because they have not yet commenced schooling. School provides an opportunity for parents to attend work because their children are occupied and

cared for during the day. Divorced or widowed employees without young children are considered to be “single employees”. This definition of a “single employee” will be used to distinguish between a single employee and an employee with a family in this study.

A variety of policies and practices can be understood as part of a singles-friendly culture. These can be practices which aim to support work-life balance of all employees and which are not related to particular conditions, such as an employee having children or a spouse. Benefits associated with flexible work arrangements were highly related to the perception that the organisation is supportive of integrating the work and life of single employees than a work-life benefit such as a day-care centre (Allen, 2001). Flexible work arrangements are an example of a work-life benefit which can be utilized by both those employees with families as well as single employees. However there are different dimensions which can be measured to determine how friendly and supportive an organisation is to the effective balancing of single employees’ work and life obligations and responsibilities (Casper et al., 2007).

Table 1 provides a summary of all the literature used in understanding and defining work-life culture. This provides an overview of the already established measurement scales which contributed to the construct of a singles-friendly culture and family-friendly culture. The majority of the singles-friendly dimensions are rooted in the understanding of a family-friendly culture and what single employees specifically value and consider to be fair and non-discriminatory practice. Brandi’s (2008) research focused on understanding the impact of a supportive work-life culture on organisational commitment. Her research considered the influence of both components of a work-life culture discussed above: family-friendly culture and singles-friendly culture. The present research, however, only emphasizes the influence of a singles-friendly culture and how single employees relate to this specific work culture. This helps provide a deeper and more insightful understanding of a singles-friendly culture.

**Table 1**

*Literature contributing to the understanding of a work-life culture*

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Measurement scale</b>	<b>Results</b>
Allen	2001	A scale developed including items related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FSOP, Work-family conflict, Supervisor support, Benefits availability and use, Job satisfaction, Organisational commitment, Intent to turnover</li> </ul>	An exploratory mechanism for why family-supportive benefits have an effect on job attitudes and experience
Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga,	2007	Measurement scale included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social inclusion, Equal work opportunities, Equal access to benefits, Equal respect for nonwork roles, Equal work expectation</li> </ul>	Developed a construct which can be used for the measurement of a singles-friendly work culture
Eby, Allen, Noble, & Lockwood	2004	A scale including the following items was used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived difficulty adjusting, Perceived maturity, Manipulation checks, Stipend eligibility, Starting salary, Recommending no relocation</li> </ul>	Overall, there are general discrepancies between single employees and married employees with children
Kirby & Krone	2002	Qualitative study where organisational members were asked to talk about their experiences concerning how work, family and work-family policies were treated	The results showed that there were general inequities in the aim of work-life policies
Mauno, Kinnunen, & Piitulainen	2005	Work-life culture was measured based on the scale developed by Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness (1999)	A work-family culture prevailed in female-dominated public sector, compared to a male-dominated private sector
McDonald, Pini & Bradley	2007	A work-life culture measure based on Thompson et al. (1999) was used. Included 2 additional dimension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gendered patterns of uptake, Co-workers support</li> </ul>	Results suggest that work environment supported employees using work-life benefits, but had limitations in terms of full participation in the organisation
Parker & Allen	2001	A scale including the following was developed and used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation size, Task interdependence, Productivity maintenance</li> </ul>	Results indicated that females are more supportive of work-family policies than males, and view it as more fair
Rothausen	1999	5 measures of family was used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent measure of family, Role measures, Potential support measures, Comprehensive family measures, Affective family measures</li> </ul>	Provides a review of the measures used to date in studies. Not a generic and exclusive set of measures. Provides a clear definition of family
Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness	1999	A measure with the following items was used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work-family culture, availability, utilization, conflict, organisational attachment</li> </ul>	Result in a three facet measure for work-family culture: Managerial support, negative career consequences, and time demands

**Dimensions of a singles-friendly culture**

Casper et al. (2007) developed a construct for a singles-friendly culture which consisted of five dimensions. These dimensions originated from family-friendly culture measurements (Thompson et al., 1999), as discussed above, and

reclassified to take into account elements which will influence the perceptions of single employees regarding the single-friendliness of their organisations. This construct was used to help predict the attitude and behaviour of employees. Exploring each of these dimensions will provide a deeper understanding of a singles-friendly culture, its definition, and how it can be measured. These five dimensions include: (a) social inclusion, (b) equal access to employee benefits, (c) equal respect for nonwork roles, (d) equal work opportunities, and (e) equal work expectations. These are discussed in more detail below.

#### *Social inclusion*

Eby, Allen, Noble, and Lockwood (2004) conducted an experimental study which focused on the perceptions individuals have of single childless employees and single parents. The study also explored the perceived adaptability and perceived maturity of both these groups of employees. Eby et al.'s (2004) findings showed that employees who are not married and do not have children are seen and perceived as being immature. Because singles are perceived to be more immature than employees with families, organisations tend to place more emphasis on the needs of employees with families. Therefore, special accommodations are generally made to support these employees when it comes to social events or the arrangements and logistics of these events. For example, an organisation that continuously arranges social events during the week and within office hours aims to accommodate employees with families and does not equally accommodate employees with families and single employees. In addition to this example, if an organisation only hosts events that attract employees with families, such as an event which requires employees to bring their spouse or children along, single employees may perceive their organisation to be unfriendly to the needs and values of single employees. The dimension of social inclusion can be defined as "the degree to which there are similar social expectations and opportunities for single employees and those with families" (Casper et al., 2007, p. 480). This dimension relates to the perception of social events at work, which are perceived as fair by employees with families as well as single employees.

### *Equal access to employee benefits*

The singles-friendly culture dimension of equal access to employee benefits can be understood as the extent to which employees perceive their organisation to establish benefits which are equally accessible for married employees with children and single employees. Qualitative research conducted by Kirby and Krone (2002) explored the impact of communication on the utilization of work-family benefits. They found that inequities in terms of utilization were present based on employees' marital status and whether or not they had children. It emerged that single employees felt that the type of benefits offered focused more on assisting employees with children as opposed to single employees who chose not to get married.

The majority of work-life benefits are generally aimed at employees with families in order to provide work-family balance. This dimension also relates to the range of benefits offered to employees. Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, and O'Dell (1998) explored the possibility of employee resentment with regard to the accessibility of employee benefits and found that single employees tended to have resentment for users of a childcare centre on site, because it was viewed as a benefit especially aimed at employees with children. Rothausen et al. (1998) suggested that generic benefits, such as flexible work arrangements, would result in a favourable perception of equitable access to employee benefits.

