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How lingering gendered structures hinder the family friendly workplace

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HOW LINGERING GENDERED STRUCTURES HINDER THE FAMILY
FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
JoAnne Theresa Delfino

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ABSTRACT

LINGERING GENDERED STRUCTURES AND HOW THEY HINDER THE FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

By JoAnne Theresa Delfino

This thesis explores how high-technology and biotechnology organizations implement and integrate family friendly policies into their work structures. This research finds three significant gendered aspects of work and family policies. First, despite the fact that most organizations have come to adopt numerous work and family policies, the conflict between these policies and already established organizational structures reinforces the status quo while discouraging the true integration of these policies. Second, by allowing for largely unchecked managerial discretion over their employees' use of alternative work arrangements and performance evaluations, organizations fail to require a standard of expectations for employees seeking alternative work arrangements and other policies intended for better balance between work and home. Finally, by encouraging the use of certain policies such as telecommuting over less traditional arrangements, organizations come to reinforce a gendered structure in which those employees who devote the most time to the organization remain the most valued.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States Census (2000) reports that over sixty percent of women who work outside the home are mothers with children under the age of six. Often these working mothers seek to balance better paid work with home responsibilities. They continue to take on a major portion of these responsibilities even though working fathers have been increasingly willing to share some aspects of housework. As such, many large corporations have been seeking to assist employees with parental responsibilities by offering them better ways to balance work and home (Shellenbarger 2006). These corporations have been attempting to attract and retain highly productive employees, particularly women, who might otherwise leave the paid workforce if conflicts between work and home exist.

The major driving force of recent family-friendly initiatives in corporations has been the U.S. Family Medical Leave Act of 1993. Even though this Act does not end all gender inequalities at work, it seeks to equalize gender disparities in hiring and promotion practices and allows employees to take up to twelve weeks of guaranteed time off to care for a new child or a sick family member. The 1993 Act advances earlier work equity initiatives such as the sex discrimination verdict of the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Kelly and Dobbin 1999:456). The Commission found companies liable for committing sex discrimination and in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act when they did not allow leave for pregnant women workers while they allowed for the leave of their disabled workers. Rulings and employment laws such as

these have increasingly pressured businesses—particularly those with over 50 employees—to reduce tensions between employees’ personal and work lives.

Legislative pressures made large corporations adapt more family-friendly policies in order to help lessen gender inequalities at work (Kelly and Dobbin 1999). That is, these policies allow working parents (particularly new mothers) to negotiate for more flexibility regarding scheduling and job activities. Prominent corporations include high-technology and biotechnology firms in the Silicon Valley who have been ranked and publicized for their family-friendly environment in popular business and women magazines. Nevertheless, the long-term attempts to reduce workplace gender inequalities through the 1993 Act and similar initiatives remain unrealized, with research continuing to find low levels of employee utilization, especially by men, of work-family policies (Fried 1998). Consequently, there remains a need to study how employers make sense of the work-family policies they adopt and how they incorporate these policies into their daily operation, irrespective of the actual policies adopted.

As such, this thesis examines why family-friendly high-technology and biotechnology firms that allow greater work schedule flexibility for their professional employees [in order to expand women’s opportunities] nevertheless foster new gendered managerial practices that limit female professionals in these firms. Specifically, this research analyzes the four interrelated practices: (1) the pressures from human resource units to curb the use of work-family benefits, (2) the uneven enforcement of work-family benefits by managers, (3) the discretionary evaluation of employees’ performance by managers, and (4) the managerial pressures for greater work productivity when

employees use of work-family benefits.

LITERATURE REVIEW: WHY DO FIRMS ADOPT FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

My review of the scholarly literature highlights several contenting theoretical perspectives on the adoption of family-friendly policies. Each theoretical perspective emphasizes one crucial external or internal factor why large corporations adapt family-friendly policies. The factors external to corporations include: (1) new legislative initiatives and laws and (2) the economic restructuring towards a post-Fordism. The factors internally significant to corporate practices include: (1) organizational demographics, (2) organizational conformity and rationality, (3) the gendered aspects of institutional practices, and (4) the initiatives of employees to reduce stress.

Legislating Work-Family Policies

Exploring the role of legislative and policy changes in the adoption and implementation of work/family policies allows for a more macro-level understanding about how organizations have developed these policies over time. Research by Goodstein (1994), Ingram and Simons (1995), Kelly and Dobbin (1999), and Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger (1999) report that these governmental and legislative pressures had a significant impact on companies' decisions to adopt these work-family policies. Kelly and Dobbin (1999), in particular, suggest that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's ruling that employers who offer disability leave must also offer maternity leave for pregnant employees had a huge impact on the widespread organizational adoption of early work-family programs (p. 456). Kelly and Dobbin (1999) argue that the debate surrounding the 1993 Family and Medical leave Act stemmed from political opposition to the government playing any role in forcing businesses to offer parental

leave. Instead, those opposed to this legislation, including politicians and business interests, argued that the market should dictate the adoption of these policies. They argued that organizations were already adopting such policies as a response to the increase in the number of female workers. Therefore, parental leave should be offered voluntarily, without government intervention (p. 456). This argument, however, places higher importance on market forces than the role of public policy when exploring the reasons that companies come to adopt such policies as family leave (p. 457). Therefore, the significant impact of public policy on the adoption of family leave policies should be acknowledged as it was the threat of legal requirements that lead many organizations to preemptively adopt these policies to ensure their compliance (p. 485).