### *Equal respect for nonwork roles*

Employees with families are more likely to have favourable assessments that their organisation has equal respect for nonwork roles than single employees (Casper et al, 2007). The singles-friendly culture dimension of equal respect for nonwork roles relates to the dimension of social inclusion because employees with families are stereotyped as being more mature than single employees. Organisations associate respect with maturity and the dimension of equal respect for nonwork roles is valuable for the measurement of a singles-friendly culture

because it helps determine whether organisations base respect for nonwork roles on family status. Equal respect for nonwork roles can be defined as the extent to which equal respect is placed on the role of employees outside of work, irrespective of whether they are married with families or single without young children. Managers who support families also showed a strong relationship with equal respect for single employees' nonwork roles (Casper et al., 2007).

### *Equal work opportunities*

The dimension of equal work opportunities relates to an equity-based system where employees are provided with opportunities irrespective of their family or marital status (Young, 1999). Therefore, these different groups of employees (married employees with families and single employees) are being judged using the same set of criteria for work opportunities which excludes elements of need, such as being able to provide for a family. In practice, this dimension could relate to an activity of providing an employee with a promotion. For example, should two candidates (a single employee and a married employee) be eligible for the same increase in position, the perception that the married employee with a family is likely to receive the promotion because they have a family to provide for is an indication that the organisation is not sensitive to the needs of single employees.

Equal work opportunities can be defined as the degree to which employees perceive fairness of job opportunities, promotions or work allocation irrespective of an employee's parental and marital status. Casper et al. (2007) found that employees with families perceived their organisation to be more fair and likely to provide equal work opportunities for employees irrespective of parental and marital status for single employees. Equal work opportunities predicted turnover intentions of employees, and single employees who perceived the organisation to provide equal work opportunities also reported lower turnover intentions (Casper et al., 2007).

### *Equal work expectations*

Equal work expectations can be defined as “the degree to which there is a similar work expectation for single employees and those with families” (Casper et al., 2007, p. 482). Casper et al. found in their study that managers, professionals and workers with a higher income bracket perceived their organisation to have equal work expectations for all employees as compared to other employees. These work expectations include elements of business travelling, the willingness for employees to spend time away from home, how often employees are expected to work late hours, and how often employees have to sacrifice scheduled leave due to business emergencies. In the case of equal work expectations, if a business emergency should arise and leave is to be cancelled, this dimension reflects the organisation’s decision to instruct an employee to cancel their leave based on family status. Single employees are required to travel more often than employees with families because employees with families are seen to have a more justifiable reason not to travel than single employees.

### **Outcomes of a singles-friendly culture**

These five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture (social inclusion, equal access to employee benefits, equal respect for nonwork roles, equal work opportunities, and equal work expectations) have a relationship with employee behaviour to the organisation. This behaviour displayed by employees has desirable outcomes that organisations would realise and benefit from should they establish a singles-friendly culture.

Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a three-component model for organisational commitment which explains the construct of employee commitment to an organisation. This model takes into account the various conceptualisations of organisational commitment and proposes a single measure consisting of three scales: (a) affective commitment, (b) continuance commitment, and (c) normative commitment. Normative commitment refers to an employee’s decision to remain with the organisation and be committed to the organisation because they feel

obligated to do so. Affective commitment and continuance commitment are discussed in more detail below. Affective and continuance commitment of single employees is included in the present study, but not normative commitment. Conceptually, affective commitment and continuance commitment relate to the reason why single employees choose to remain with an organisation and aim to be effective at their work (Casper et al., 2007). Single employees will identify with a singles-friendly culture created by an organisation, and feel that they have to be effective in their work in return (affective commitment). Similarly, single employees may be concerned that they will not receive the same work culture in other organisations, and therefore have low desirability for movement (continuance commitment). Normative commitment was excluded from the present study because it does not relate to a social exchange which happens between the organisation and the employee, but rather because the employee believes it is the right thing to do (Wiener, 1982, cited in Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin, 2009). The conceptual relationship between normative commitment and a singles-friendly culture does not hold because culture relates to employee experiences at work with regards to the organisation's work environment (Schein, 1990), and not employee beliefs regarding obligation.

Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) described three outcomes of affective and continuance organisational commitment. Firstly, there is a negative relationship between affective commitment and continuance commitment, and employee intention to turnover. Secondly, there is a positive relationship between affective commitment and organisational performance and on-the-job behaviour. Continuance commitment, however, is negatively related or unrelated to attendance, performance and helping behaviour (Gong et al., 2009; Meyer et al, 2002). Finally, affective organisational commitment has a positive relationship with employee wellbeing. Because continuance commitment is not associated with an emotional attachment to the organisation, there is a negative or unrelated relationship between continuance commitment and employee wellbeing (Meyer et al., 2002).

### *Affective organisational commitment*

Casper et al. (2007) found that if an organisation shows equal respect for single employees' role and responsibilities outside of work then they would reciprocate with loyalty to the organisation and will feel an emotional commitment to perform in their roles at work. Therefore, there is a relationship between affective commitment of single employees and the establishment of a singles-friendly culture (Casper et al., 2007). Affective commitment is defined as the eagerness of an employee to stay with an organisation because of an emotional attachment with the organisation and identification with its values, goals and practices (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This type of commitment centres on an affective component which encourages and motivates employees to be productive and engage with the organisation's values and goals. Affective commitment does not only focus on the employee's willingness to remain with the organisation, but the emotional connection with the organisation. Affective commitment includes how an employee relates to the organisation which encourages them to commit to the organisational goals and values (Cooker-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005). Single employees feel that if the organisation shows them equal respect for their roles outside of work, they will be emotionally committed to perform in their roles at work (Casper et al., 2007).

Allen and Meyer (1990) and Meyer et al. (2002) identified work experiences as an antecedent of affective commitment. In the case of a singles-friendly culture, a work experience relates to the perceived singles-friendliness of the organisation, and the practices and benefits single employees are able to use. Therefore, if an employee feels that their organisation supports their life outside of work, irrespective of whether it is related to family issues, this will contribute to the affective commitment the employee has towards the organisation. Although, theoretically and conceptually based on the literature reviewed all of the dimensions of a singles-friendly culture do not directly relate to affective organisational commitment, it is speculated that all of these dimensions should have a relationship with affective organisational commitment. This conceptual

relationship that affective commitment has with a singles-friendly culture leads to the first proposition of the present study:

*Proposition 1:* There is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation.

#### *Continuance organisational commitment*

Continuance organisational commitment is an employee's willingness to stay with an organisation because of the costs associated with leaving or the benefit gained due to staying with the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The costs and benefits do not only refer to a monetary value, but also refers to a variety of other incentives, such as, work flexibility, autonomy, relationships, and benefits. An employee will perform an activity similar to a cost-benefit analysis where they weight the benefits of leaving or joining another organisation against the costs. This would also be dependent on what the employee considers valuable and important. Continuance commitment is different from affective commitment as it does not relate to an employee's emotional attachment to the organisation, but rather what the employee considers best for them at that particular point in time. Therefore, it is important for organisations to consider workplace benefits and whether this would lead to an employee attachment to the organisation because it is viewed as something valuable that employees have to lose should they change organisations (Meyer et al., 2002). Therefore, it is expected that should single employees perceive their current organisation to have a culture which is singles-friendly, they would consider whether other organisations have the same work-life culture and present the equal opportunities before they choose to work for another organisation.

An antecedent of continuance organisational commitment is an employee's work alternatives or options other than working for the current organisation (Allen &

Meyer, 1999; Meyer et al., 2002). If there is a lack of opportunities for alternative work other than the current organisation, the employee will have a higher continuance commitment to the current organisation. Therefore, this does not relate to staying with the organisation because an employee wants to, but rather because they have to do so to earn an income to provide for their families or maintain their current lifestyles. This theoretical prediction of continuance organisational commitment leads to the present study's second proposition:

*Proposition 2:* There is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their continuance commitment to the organisation.

### **Mediator variables**

Mediator variables act as a mechanism for the relationship between two or more other variables (Tredoux & Smith, 2006). Casper et al. (2007) provides evidence that perceived organisational support acts as a mediator between a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment; and also provides evidence of workforce demographics, such as gender, which moderates this effect. These different mediators and moderators which influence the relationships between a singles-friendly culture, and affective and continuance organisational commitment are discussed in more detail below.

#### *Perceived organisational support*

Casper et al. (2007) found that the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective organisational commitment is mediated by perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support is the global perception employees have regarding the support and commitment their organisations have towards them (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986), which includes the amount of support an employee receives for work-life balance. This mediating effect of perceived organisational support is assessed in the present study to

validate the findings by Casper et al. (2007) that perceived organisational support mediates the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment. Eisenberger et al. (1986) investigated the exchange ideology between employees and their organisation, and the outcome this has in terms of employee commitment. They concluded that employees form global perceptions of their organisation's commitment to them which in turn influences the commitment level of employees to the organisation. Perceived organisational support creates an emotional obligation felt by the employee to commit to the organisation's sustainability and success (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Casper et al. (2007) found that perceived organisational support is a mediating variable for outcomes of a singles-friendly culture, and that perceived organisational support relates to employee turnover intentions and organisational citizenship. Employees feel a sense of belonging in the organisation and enjoy a sense of purpose and meaning by being part of the organisation. It is expected that perceived organisational support mediates the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment, because if an employee feels that they are being supported by their organisation to balance work and life responsibilities, in return they will feel an emotional attachment to their organisation. Therefore, this would lead to commitment to the organisation based on an emotional attachment.

The relationship between perceived organisational support and affective commitment is based on the notion of employee exchange ideology (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This refers to an employee's belief that their organisation really cares about their wellbeing. Based on the strength of this belief and how favourable they have been treated, employees will react by showing concern for their organisation's wellbeing. This relationship is a social exchange, where an employee provides work effort in support of the organisation's wellbeing, in

exchange for favourable treatment from their organisation in support of their personal wellbeing.

The fact that an organisation places emphasis on a singles-friendly culture and the equal practices associated with it, will be perceived as a symbol that the organisation cares for single employees' personal well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Single employees, in return, will care about the well-being of the organisation (affective commitment). The relationship between a singles-friendly culture, perceived organisational support and affective organisational commitment leads to the third proposition of the present study:

*Proposition 3:* The relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation is mediated by the perceived organisational support.

### **Gender differences**

Gender influences the perceptions employees have of their organisation's singles-friendly culture (Casper et al., 2007). McDonald et al. (2007) explained that although work-life policies use language which is gender neutral and non-discriminative based on gender, in practice these beneficial working conditions usually support women, and result in men's utilization of these benefits being generally low (Bagilhole, 2006). The use of work-life policies by men is still not widely accepted because of the general perception that women play the role of primary care-giver with regards to children (McDonald et al., 2007). It is expected that men and women will have different experiences of the organisation's singles-friendliness because of the different perceptions organisations have of the role women and men play outside of work.

Although singles-friendly culture' measures will not be directly related to the perception of women as primary care-givers for children, it would be expected

that this perception would have an influence on single women's assessment of an organisation's singles-friendly culture and their perceived nonwork role exclusive from children. Thompson et al. (1999) concludes that an organisation's work-life culture can influence whether employees make use of work-life benefits. Therefore, if it is not accepted for male employees to utilize work-life benefits, such as a care centre, then male employees would under-utilize these work-life programs. Organisations would have to take into account different work-life practices and policies to appeal to single male employees and single female employees. This consideration of gender is expected to influence the level of affective commitment to the organisation. The present study's fifth proposition is based on the moderating effects of gender on the relationship between singles-friendly culture and organisational commitment:

*Proposition 4:* Females will have more favourable assessments of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture than males.

The present research aims to test the relationships between the different constructs discussed above and how these influence the organisational outcomes. It includes the expected relationships between the independent variables (The five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture), mediating variable (perceived organisational support), moderator variable (gender), and the dependent variables (affective commitment and continuance commitment).

A summary of the propositions to be tested in the present study are shown in Table 2. These propositions are based on literature reviewed and discussed above. These propositions only apply to single employees and will be tested using the responses from single employees.

The present study aims to provide input into and expand on the research conducted by Casper et al. (2007) in an aim to expand on the knowledge base of a singles-friendly culture. This includes the validation of the singles-friendly

culture scale developed by Casper et al. (2007) and its relationship with affective and continuance commitment. The propositions also test the role of work-life conflict and gender in the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment. Testing for the moderating effects of work-life conflict and gender is an extension of the research conducted by Brandi (2008).

**Table 2**  
*Summary of research propositions*

<b>Proposition</b>	
Proposition 1	There is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation
Proposition 2	There is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their continuance commitment to the organisation
Proposition 3	The relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation is mediated by the perceived organisational support
Proposition 4	Females will have more favourable assessments of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture than males

## METHOD

This chapter of the research paper provides an overview of the method followed to obtain the necessary data for the analyses shown in the results section. It presents details related to the research design, demographics of the research sample, procedure followed for the collection of data, and the measures and constructs used.

### Research design

A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used to explore the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and organisational commitment. A descriptive research design was the most appropriate design for the current research as it provided a basis to understand the relationship between variables and an opportunity to perform statistical analysis on the data captured. (Babbie & Mouton, 2003).

### Participants

Participants were 48 single employees working for two different organisations operating in the information technology (IT) industry. These included divisions which provided IT-related services to external clients, or internal departments or colleagues. As discussed in the literature review section, a single employee is an employee who is not married or not cohabiting with a partner. More females participated in the study than males. There were 29 (60.40%) female participants and 16 (33.3%) male participants. The average time participants stayed with the current organisation was 3.78 years ( $SD=3.86$ ). All race groups were represented (Black, Coloured, Indian and White), where the majority of the participants were White (60.40%). Refer to Table 3 below for an overview of the participant demographics. The table provides the frequency value of the particular demographic variable and the proportion of the sample.