This early legislative impact on the adoption of family policies such as maternity leave suggests that while many organizations did adopt maternity leave prior to the legislative changes, it was the threat of these changes that forced organizations to adopt the policy preemptively. In contrast, legislative changes did not drive the initial corporate adoption of family-friendly policies such as flexible time or on-site day care. This suggests the insufficiency of explaining the rise in organizational adoption of work-family policies due to legislative changes. As such, we need more thorough studies that examine how well organizations integrate, encourage, and discourage the use of particular aspects of work-family policies.

Family-Friendly Firms in the “New Economy”: Changes to Organizational Norms and Structures

The post-Fordist economic restructuring serves as an additional external pressure

of the adoption of family-friendly policies. New high-technology, biotechnology, and Internet firms' have emerged since the 1970s and readily accepted non-traditional forms of work practices. Traditional work practices involve highly routine and specialized tasks within mass assembly—like Fordist production. Non-traditional post-Fordist forms of work include greater flexibility in scheduling, emphasis on teamwork and quality outcomes, and short-term work assignments leading to greater subcontracting and “off-shoring” of portions of production and service work. Post-Fordist employment practices establish new work models that allow more employee autonomy, flexibility, and better ways to balance work and family, in ways that would have been limited within the more traditional Fordist work practices.

Since the 1980s, Wells (1987), Smith (1997), Vallas (1999), and others examine empirically the impact of post-Fordist employment practices on traditional work and organizational life. While these researchers do not focus on the development of family policies, they explore how the changing global economy affects the organization and structure of work. In this study on post-Fordist employees, Vallas (1999) argues that a Post-Fordist economy has not really allowed for greater employee autonomy and discretion, and he calls for greater analysis of current organizational trends regarding flexibility and changes in Fordist practices in corporations. He suggests that research on post-Fordism overemphasized the decline of Fordist practices and failed to recognize the lingering aspects of the Fordist economy that remain significant.

However, Wells (1987) and Smith (1997) suggest new work arrangements may allow for greater autonomy for workers and inspire innovation and hence greater job

satisfaction among workers that in post-Fordist economies. In particular, Wells (1987) asserts that the rise of the flexible economy has not always been a wonderful development. Wells suggests that while this economy has allowed for more significant employee input, the underlying structure of work persists in which management retains significant, if not even greater, control over workers. That is greater work flexibility has not resulted in greater equity between workers and management.

Hohl (1996) suggests that flexible work arrangements in corporations (such as part time or flexible schedules) make it structurally more difficult for managers to coordinate employees work lives and schedules, even though these arrangements may benefit the corporations. These difficulties then lead to the selective allowance of employee use of such schedules, fostering the notion that these arrangements are gifts to “good” employees instead of being based on merit and balanced negotiation over work flexibility between the employee and manager (Hohl 1996; Brewer 2000).

Telecommuting as an alternative work arrangement has become a viable option for employees with the rise of the technology-based economy. Research on the issue of non-traditional work arrangements explores how changing technologies and forms of work alter their acceptability for employees. Tomaskovic-Devey and Risman (1993) and Raines and Leathers (2001) suggest that despite the ability of employees to complete their work by telecommuting, overwhelmingly professional workers remain entrenched within managers’ normative expectations regarding responsibilities at work. The research shows that managers’ normative perceptions continue to impact the levels of work flexibility offered to employees and these perceptions structure interactions

between managers and their employees wishing to use flexible work arrangements.

Other research by Hohl (1996) and Brewer (2000) examines the increased availability of flexible work schedules as an alternative to the traditional work schedule of five days a week for eight hours each day. These flex-time and part-time work arrangements may allow for employees to have greater independence regarding when and how their work is completed. This could include working less than forty hours a week, job sharing, working four days a week for ten hours each day, just to name a few options. Employees tend to adopt these arrangements in the specific life stage that requires such an arrangement (usually when small children are at home), and they remain overwhelming utilized by women (Hohl 1996:80-81; Brewer 2000:79). However, further research by Osterman (1995) and McNeely and Fogarty (1988) suggests that organizational adoption of such arrangements hinges on various factors: the hardship it would pose to clients or the organization, the perceived value to employee retention, and commitment to the organization. These reasons, while seemingly reasonable, remain arbitrary and at the whim of the employers when it comes to gaining approval of these schedules. Martin (1990) suggests that even feminist organizations, as well as companies established by female entrepreneurs, fall into the same trap of adopting traditional organizational forms even while attempting to systematically challenge these traditional forms.

The post-Fordist economy may have introduced new forms of work and the ways in which employees and management operate within organizational forms, but the overall impact remains uncertain. However, recognizing the role that work-family policies play

within these new post-Fordist organizations allows for a more modern exploration of how these policies operate and are utilized within the context of organizational structures.

While these explanations may consider new ways in which organizations are structured, they do not address the reasons that organizations chose to adopt these policies without creating a supportive organizational environment.

The Impact of Organizational Demographics on Family Policy Adoption

Studies in organizational sociology suggest that demographic trends in an organization have a significant impact on an employer's decision to adopt "family friendly" policies. Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995) highlight the fact that employers' decisions to adopt various family policies correlate directly with the degree to which they experience the following: significant numbers of female workers within the organization, pressure from other members of the business community to adopt work and family policies, and the increased public opinion that companies are in some part responsible in helping their employees better balance work and family.

Other casual explanations for organizational adoption of family policies address the role of the gender composition of an organization's upper management. Martin et al. (1988) and McNeely and Fogarty (1988) explore the types of work and work environments that best facilitate the adoption of family policies. Martin et al. (1988) suggest that the gender composition of a company's management team plays a significant role in whether or not the organization adopts family friendly policies. In contrast, McNeely and Fogarty (1988) explore the factors have the most significant impact on employers' decision to adopt various family policies. However, Fried (1998) uncovers

the truth that adoption of these policies alone does not indicate their support and practice within the organization. While organizational studies suggest that legislative and demographic shifts affect the adoption of work-family policies, this research fails to address how organizations integrate these policies into their established structures. It is not enough to explore how and why these policies are adopted, but whether or not employees actually use them as well.

Why Be Family-Friendly: The Role of Organizational Conformity and Rationality in the Adoption of Work-Family Policies

To complement organizational demographics research, studies on organizational conformity suggest that similar organizations tend to adopt similar practices and policies. This explains why organizations may adopt work-family policies but fail to actively promote their use. As such, organizational conformity research examines closely how and why organizations adopt and encourage certain family policies within their structure.

Macro-level analyses explain how the widespread conformity of organizational forms stems from habit and pressures to conform rather than rational decision-making within corporate firms. Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that prior studies make the false assumption that the perpetuation of similar, traditional organizational models stems from their inherent rationality (p. 342). While the traditional rules and structures that exist within organizations are lauded as rational, ultimately they are nothing more than socialized norms of an organization's behavior. These habitual norms prescribe the appropriate behaviors and functions for successful businesses, which in turn make it impossible for new organizations to deviate from these norms if they hope to be taken

seriously within their business community (p. 343-344). However, despite Meyer and Rowan's (1977) acknowledgement that rational decision making is not the primary inspiration for the adoption of organizational policies and structures, they fail to state the most significant indicators for organizational policy decisions.

Moreover, Granovetter (1985) and Gulati and Gargiulo (1999) argue that the adoption of these established organizational norms allows for the easy coordination between different companies rather than a rationally necessity. Through conformity, companies can confidently assume that they appear stable and serious; an organization that other members of the business community can confidently work with. Gulati and Gargiulo (1999:1443) assert that organizations must establish a reputation as a business that is both trustworthy and dependable in order to gain access to the resources needed to pursue their organizational goals, to gain trust, and establish an interdependent relationship. Therefore, organizations either conform to pre-established norms or risk being perceived by other companies as a liability that should be avoided.

Furthermore DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggests that the structural reasons for organizational conformity result from (1) organizational compliance to federal and state laws regulating business and (2) both the unconscious and conscious conformity to well-established organizational forms; the latter occurs because the individuals working in the upper management positions of these organizations are trained at the same business schools and develop similar training regarding how to establish a successful organization.

Camic (1986), Meyer and Rowan (1977), Granovetter (1985), Gulati and Gargiulo (1999) as well as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) recognize the significance of

interorganizational pressures that lead similar organizations to conform to one another and conform among various other types of organizations. Studies on organizational conformity, however, cannot answer the question why certain organizations encourage and adopt more generous policies than their similar counterparts, despite the fact that they may all adopt the same—or very similar—family policies. The adoption of these types of policies at organizations is not in question; however, understanding not only why these policies are adopted, but also why some of these policies receive more organizational support.

When an organization adopts an alternative work schedule that employees have the option to utilize, they introduce a new model of work; if used, this model challenges the traditional work structure of a 40-hour work week at the office. Simply noting the conformity of organizational structures to one another fails to address how organizations deal with unanticipated challenges that arise due to federal, state and organizational policy changes that come to alter the basic structure of work.

Gendered Organizations

When considering the role of gender within organizational structure, the first research to explore is Joan Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations (1990). Acker's theory offers a comprehensive and convincing argument surrounding the issue of organizational segregation between men and women within the workplace. Her argument places gender at the center of analysis, suggesting that all organizations are inherently gendered, considering the masculine as the norm and all else or "female" as different or abnormal. Acker suggests that the weakness of non-feminist based organizational

research is that it assumes the organizations' neutrality, emphasizing gendered individuals' experiences rather than the gendered nature of the organization itself (p.146). In her theory, Acker considers that all organizations are based upon a gendered structure of masculinity that assumes that "those who are committed to paid employment are 'naturally' more suited to responsibility and authority; those who must divide their commitments are in the lower ranks" (p. 149 –150). These organizational definitions of the 'ideal worker' are inherently gendered and place a premium on those workers able to conform to a masculine work life essentially. By virtue of being women, female employees are at a distinct disadvantage within the gendered organizational structure that values masculine work models over female ones because men are traditional more able to fully commit themselves to their lives at work.