Table 3

*Demographics of sample*

Demographic variable	Single employees
<b>Marital status:</b>	
Divorced	4 (8.3%)
Widowed	2 (4.2%)
Single (never married)	42 (87.5%)
<b>Parental status:</b>	
Number of employees who have children	7 (85.4%)
<b>Education:</b>	
Matric	11 (22.9%)
Diploma	14 (29.2%)
Degree	15 (31.3%)
Postgraduate degree	8 (16.7%)
<b>Occupational:</b>	
Senior management	2 (4.2%)
Professionally qualified	24 (50.0%)
Associate professional/Middle management	11 (22.9%)
Clerical	9 (18.8%)
Unanswered	2 (4.2%)
<b>Race:</b>	
black	19 (39.6%)
White	29 (60.4%)
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	16 (33.3%)
Female	29 (60.4%)
Unanswered	3 (6.3%)
<b>Work status:</b>	
Full-time	47 (97.9%)
Part-time	1 (2.1%)
<hr/>	
<b>Age (Mean &amp; SD)</b>	32.20 (SD = 7.74)
<b>Tenure (Mean &amp; SD)</b>	3.78 (SD = 3.86)

*Note.* 'black' refers to Coloured, Indian & Black (African) respondents; A single employee is an employee who is unmarried and has no young children to care for.

## Procedure

After obtaining organisational permission from the directors of the IT organisations, ethics clearance was obtained from the UCT Commerce Ethics Research Committee. Permission was obtained from the directors of the IT organisations to approach employees in their organisations as research participants. Although all participants were provided with the same survey questions, two different approaches for collecting data were adopted for each of

these organisations. An online survey containing the required items was provided to one organisation, and printed questionnaires were distributed to the other. The reason for the different approaches was because one organisation had restricted access to the online survey as employees were unable to access the internet. These different approaches are discussed in more detail below.

*Online survey.* A link to the self-administered electronic survey was sent to 530 employees included in an organisation's global email address list. Participants were requested to complete and submit the survey online. Due to technical difficulties experienced, many participants were unable to access or complete the questionnaire. Approximately 130 participants were unable to complete the questionnaire owing to the technical difficulties they experienced. As an alternative, participants were also emailed an electronic form of the questionnaire to complete and return it via email. Initially only 50 participants completed the online survey, and an additional 30 completed the emailed form.

*Printed questionnaires.* Physical printed copies of the survey were distributed to 120 employees in an organisation. Participants were requested to complete the questionnaire and place it in a submission box positioned in the reception area. Additional copies of the questionnaire were left at the submission box for employees who mislaid the questionnaire provided to them. A total of 61 participants submitted a completed questionnaire in the submission box.

The online survey or submission box was made available for 6 weeks, and after one and a half weeks a reminder via email was sent to all participants to please complete the survey. An approximate total of 520 employees were able to complete the questionnaire and 141 responses were received. Therefore, the response rate for the present study was calculated at 27.12%. Of these 141 individuals who completed the questionnaire, 48 were single employees. The response rate calculated provides a low estimate of the number of employees who completed the survey, as many of the employees approached were unable

to complete the online questionnaire and may not have been informed about the survey owing to technical difficulties. It was difficult to obtain the exact number of employees unable to respond owing to these technical difficulties. Therefore, the response rate is calculated on an approximated estimate.

Only the responses of single employees were taken into account and used when analysis was completed.

### **Measures**

The self-report questionnaire consisted of 54 items (excluding demographic questions) with the Likert-response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All of the items used were from previously developed scales though some items were changed to be worded positively. The details of each measure are discussed below.

*Singles-friendly culture.* Casper, Weltman and Kwesiga (2007) developed a scale to determine the extent to which an organisation is sensitive to the values and expectations of single employees in an organisation. The scale constructed by Casper et al. (2007) consisted of a 5-point Likert scale measuring 5 dimensions: social inclusion, equal work opportunities, equal access to benefits, equal respect for nonwork roles, and equal work expectations. The internal consistency for these dimensions ranged from 0.75 to 0.96 (Casper et al., 2007). A total of 28 items from Casper et al. (2007) original scale was included in the present study. Details of the items included per dimension are discussed below:

A total of 9 items measuring social inclusion (e.g. "My supervisor encourages single and married employees equally to attend company-sponsored social events") was included in the present study. Five items were included to measure equal work opportunities (e.g. "My organisation provides equal work opportunities for single and married employees"). Six items measuring equal access to benefits (e.g. "All employees receive the same level of employee benefits,

irrespective of family status") was included in the present study. A total of 3 items to measure equal respect for nonwork roles (e.g. "My supervisor treats all employees' requests for time off the same, regardless of why the employee wants the time off"), and 5 items to measure equal work expectations (e.g. "My supervisor makes work assignments without considering an employee's family situation") was included.

*Organisational commitment.* Affective and continuance commitment was measured using a scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Allen and Meyer (1990) reported that the original scale had an internal consistency of 0.87 for affective commitment and 0.75 for continuance commitment. Four items from the affective commitment scale (e.g. "I feel emotionally attached to this organisation") and 4 items from the continuance commitment scale were included (e.g. "Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now").

*Perceived organisational support.* Six items from Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986) perceived organisational support scale were included in the present study. The original scale comprised of a 36-item scale with 7 categories (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) and an internal consistency of 0.97. An example of an item included in the present study is: "The organisation strongly considers my goals and values".

*Marital and parental status.* Marital and parental status of participants were gathered by including questions related to their gender, marital status, and the number of children they have (parental status). Parental and marital status was used in the present study to determine whether employees were single.

## RESULTS

Statistical analyses were performed on the data obtained from 48 single employees who completed the self-report questionnaire. Factor analysis and reliability analysis was conducted to assess the factorial validity and internal consistency reliabilities of the scales used in the study. Correlation analysis and regression analyses were conducted to test the propositions of the study. The results of these analyses are discussed below.

### **Dimensionality of scales**

Exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the dimensionality of the scales for the independent and dependent variables specified in the proposed theoretical relationships. Given the objective of detecting structure, the Principle Axis Method with Varimax Normalized Rotation was used. An item was assigned to a particular factor if it had a factor loading of greater than 0.50 and a cross-loading of less than 0.35 with other factors. Kaiser's Criterion was applied and factors with a latent root of less than 1 were considered insignificant and not retained (Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel, 2003). All the items for organisational commitment loaded as expected and the final factor loadings for organisational commitment are shown in Table 4.

Casper, Weltman, and Kwesiga (2007) assessed the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture using Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), however due to the limited sample size (Hair et al., 2003) in the present study it was not possible to conduct a CFA. However, exploratory factor analysis was run separately for each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture.