However, it is not only from a theoretical base that Acker's argument has power: her analysis of the disembodied worker as the prototype for all employees is significantly important to her analysis. The "disembodied worker," according to Acker, is the nameless and faceless worker who can easily slip from position to position within the workplace (p. 149). This worker is able to make this smooth transition between jobs because of their "disembodied" nature that requires no consideration by the worker of their bodily needs such as caring for children, or preparing food and shelter. Because work is organized around the seamless entry and exit of disembodied workers from position to position, female employees who also have heavy responsibilities within the home are at a distinct disadvantage compared to their male peers. Therefore, arguments justifying men's supremacy at work stemming from their greater drive or commitment

are simply masking an organizational structure founded upon masculinity as the norm and femininity as deviant (p. 153). For Acker, it is only through the acknowledgement of the gendered structure within organizations that a comprehensive understanding of gender inequalities can be developed. Studies on organizational conformity often ignore the gender aspects of organizational practices. In particular, studies looking at organizational conformity regarding policy adoption lack a thorough gender analysis in their explanations.

This theoretical perspective places women at the center of the analysis, exploring how women as workers with significant responsibilities at work and home and are restricted from traditional norms within work structures. This theoretical basis suggests a new way of exploring the question of why organizations adopt and encourage certain family policies.

Adopting Family-Friendly Policies: Stress in Workers' Lives at Work and Home

Exploring the strain that exists for today's workers, especially female workers, can aid in our understanding of some of the demands being placed on organizations when choosing which work-family policies are adopted. Kelly and Voydanoff (1985) show that workers with children experience significant conflict in their roles at work and at home, more than workers without children. This conflict can have very real consequences for workers and employers; both men and (especially) women who feel this conflict most profoundly can suffer from illness, irritability and even declined productivity at work (Hochschild 1989; Kelly and Voydanoff 1985). Individuals who feel significant strain between their roles at home (as parents, spouses, etc.) and their

roles at work report feeling considerable levels of stress and low satisfaction due to little support from their employers (Anderson, Morgan, and Wilson 2002; Clark 2001; Kelly and Voydanoff 1985). This discord can have very real consequences for employers, including declined productivity, increased absences due to illness, and even the loss of employees who would rather work for a more “family friendly” employer (Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman 1996).

However, while researchers show these stresses between work and home impacting both genders, Hochschild (1989) and Fried (1998) suggest that women bear the brunt of the responsibilities for children and the home and, therefore, feel a deeper strain between their responsibilities at work and at home. In contrast, men continue to find it easier to separate their work lives from their home lives, which allows their focus to remain in the workplace without significant intrusion from their responsibilities within the home.

Corporations do adopt family policies and offer them as a part of their benefits packages, however what remains of interest is the rates of utilization of various family policies once they are adopted by an organization. For example: the use of maternity leave for women is much more naturally utilized due to the physical act of giving birth, whereas a policy like flex time is a more voluntary policy that does not necessarily need to be adopted by employees out of some type of physiological reason. Therefore, Galinsky et al. (1996), Glass and Estes (1997), Fried (1998), and Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) examine the level of utilization of these policies, and how both organizational culture and structure either prevent or discourage employees from using these offered

family policies.

Fried (1998) finds that while organizations may adopt and proudly advertise their generous family policies, actually having high levels of such policies' utilization remains an issue of concern. Fried traces the utilization of various family policies at one organization and found that women overwhelmingly utilized these policies, but, in general, the utilization of those family policies that took a worker away from work were viewed negatively by workers as were policies that prevented them from working long hours at home. She argues that the organizational structure of valuing work time above all other measures of a good worker (such as commitment productivity) created a structure that makes the utilization of family policies have a negative impact on your career.

Most importantly, because organizational structure remains constant, and family policies are adopted into a pre-established gendered structure, exploring which employees actually utilize the policies and why remains significant. Galinsky et al. (1996), Glass and Estes (1997), Fried (1998), and Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) have found that even with the adoption of work and family policies, difficulties persist in convincing employees, especially males, to use them. These findings suggest that the workplace environment plays a significant role in predicting whether or not employees actually feel comfortable using such company policies as flextime, family leave for an extended time, or part-time work. In fact, the adoption of these family friendly policies does not actually serve to make it easier for male and female employees to balance their work and family lives.

Recognizing the centrality of employee comfort levels in their use of work-family

policies and how women overwhelmingly experience greater comfort when using these policies, this research addresses the gendered component of the organizational structure and its role in the use of work-family policies. However, while acknowledging the gendered use of these policies, this research does not address the issue from an organizational perspective. By failing to address the organizational reasoning for the deliberate or inadvertent support or discouragement of employees' use of certain policies, the research fails to address the issue from those that have the most significant impact on this issue: the employers. By focusing on the opinions and perceptions of employers, we can better understand how the perceptions of employers affect how and why they integrate work and family policies into their organizational structure.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In sum, the scholarly literature highlights six theoretical perspectives on the adoption of family-friendly policies in large corporations. Each of the perspectives emphasizes an external or internal factor such as: (1) new legislative initiatives and laws, (2) the economic restructuring towards a post-Fordism, (3) organizational demographics, (4) organizational conformity and rationality, (5) the gendered aspects of institutional practices, and (6) the initiatives of employees to reduce stress.