All the items of the different dimensions of a singles-friendly culture loaded onto individual factors according to the dimensions. For example, all the items related to *social inclusion* loaded into one factor. The factor loadings of the items of *social inclusion* range from 0.59 to 0.82, with an Eigenvalue of 2.21 and total

variance of 44.20%. The items from *equal work expectations*' scale loaded in a range from 0.28 to 0.90, and had an Eigenvalue of 1.48. The items explained 49.26% of the total variance in the scale. The factor loadings of the items from *equal respect for nonwork roles* ranged from 0.69 to 0.71. The items from this scale explained 50.97% of the total variance in the scale. *Equal access to benefits* had a factor loading range of 0.61 – 0.79 (Eigenvalue was 2.92 and total variance explained was 58.36%). Lastly, the items measuring *equal work opportunity* loaded onto one factor with a range from 0.57 to 0.87, and the highest Eigenvalue of 4.50 (Total variance explained by these items = 49.97%).

Table 4.

*Factor loadings of organisational commitment for single employees*

	Factor 1, Affective Commitment	Factor 2, Continuance Commitment
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.	<b>0.85</b>	0.01
I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation.	<b>0.93</b>	-0.08
I feel like 'part of the family' at my organisation.	<b>0.95</b>	0.01
This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	<b>0.91</b>	-0.00
It would be very costly for me to leave this organisation right now	-0.16	<b>0.71</b>
Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided that I wanted to leave this organisation now	0.10	<b>0.86</b>
I would not leave this organisation right now because of what I would stand to lose	0.09	<b>0.90</b>
For me personally, the cost of leaving this organisation would be far greater than the benefit	-0.06	<b>0.73</b>
<b>Eigenvalue</b>	3.36	2.60
<b>Explained Variance %</b>	42.00	32.50

Note. n=48; bold values indicate that an item has been assigned to that factor; Total explained variance = 74.50%

### Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was performed to assess the internal consistency of the scales used (Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel, 2003). The Cronbach alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) for the scales ranged from 0.65 to 0.93, which is regarded as

acceptable (Hair et al., 2003). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for each of the scales are shown on the diagonal of the correlation table for all participants. The inter-item correlations ranged from 0.43 to 0.79, which is satisfactory (Hair et al., 2003). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture obtained were similar to the reliability coefficients reported in the study conducted by Casper et al. (2007).

The reliability coefficients for the scales measuring the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture were high, with *equal access to benefits* having the highest reliability ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ). *Social inclusion*, *equal respect for nonwork roles* and *equal work opportunities* also had high reliabilities of 0.84, 0.77, and 0.76 respectively.

### **Descriptive statistics**

The means of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture, affective and continuance commitment, and *perceived organisational support* was calculated. These ranged from 2.78 to 3.69 on a five-point scale. The high means per scale indicated that employees have a high assessment of these variables in their organisations. The mean and standard deviation (*SD*) were also calculated for each of the scales for single employees which can be found in Table 6.

All the distributions, except the distribution of *equal respect for nonwork roles*, *continuance commitment* and *affective commitment* was negatively skewed with the skewness values ranging from -1.05 to -0.02. *Social inclusion* was close to a substantially negatively skewed distribution with skewness value -1.05 (Hair et al., 2003). The kurtosis values (peakedness) for the scales ranged from -0.62 to 2.42. A distribution is considered too peaked if it has a kurtosis of 3, or too flat if it has a kurtosis of -3 (Hair et al., 2003). None of the distributions were too peaked or too flat. The skewness and peakedness of the distributions were calculated for single employees and employees with families separately. These results can be found in Table 5 below.

Table 5.

*Distribution characteristics*

Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social inclusion	-1.05	2.42
Equal work opportunities	-0.34	1.63
Equal access to benefits	-0.02	0.60
Equal respect for nonwork roles	0.19	-0.18
Equal work expectations	-0.19	-1.08
Affective commitment	0.16	-0.62
Continuance commitment	0.37	-0.42
Perceived organisational support	-0.32	1.34

**Correlation analysis**

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between all the continuous variables. The correlations for the responses of single employees are presented in Table 6. Details regarding the correlations between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture are discussed below.

Correlations between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture were calculated to determine the degree of overlap and how related these subscales are. This includes correlations between *social inclusion*, *equal work opportunities*, *equal access to benefits*, *equal respect for nonwork roles*, and *equal work expectations*. The values of the significant intercorrelations ranged from 0.30 to 0.68. *Equal access to benefits* correlated highly with *equal work opportunities* and *equal respect for nonwork roles* with a correlation of 0.57 ( $p < 0.0001$ ) and 0.68 ( $p < 0.0001$ ) respectively. *Equal work expectations* had the least overlap with the other dimensions of a singles-friendly culture because it does not have a significant correlation with any of the other dimensions of a singles-friendly culture. None of the significant correlations between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture (independent variables) exceeded 0.70 which indicates that the multicollinearity would not present a problem for regression analyses (Hair et al., 2003).

Table 6.

*Correlation analysis for single employees*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Singles-friendly culture (predictor)</i>										
<b>1 Social inclusion</b>	3.49	0.52	(0.84)							
<b>2 Equal work opportunities</b>	3.69	0.56	<b>0.32*</b>	(0.76)						
<b>3 Equal access to benefits</b>	3.61	0.58	0.15	<b>0.57***</b>	(0.87)					
<b>4 Equal respect for nonwork roles</b>	3.41	0.74	<b>0.30*</b>	<b>0.50***</b>	<b>0.68***</b>	(0.77)				
<b>5 Equal work expectations</b>	3.29	0.52	-0.24	0.23	0.12	0.01	(0.65)			
<i>Outcomes</i>										
<b>6 Affective commitment</b>	3.17	0.95	<b>0.45**</b>	<b>0.41**</b>	<b>0.36*</b>	<b>0.37*</b>	<b>-0.30*</b>	(0.93)		
<b>7 Continuance commitment</b>	2.78	0.77	0.08	-0.05	0.07	-0.14	-0.20	-0.01	(0.81)	
<i>Mediator</i>										
<b>8 Perceived organisational support</b>	3.39	0.69	<b>0.57***</b>	<b>0.44**</b>	<b>0.53***</b>	<b>0.54***</b>	-0.19	<b>0.74***</b>	-0.03	(0.89)

Note. n = 46 (Single employees) - Casewise deletion of missing data; Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is presented on the diagonal ; Significant correlations: \* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

Correlations between the dimensions of a singles-friendly culture, and the outcomes, mediators and moderators were calculated. *Affective commitment* significantly correlated with all the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture which ranged from  $-0.30$  to  $0.45$ . *Affective commitment* only had a negative correlation with *equal work expectations* ( $r=-0.30$ ,  $p=0.043$ ). *Perceived organisational support* significantly correlated with four of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture. *Perceived organisational support* did not have a significant correlation with *equal work expectations*.