While these theoretical perspectives provided partial explanations for why large corporations adopt family-family policies, they have not fully accounted for how these corporations make sense of these policies, how they make decisions to adopt them, and how they justify their enactment.

As such, my research seeks to provide answers to the theoretical question: how do large corporations make sense of the work-family policies they adopt and how do they incorporate these policies into their daily operation, irrespective of their actual policies?

METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

This study uses a qualitative approach to answer the research question and examine the recent adoption of family-friendly policies in high-technology and biotechnology firms. For this study, I collected data between August 2004 and April 2005. I interviewed ten human-resource professionals at various high technology and biological technology firms in the Silicon Valley of California's Bay Area. The firms comprise of seven large organizations (indicated employing over 500 employees) and three small "start-up" organizations (indicated employing less than 500 employees). The large firms have been in operations at most 30 years. The "start-ups" are relatively young, have fewer employees, but are growing steadily in employee numbers.

I interviewed human resource professionals from high and biotechnology companies for several reasons. First, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and similar organizational conformity studies use quantitative methods, thereby making them unable to examine in-depth the meanings of gendered work policies. Second, these organizational conformity studies emphasize the reluctance of companies towards structural change, failing to account for work practices in new industries that are proud of their seemingly alternative work practices. Consequently, my research attempts to overcome this limitation while taking geographic advantage of the potential access to Silicon Valley firms. Third, studying local high-technology and biotechnology firms allow for an examination of their progressive corporate policies, particularly regarding gender and family and how adoption of policies regarding work-family policies.

Like many researchers examining organizations, gaining access presented a

significant challenge (Smith 2001). Initially, I thought it would be simple to gain the appropriate number of interviews given my employment at a law firm that represents numerous high-technology and biotechnology clients. Instead I found that I was able to gain better access to possible subjects by using contacts from acquaintances and email queries to 65 firms in the Bay Area. I submitted email letters, requesting an interview with a human resource representative at these organizations, stating the basic premise of my research, stressing the confidentiality of the identity of the organization and representative and offering a copy of my research as incentive. Gaining participation from these organizations proved to be particularly difficult, as out of the 65 requests mailed, five interviews were granted, a seven percent success rate. The other five participants included in this research were recruited based on my personal connections and acquaintances. Each interview lasted approximately one hour each, with some lasting as long as 1.5 hours and others approximately 35 minutes. In these interviews, I asked open-ended questions, allowing for the comments of the participant lead to other questions that expanded these questions, (See Appendix for complete interview guide.)

The process of conducting these interviews was intriguing. While I intended to establish professional rapport during the interview, I found that conducting interviews with individuals of higher social status made creating such rapport difficult. I began each interview by introducing myself as a graduate student and that while this research was to be used in a Master's Degree thesis, I did plan on pursuing this topic into a Ph.D. dissertation. I chose this introduction so as to place myself on a more level field with my participants who all were highly successful, educated women working at well known

high-technology and biotechnology companies. Throughout the interview process, I felt conscious of the differing power within our relationship, I conceded to their expertise and only sought to clarify their responses to my questions, as I was very aware they view this research as a threat to their organization. I re-assured them that their identity as well as the identity of their organization would remain confidential with only my being aware of such information as this concern of the utmost importance to placate their perception of threat.

In my analysis of the interview data, I began by creating separate documents for each of the questions asked in the interviews and grouping the responses that dealt with these similar issues. Because I focused on open-ended interviews, each interview did have differing questions depending on how the conversation went, so I had to group responses by topic often rather than specific word-for-word questions. I then went on to code these responses, first coding the general category of response and then an analysis of what that response was affirming or stating on a more significant level. I systematically looked for patterns in the data, looking for similar or identical word choices or characterizations and used this information to generate the major themes.

While I was not specifically analyzing my data from a gendered organizational assumption (Acker 1990), I did use this theoretical perspective during my analysis of the themes that arose throughout the course of this research. I conducted focused, line by line coding and then further coding as to the meaning of this research, it was after developing these themes and ideas that I used Acker's theory of gendered organizations to explore the issues and social interactions that were occurring within the structures of

these organizations. It was this analysis that generated the major themes found within my research and formed the analysis of the experiences and social relations that occurred within these organizations and their workers.

FINDINGS

This study uncovered four major factors regarding how large corporations make sense of the work-family policies they adopt, and how do they incorporate these policies into their daily operation, irrespective of their actual policies. These factors include (1) the pressures from human resource units to curb the use of work-family benefits, (2) the uneven enforcement of work-family benefits by managers, (3) the discretionary evaluation of employees' performance by managers, and (4) the managerial pressures for greater work productivity when employees use work-family benefits.

How Permanent is the Arrangement: Gendered Practices to Restrict the Use of Work and Family Policies

Organizational Pressure: Structural Limits to the Use of Family Policies. The organizations I interviewed offer a range of family-friendly policies, including generous maternity and paternity leave and alternative work arrangements such as part-time, flextime, and telecommuting. Despite offering these family-friendly policies, this research finds that certain policies received more organizational support than others. In this context, the policies available are of less significance than recognizing which were structurally supported within the organization. These restrictions are then explored through a gendered lens as defined by Acker (1990) and her theory of gendered organizations.

Restricting their Use: Adopting Alternative Work Arrangements in a Gendered Institution. Offering part-time or flex-time work arrangements to their employees,

organizations offer employees the ability to work alternative schedules that do not require a full-time commitment to the organization. However, when asked to utilize one of these flexible work arrangements, such as a part-time schedule, structural constants restrict employee use of such arrangements. Structural constraints on managers can directly contradict their ability to allow employees to make use alternative work arrangements, especially those that allow for less time commitment from the employee. For instance, one organization offers distinctly different structural support for two separate alternative work arrangements. The human resource manager from Company Red, a large high-technology organization speaks on the decision-making process managers use when allowing for a worker to adopt a part-time schedule: “the manager has to decide: ‘can I afford it?’ And usually it is no, because the person working part-time still counts as a head and they are going to want a head in there that is working full time because they only get so many heads.” Despite offering a part-time work arrangement to employees, this quote illustrates the reality that structurally, allowing for the use of shortened schedules remains discouraged. A manager would be unlikely to allow an employee to work on a part time schedule because the departmental budgets constrain the number of employees rather than the hours worked by those employees. This policy in turn restricts the number of employees permitted in a certain department rather than establishing a structure based on hours worked. Managers are restricted from allowing their employees to adopt these shortened work schedules because this practice hurts their entire department.

Structural Support for Temporary versus Permanent Alternative Work

Arrangements. The use of such alternative work arrangements as part-time schedules and flex-time were not, however consistently discouraged. Often organizations were willing to allow for the use of alternative work arrangements more readily if such arrangements were temporary. Central to the organizational decision making process was the amount of time an employee was planning to use an offered alternative work arrangement. A human-resource representative from Company Black, a large high-technology organization states, "So, they really just go to their manager if it is something temporary. But if they say wanted to go part time that would probably be something that they would need to work out with their manager and upper level management as well. Just because if they go part time obviously there is going to be a deficit in work product and they are gonna need somebody who can pick up the slack." When an employee moves to a shortened schedule for a short time (typically characterized as a few months by the human-resource representatives), it was not considered a big deal; it was an issue they would simply need to address with their manager.

However, when an employee wishes to work less time on a permanent basis, they must receive permission not only from their manager, but from several other members of upper management as well. Organizational policy requires that if a worker plans on adopting such an arrangement, it must first be cleared by several levels of management rather than just one's immediate supervisor. Structurally it is a much larger issue and requires much more work on the part of the employee to request such an arrangement. The complex bureaucratic structure required for approval reinforces the fact that adopting

permanent alternative work arrangements is a significant issue to the organization. The complexity of this structure therefore reinforces the abnormality of the adoption of these alternative work arrangements.

The same human-resource manager for Company Black went on to say: “The manager decides what they can do if it is short term you know probably no problem if it is for a month or so is very different than if they say I only want to work part time.... We work things out and work around it but if it is long term that makes a difference.” This manager illustrates the typical trepidation with which some human-resource professionals perceive alternative work arrangements. Ultimately, it is inconsequential whether or not organization offers these types of alternative work arrangements; because the organizational structure dictates the level of support and encouragement such policies receive. Restrictions placed on managers as well as the significant bureaucracy surrounding employee requests for alternative work arrangements both serve to discourage the use of flexible work schedules. The issue is not whether work-family policies are offered by organizations as previous research suggests, but instead how the management perceives and discourages their long-term use.

Telecommuting: The “Privilege” of Flexible Time. By far the most popular alternative work arrangement at these organizations was telecommuting. When allowing employees to use telecommuting, a benefit in which an employee is able to hook up to the Internet or communicate via email, and therefore work remotely, the companies foster the use of such a policies on employee contributions and proven value to the organization. When discussing their telecommuting policies, the human resources

representative for Company Red states, “flexibility with respect to hours is a “privilege” and if it isn’t working out the boss might say you need to come in 9-5 but only if you abuse it. We offer telecommuting and we have this one employee who works out of state in Omaha for whatever reason [because] his life is there.”

An employee earns the “privilege” of telecommuting if they effectively accomplish their predetermined responsibilities at work and their manager approves such an arrangement, a situation that allows the employee some level of control over their ability to telecommute in their job. While certain jobs do require that an employee be at the office, allowing for “responsible employees” to earn the right to telecommute, organizations allow for the easier use of telecommuting by employees.