### Regression Analyses

Regression analysis was used to examine some of the proposed relationships depicted in the theoretical relationship and how the different dimensions of a singles-friendly culture explain the variance in *perceived organisational support*, *affective commitment* and *continuance commitment*. Table 7 shows the initial regression analysis for the responses of single employees without young children and the results of the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture, and *affective commitment* and *continuance commitment*.

Table 7.  
Regression analysis for single employees

Singles-friendly Culture	Affective Commitment		Continuance Commitment		Perceived Organisational Support	
	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	$\beta$	SE $\beta$
Social inclusion	0.24	0.14	0.11	0.17	<b>0.41***</b>	0.12
Equal work opportunities	0.30	0.16	-0.06	0.20	0.07	0.14
Equal access to benefits	0.17	0.18	0.40	0.22	<b>0.35*</b>	0.16
Equal respect for nonwork roles	0.04	0.18	-0.41	0.21	0.15	0.15
Equal work expectations	<b>-0.33*</b>	0.13	-0.20	0.16	-0.15	0.11
$R^2$	<b>0.41***</b>		0.14		<b>0.56***</b>	

Note. n = 46 (Single employees) – Casewise deletion of missing data; \*p < 0.05 \*\*p < 0.01 \*\*\*p < 0.001

For single employees, the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture explained 41% of the variance in *affective commitment* ( $R^2=0.41$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Only *equal work expectations* ( $\beta=-0.33$ ;  $p=0.02$ ) was a significant predictor. The regression analysis was rerun including only *equal work expectations*, where the new combination explained 9% of the variance in *affective commitment* ( $R^2=0.089$ ;  $p=0.04$ ). This is a similar result reported by Casper et al. (2007).

The five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture explained 14% of the variance in *continuance commitment* ( $R^2=0.14$ ;  $p=0.29$ ). None of the predictors were significant in this model. For single employees, the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture explained 56% of the variance in *perceived organisational support* ( $R^2=0.56$ ;  $p<0.0001$ ), where *social inclusion* ( $\beta=0.4$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) and *equal access to benefits* ( $\beta=0.42$ ;  $p=0.03$ ) were significant predictors.

### **Mediation Analysis**

Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach was used to test the mediating effects of *perceived organisational support* on the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *affective commitment*. The mediation analysis was conducted including only responses from single employees.

#### *Step 1: Relationship between independent variable and outcome*

The correlations between all five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *affective commitment* were calculated. The dimensions of a singles-friendly culture were the independent variables and *affective commitment* was the outcome variable. Table 6 shows that all the dimensions of a singles-friendly culture significantly correlated with *affective commitment*. This establishes that there is a relationship between each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *affective commitment* which may be mediated.

*Step 2: Relationship between independent variable and mediator*

The correlations between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *perceived organisational support* were determined. *Perceived organisational support* was the mediator. All the dimensions of a singles-friendly culture, except *equal work expectations*, significantly correlated with *perceived organisational support*. This is shown in Table 6. Therefore, the second step in Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation approach is satisfied.

*Step 3: Relationship between independent variables and mediator, with outcome*

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed which included *social inclusion*, *equal work opportunities*, *equal respect for nonwork roles*, *equal access to benefits* and *perceived organisational support*. This analysis was run against the outcome variable, *affective commitment*. A regression analysis was first run only including *perceived organisational support* as the independent variable and *affective commitment* as the outcome variable. This analysis was followed by a regression which included the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *perceived organisational support* as the independent variables, against *affective commitment* as the outcome variable. Table 10 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 10

*Hierarchical regression for affective commitment*

Variable	Step 1		Step 2	
	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	$\beta$	SE $\beta$
Perceived organisational support	1.02***	0.10	0.00*	0.13
Social inclusion			0.17	0.13
Equal work opportunities			-0.10	0.16
Equal access to benefits			-0.05	0.15
Equal respect for nonwork Roles			0.74	0.15
$R^2$		0.54***		0.56***

Note. n=46 (Casewise deletion of missing data); \*p < 0.05 \*\*p < 0.01 \*\*\*p < 0.001;  $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.76$

*Perceived organisational support* does mediate the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *affective commitment* because there is not a significant change in the explained variance when the dimensions of a singles-friendly culture is added to the regression model of *perceived organisational support* against *affective commitment* ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.76$ ). *Perceived organisational support* explained 54% of the variance in *affective commitment* ( $R^2 = 0.54$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ).

### **Group differences**

ANOVA was used to assess whether differences in perceptions of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture existed across gender groups, between race groups. Differences in *affective commitment* were also assessed.

The results of the ANOVA show that a significant difference at the 5%-level was found between black (Coloured, Indian and African) and White employees regarding their perceptions of the *equal work opportunities* ( $F = 5.83$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ) and *equal access to benefits* dimensions of a singles-friendly culture ( $F = 5.64$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ). Black employees, on average, reported lower perceptions of *equal work opportunities* and *equal access to benefits* than White employees. A significant difference at the 1%-level was also found between black and White employees level of *affective commitment* to the organisation ( $F = 7.49$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ). Black employees, on average, reported a higher level of *affective commitment* than White employees.

A significant difference at the 5%-level was also found between the perceptions of males and females regarding *equal work expectations* of a singles-friendly culture ( $F = 4.80$ ;  $p = 0.03$ ). Males were found to have reported, on average, lower perceptions of *equal work expectations* than females. There were no significant differences between the interactions of the different demographic variables (gender and race) used in the ANOVA to assess the differences in the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture or *affective commitment*.

Table 11 below provides an overview of the different statistical tests used to determine whether the propositions should be accepted or rejected. The table also includes the significant values used to determine the outcome of the proposition.

Table 11.  
*Summary of results*

	Proposition	Statistical test	Significance	Outcome
1	There is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation	Correlation analysis	All the dimensions of a singles-friendly culture correlated with <i>affective commitment</i>	Accept
2	There is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their continuance commitment to the organisation	Correlation analysis	None of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture significantly correlated with <i>continuance commitment</i>	Reject
3	The relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation is mediated by the perceived organisational support	Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation approach (Regression analysis)	<i>Perceived organisational support</i> mediates the relationship between singles-friendly culture and <i>affective commitment</i>	Accept
4	Females will have more favourable assessments of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture than males	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	A significant difference was found at 5%-level with <i>equal work expectations</i> (F=4.80; p=0.03)	Accept

The results show that the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *affective commitment* is mediated by *perceived organisational support*. The moderating role of gender on the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and *affective commitment* was not supported. Differences between gender groups were found in perceptions of *equal work expectations*. A detailed explanation regarding these findings is discussed further in the discussion section.

## DISCUSSION

The present study builds on and validates the research conducted by Casper, Weltman and Kwesiga (2007) regarding the development of a singles-friendly culture measurement and exploration of the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and organisational commitment. Brandi (2008) explored the relationship between a work-life culture, which consists of a singles-friendly culture and family-friendly culture, and affective commitment. Compared to the research conducted by Brandi (2008), the present study focuses only on the impact of a singles-friendly culture on employee commitment to the organisation. The participants of this study were limited to only include those from the Information Technology industry. The current study extends on previous research (Brandi, 2008; Casper et al., 2007) by assessing whether continuance commitment is an outcome of an established singles-friendly culture.

### **Singles-friendly culture and organisational commitment**

Casper et al. (2007) explored the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective organisational commitment. Brandi (2008) followed a similar research approach to Casper et al. (2007), but included dimensions related to family-friendly culture in this relationship. The interest an employee shows to remain with an organisation and continue employment due to an emotional attachment and connection with the organisation is referred to as affective organisational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). One of the primary objectives of this study was to validate research conducted by Casper et al. (2007), and therefore examine the relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment to the organisation. The first research proposition assessed the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment, and hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between the perceptions single employees without young children have of each of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective commitment to the organisation.

For the responses of single employees, all five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture (social inclusion, equal work opportunities, equal access to benefits, equal respect for nonwork roles, and equal work expectations) significantly correlated with affective organisational commitment. All the dimensions, except the perceptions of equal work expectations, had a positive relationship with affective organisational commitment. This result shows that each dimension individually relates to affective commitment. Therefore, if the perceptions of any of these dimensions should become more favourable, it would have an effect on affective commitment of single employees to the organisation. The significant dimensions included social inclusion, equal access to benefits, and equal respect for nonwork roles. All these dimensions positively related to affective organisational commitment.

All five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture relate to affective organisation commitment, but there is limited evidence to show that all of these form part of a single construct known as a singles-friendly culture. These dimensions individually relate to affective commitment, but these relationships are independent and different. The conclusion was reached because four of the dimensions had a positive relationship with affective commitment (social inclusion, equal work opportunities, equal access to benefits, equal respect for nonwork roles), while equal work expectations has a negative relationship. Single employees feel that their organisation respects their role outside of the organisation when they are included in social events and provided with equal benefits to manage their personal lives. Social inclusion shows that the organisation and management does not view single employees without young children as immature due to their choices in life to not get married (Eby, Allen, Noble & Lockwood, 2004). This perceived realisation provides single employees with an indication that their organisations care for them. Understanding the perceptions single employees have of equal access to benefits helps an organisation redefine its benefits which only apply to employees with families, so

that they can ensure commitment from their single employees without young children. Single employees would have access to general benefits to manage work and life, such as flexibility, and this would provide them with the feeling that their organisation supports their specific needs. Single employees who perceive their organisation to provide them with equal access to benefits, compared to employees with families, also have high assessments that their organisation respects their nonwork roles. It shows single employees that the work-life benefits offered by their organisation are not associated with family. This supports single employees' view that their organisation values their responsibilities outside of work (Casper et al., 2007).

The only significant predictor of affective commitment for single employees was their perceptions of equal work expectations provided by their organisation. Equal work expectations includes the amount of time single employees are required to spend at work compared to personal responsibilities, and this needs to be managed between work and life (Casper et al., 2007). This finding that equal work expectations uniquely predicts affective organisational commitment is different to the result found by Casper et al. (2007). Casper et al. (2007) found that social inclusion was the only predictor of affective commitment to the organisation for single employees. Casper et al. (2007) concluded that singles seek a connection and a sense of community at work because they often receive fewer socially supportive relationships at work than employees with families. Single employees feel that if their organisation provides equal work expectations to both single employees and those with families, they are required to give up of their personal time to ensure that work responsibilities are achieved and completed according to satisfaction. Their perception that their organisation is expecting the same amount of effort from them as compared to employees with families, and organisations do not take into account the possibility that many of their single employees are probably younger and newer to the world of work than employees with families. Some single employees may still need to develop the necessary skill to effectively perform their job. Single employees may feel that

their organisation does not provide them with opportunity to develop these skills before expecting them to perform on the same level as older employees. Therefore, single employees would feel less emotionally connected with their organisation.

The second proposition of this study tested the relationship between the perceptions single employees had regarding a singles-friendly culture and their continuance organisational commitment. It was expected that a positive relationship between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and continuance commitment existed. Continuance organisational commitment is defined as an employee's eagerness to remain employed by their current organisation due to the perceived benefit they get by staying with the organisation, and the perceived costs associated with leaving (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This proposition aimed to establish whether employees would remain with an organisation because it offered a value proposition through its work-life culture that other organisations do not have (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). Therefore, an organisation would be positioning itself as an employee of choice should it provide an established work-life culture that is sensitive to work-life issues of single employees without young children. The relationship between a singles-friendly culture and continuance commitment would have a direct relationship and not mediated by perceived organisational support. No reciprocation takes place where single employees react due to an emotional connection with the organisation. This is an expansion of the research conducted by Casper et al. (2007) which only focused on the influence of a singles-friendly culture on one type of organisational commitment, affective commitment.

For the responses of single employees, none of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture had a relationship with continuance organisational commitment. Therefore, should any of these dimensions of a singles-friendly culture become more visible in the organisation, this will not change the continuance commitment single employees have to the organisation.

No relationship between any of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and continuance organisational commitment existed because a singles-friendly culture focuses more on the respect and environment an organisation establishes with their employees as opposed to a specific set of benefits (Koppes, 2008). Components of continuance commitment relates to the particular benefits an employee receives at their current organisation that encourages them to remain with the organisation. Therefore, single employees seek an emotional attachment to an organisation which is based on respect and equality and not the fear of not having particular benefits, such as flexible work arrangements, from another organisation should they choose to leave. Employees with families may be more committed to an organisation should they show less equality with regard to work expectations between single employees and employees with families. This is because employees with families would enjoy the benefit if single employees were able to work longer hours compared to them so that they are able to spend more time with their families. It relates to the perceptions employees with families have regarding single employees and whether they have personal obligations outside of work (Casper et al., 2007).

### **Singles-friendly culture and perceived organisational support**

The third proposition of this study is that the relationship between the perceptions single employees have regarding the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and their affective organisational commitment is mediated by perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support is the global perception employees have regarding the support and commitment their organisation has towards them (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). Research conducted by Casper, Weltman and Kwesiga (2007) and Brandi (2008) found that the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective organisational commitment is mediated by perceived organisational support. Therefore, as part of validating the research conducted by Casper et al. (2007), this study also explored the role of perceived organisational support in the

relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective organisational commitment.