Structural restraints do exist which actively prevent the manager from allowing part-time work arrangements. In situations where an employee wishes to use a part-time work arrangement, organizations discourage managers from approving such an arrangement because to do so works against their entire group. Within this type of organizational structure, work arrangements that take an employee’s time away from the organization are discouraged, because allowing such arrangements cause the entire department to suffer. In contrast, self-motivated and responsible employees are allowed to adopt a more flexible arrangement in telecommuting while retaining the same time commitment to the organization. However, that same employee does not have the same capital when requesting to work a shortened schedule.

These organizations may offer employee’s policies that allow for shortened work schedules, however, it is those policies, such as telecommuting, that retain a full-time

commitment to work that remain most encouraged within the organizational structure. The valuation of time then supports a structure that encourages flexibility in workers' schedules when the employee is willing and able to commit the same amount of time to the organization. This in turn encourages the use of those flexible work arrangements, which reinforces a structure that considers the commitment of time to be the most significant indicator of an employee's worth (Fried 1998). Because the organizational structure remains stagnant, those policies that conform to the current structure experience greater organizational support than those that do not, such as part time work arrangements. Structures based on the number of employees rather than hours worked by each employee discourage managers from allowing their employees to make use of offered benefits. This seemingly innocuous structure, while mentioned as a basic reality of their organization by the human-resource manager, in fact reinforces a gendered model. Within this model, employees are expected and forced to conform to traditional schedules and arrangements despite the fact that other schedules may be offered within the organization.

Fostering Acceptance and Integrating Alternatives into Established Schedules.

The conflict between the adoption of alternative work arrangements that allow for less employee time and organizational structures was a conflict that was not directly addressed in the vast majority of the interviews. However, in one candid interview a human-resource manager who works heavily on Company Purple, a large biotechnology organization's, work-family issues, discussed, in depth, how gendered work assumptions are addressed within her organization, a company that is actively trying to restructure

how they define value in their employees. While discussing this challenge, she suggests:

It is always a struggle. A couple of the ways that we have addressed it is [that] we have a core set of values so... let me start with something else first. The really important thing is for the leaders of the organization to understand how it is an advantage to the business how does it help the business. Ok, so, when we talk about talent it seems very apparent that one can say if you're working 65 hours a week, ok, does that mean that you're more productive; does that mean that you're contributing more? We want the person whose gonna have the breakthrough idea especially in our business, in high-technology where product cycle is what's important. We have to move quickly we have to have the best idea the fastest and implemented you know with excellence and precision right? So its, I think that in some ways in a high tech organization you have this tension because its so fast that you do have to react quickly and that means sometimes that you don't have time to wait until tomorrow and so there is that sense of the heroics of someone who can work you know 80 hours when you need to get the product out tomorrow kind of thing. But on the other hand, just because the person is there [you know] 80- hours doesn't mean that they have the breakthrough idea. The breakthrough idea is the key to success, right? Ok, so we have a set of beliefs in our organization that I think help us to stay on top of this issue. But again it all has to start from the perspective that, were not doing this cause we're nice, we're doing this because its a competitive advantage for us to have the brightest people, not the people who work the longest, but the brightest people. Now if they are the brightest people and they work long that's even better.

Only a small proportion of those human resource representatives mentioned any specific ways in which their company was reexamining their structure and policies. This statement remains important as it addresses an issue that the majority of the other organizations did not mention; the issue of how to integrate alternative work arrangements that are counter to the organizational structure. Rather than simply stating that they have adopted generous family-friendly policies, this organization addresses the difficulty in adopting policies that are actually used, not just offered to employees. Recognizing the importance of diversity within the modern business place, this organization considers the evolution of their business structure as key to their remaining

competitive in their field. While in the minority, this organization has adopted a structure that challenges their traditional work culture that values time over ideas. However, this company has made the decision to challenge this tradition because, in their estimation, equating time with value can have serious consequences in the modern economy. This type of structural change is not easily implemented as this manager alluded to; however, its acknowledgement as a business necessity rather than an issue of social justice (or some other reasoning) suggests that alternative arrangements can be viewed in a more positive light by an organization if they take the correct steps. However, the atypical nature of such comments suggests that while the majority of organizations have adopted some form of family policies, consideration of the possible structural changes occurring simultaneously remains under explored by companies.

The Spin Zone: Managerial Perceptions and its Control over Work and Family Policies

The organizational structure of a company not only restricts the use of offered family policies such as alternative work arrangements, it also affords managers' significant levels of control over the use of these policies by employees. Exploring the role that managerial perceptions and interpretations of the value of alternative work arrangements plays in their adoption addresses the significant role that managerial perceptions play in the adoption of different alternative work arrangements.