It was found that perceived organisational support does mediate the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective organisational commitment for single employees. All five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture correlated with perceived organisational support, where social inclusion had the strongest positive relationship with perceived organisational support. Equal work expectations was the only singles-friendly culture dimension that had a negative relationship with perceived organisational support. The five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture explained a significant variance in perceived organisational support, which in turn explained a significant variance in affective commitment to the organisation. Therefore, should an organisation change the organisational culture to increase the visibility of these dimensions, it would have an impact on single employees' global perceptions that their organisation supports single employees without young children and is committed to their wellbeing. An increase in the perceived organisational support of single employees will influence their affective commitment to the organisation.

Employee perceptions of social inclusion and equal access to benefits were the only two significant predictors of perceived organisational support for single employees. This finding differs from the result obtained by Casper et al. (2007) who found that social inclusion and equal respect for nonwork roles predicted perceived organisational support. Casper et al. (2007) suggested that equal respect for nonwork roles showed that organisation cared for single employees' lives outside of work irrespective of whether it involved children or spouses. Therefore, organisations influence attitudes by providing diverse work-life benefits that appeal to single employees and employees with families.

By including single employees in social events, providing them with equal access to benefits as compared to employees with families and offering benefits which

appeal to their personal situations will create a sense of belonging whereby single employees feel emotionally connected to their organisation because their organisation showed that they cared about their wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This relationship between perceived organisational support and affective organisational commitment is strengthened by the perceptions single employees have regarding equal access to benefits. This relationship is reinforced because single employees feel that they are valued at work because their organisation offers them benefits which will help them balance work and life responsibilities irrespective of whether these are related to family or children (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Therefore, an organisation's responsiveness to the specific needs and values of single employees without young children provides their single employees with an indication that they care about them and their single employees in turn will form an emotional connection to ensure that the organisation is successful.

#### **Singles-friendly culture: Group differences**

In practice, beneficial working conditions that help balance work and life usually support women, and result in men's utilization of these benefits being generally low (McDonald, Pini, and Bradley, 2007). Therefore, the use of work-life policies by men is still not widely accepted because of the general perception that women play the role of primary care-giver with regard to children. Therefore, women would have more favourable perceptions of a singles-friendly culture. The fourth proposition of this study explored whether employee perceptions of a singles-friendly culture differed between gender groups, and hypothesized that females would have more favourable perceptions of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture than men.

A significant difference was found between the perceptions males and females have regarding the equal work expectations in their organisations. Males reported less favourable perceptions of equal work expectations than females. Females are still viewed as the primary care-giver in the family (McDonald et al.,

2007) and therefore it is more acceptable for women to take time off from work to ensure that their family obligations are met as opposed to men. This is the reason why men have the perception that they are required to work harder in the organisation and therefore expected to put in additional effort and time as opposed to women. No significant difference between the evaluations reported by men and women with regard to the other four dimensions of a singles-friendly culture were found.

Differences in the perceptions of the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture were also assessed based on race groups. A significant difference was found between black and White employees regarding their perceptions of the equal work opportunities and equal access to benefits in their organisations. Black employees had less favourable assessments of both equal work opportunities and equal access to benefits than White employees. Owing to South Africa's history of Apartheid, some organisations still need to readdress inequalities in terms of race. Therefore, establishing a work-life culture which is sensitive to cultural differences and which provides equal work opportunities to all race groups is required. Until all organisations and managers fully ensure that employees of all races are comfortable with the work-life culture, some employees may still perceive their organisational practices to be unfair or biased.

As obtained by Casper et al. (2007), results show that perceived organisational support mediates the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective organisational commitment. The findings also show that the strength of the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and affective commitment is not influenced by work-life conflict. No relationship was found between the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture and continuance commitment.

### **Suggestions for future research**

In order to effectively conduct a confirmatory factor analysis, a sample size of at least five times the scale length is required (Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel,

2003). This will provide a sufficient sample size to perform a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the dimensionality of the singles-friendly construct and validate the five dimensions proposed by Casper et al. (2007). Future research should validate Casper et al.'s (2007) findings regarding the dimensionality of a singles-friendly culture, and assess whether it consists of the five dimensions: social inclusion, equal work opportunities, equal access to benefits, equal respect for nonwork roles, and equal work expectations. Future research should also validate whether work-life culture consists of two components: family-friendly and singles-friendly; and that these two components are different and exclusive from one another.

Cross-sectional research design provides an understanding of participant perceptions at a particular point in time, which does not provide insight into causal relationships (Hair et al., 2003). Future research should follow a longitudinal research approach which aims to understand the causal relationship between a singles-friendly culture and organisational outcomes, such as organisational commitment. Causal analysis will provide a better understanding of the strength of the relationship between a singles-friendly culture and perceived organisational support, and subsequently the strength of the relationship between perceived organisational support and affective organisational commitment.

The gap between the experiences of married employees with children and the experiences of single employees is explained by employees' demographics, educational level and job characteristics (Boushey, 2008). It is recommended that future research explore the influence of educational level and job level in terms of their moderating effects on the relationships testing in this study.

### **Implications for management**

There is limited research regarding the implications of a singles-friendly culture for an organisation and the benefit of establishing this type of culture for its

employees and the organisation. This study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by providing theoretical understanding of a singles-friendly culture and the practical implications and outcomes should an organisation choose to adopt a singles-friendly culture.

Owing the limitations associated with the small sample size obtained in this study, it was not possible to validate whether a singles-friendly culture consisted of five dimensions as described by Casper et al. (2007), and whether it could be measured using these dimensions. However, the findings of the present research have theoretical value and implications for the discipline of Organisational Psychology. It offers an understanding of how the five dimensions of a singles-friendly culture relates to other concepts. This study found that all dimensions correlated with affective organisational commitment which provides an understanding that should any of these dimensions be manipulated that it would have an effect on affective commitment of employees to their organisation. Therefore, should any research be conducted in the field of work-life culture, it could be understood that it consists of a family-friendly element as well as a singles-friendly component. In addition to this implication, should research be conducted in the field of organisational commitment and perceived organisational support, researchers can take into account that a singles-friendly culture is possibly an antecedent in the relationships explored.

The outcomes of the research will also assist organisations to understand how effective their practices and policies are in terms of its single-friendliness. A perspective an organisation can take with regard to work-life initiatives is that it forms part of its broader strategy and culture so that the organisation is more flexible and adaptable to the external environment (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). This shows a shift in focus of work-life initiatives to be more than simply a employee assistance program or solely concerned about women's work-family needs (Harrington & Ladge, 2009).

The findings suggest that should an organisation place emphasis on establishing a culture which supports single employees, that they would be more emotionally attached to that organisation. Therefore, should an organisation want to effectively manage and retain their employees and obtain an outcome which ensures that all their employees are committed to the organisation, they should consider including elements in policies and practices which help all employees balance work and life responsibilities. Organisations should include diversity into their practices and policies which take into account the different values and interests of single employees. In terms of positioning the organisation as an employer of choice, these findings provide organisations with information to effectively position their organisation so that it attracts employees who are single and do not have children by offering equality in terms of work-life benefits and practices.

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