Maintaining Full-Time Productivity Despite Part-Time Pay. Making the business case to their managers for their use of an alternative work arrangement was typical of the organizations that I spoke to for this research. A human resources representative for Company Purple, large bio-tech firm commented:

We have a pretty formal process actually, and its not cumbersome, but it's formal, so we give them a set of questions that they work with their manager [on]; the manager and the employee decide between themselves and their work team; and some of the things that we ask are what (how are you going to measure your contribution?) and how, (what are the warning signs that this is not working? what are some of the things that can help the business given the plan that you are suggesting whatever it is, part-time, flex time shortened work week, telecommute, whatever). Basically what we say to the manager is the flexible arrangement can't hurt the business: it either maintains the business or it enhances the business. We never ask an employee why they are going on a particular arrangement because I don't want to evaluate that. For myself, I'm not married and I have no children, I'm working with a non-profit organization the days that I'm not here so I don't want as an organization for a manager to decide whether my reason is important, [or] more important than the person who has children or an eldercare issue cause the real issue is it gonna hurt the business or will it maintain and help the business? So in my case [you know, well] how does it help the business or even maintain the business, [if] you're working two less days a week? In the very end, I have an area of expertise, [and I can probably,] this is what the person I report to said, you know, you can do this work 60% if I hire someone [in] now to run the organization in your area of expertise; it would take them twice as long to do the same amount of work, so they would be working 12 hours a week and being paid for it, and when you work 60% time and get paid for it, and that is a better deal.

As the above quote illustrates, the issue of primary importance any time an employee requests a alternative work arrangement is how to resolve the needs of the employee with the business needs of the organization. The employee was permitted to adopt a shortened schedule because her particular manager interpreted her taking on a reduced schedule as a way for the company to save money without losing any work product. This interpretation by the individual manager was positive for the employee because it viewed her reduced schedule in a positive light; the company would be saving money while getting the same amount of work.

If, however, the manager had interpreted the request in a different way: that the

organization could not tolerate a shortened schedule because of this individual's specific knowledge and responsibilities—then it can be assumed that her request would have been denied. The importance of this example lies in that it shows how an employee and a manager can spin specific requests in such a way that can have significant consequences on which employees are permitted alternative work arrangements. Because the structure of the organization places the burden on the employee to make a valid case for their shortened schedule, the research of the employee and the willingness of the manager to attempt the arrangement is more or less arbitrary. This reinforces a structure that does not encourage the use of these alternative work arrangements unless of course the employee is lucky enough to have a manager willing to give such an arrangement a chance.

Because managers are granted this control over their employees, the use of family policies is largely dependent on the manager's own personal perceptions and feelings regarding the types of arrangements they will allow their employees to adopt. One human-resource representative for Company Magenta commented in a surprised voice:

The company policy says we have telecommuting, we have flexible work arrangements. There is nothing that says you have to be in the office and yet what we are finding is that our managers struggle with that there can be a company policy regarding a certain thing and yet the managers' opinions and feelings dictate what gets done or adopted so the company says they offer these kinds of work arrangements, but when push comes to shove it is the managers that dictate it, even with something like telecommuting.

The surprise in her voice suggests her disbelief that some managers continued to require their workers to come into the office everyday without even the option of telecommuting. She stresses managerial control over those policies that are offered by the organization

because, despite allowing telecommuting, its use remains under the discretionary control of the manager. This comment also illustrates another important issue, the fact that human resource professionals do not have any means of addressing managerial beliefs and policies that run counter to the general goals and policies of the organization. This lack of centralized authority over managerial control creates a situation in which human resource is aware of all the benefits and policies their company offers, but it is managers who retain complete control over their application. This discretion causes different employees to experience different rules and approved work arrangements, making the use of certain benefits as leave, telecommuting, and part-time work entirely dependent on how their manager feels about such policies. This inconsistency then reinforces an organizational structure that fails to support alternative work arrangements with any level of consistency.

Getting Approval for a Shortened Work Arrangement: The Promise of Continued Productivity. Managers further restrict the use of family policies through their more willing acceptance of alternative work arrangements when employees are willing to commit themselves to the same amount of work product with less compensation. For example, as one human-resource manager for Company Brown, a large technology firm suggested, when she herself used a shortened work-week after the birth of her child:

It wasn't even for a complete year: I came back in September, and I came in four days. I'd work 30 hours a week, or four days a week, I guess, is what it was, and I still had the same job, though. My pay was reduced because I was only here four days a week but I'm an exempt employee so that was my agreement: that I would agree that I would still get that same job done but I was gonna do it in four days versus five, and I also made an agreement that I would be available to check my voice mail. I would also be available at home if someone needed to get in touch with me, and so

you work it out with your boss to see if the business can sustain that, and you make a commitment you're gonna meet your performance expectations even though your hours are gonna change. Your role may change just slightly, but again it's a one on one thing. It is something we encourage managers to work out with their staff, and it may just be temporarily. It may be a situation where they say we can do it but only for maybe three or four months. Do you think you're gonna be able to come back full time after that? And again that's a discussion, so it truly is again open communication[s] that helps us figure out the best thing possible that we can accommodate for the individual, but there are those options that are available to them.

This case illustrates an important point that ran throughout these interviews; stress that despite their use of alternative work arrangements, the employee's work product is expected to remain the same. The compromise that was struck between this human-resource manager and her manager was essentially that she would be able to work one day less a week as long as she was available to work from home if they needed her (i.e. available by phone). This arrangement allowed the manager to get what she wanted, while the company was still able to depend on her while she was away from the office. While this compromise was acceptable to this human-resource manager, it illustrates a consistent issue that arose in the interviews: the need for employees to accept whatever terms their manager demanded if they wanted to have their request approved. This prerequisite places the burden on the employee to conform an alternative work arrangement to meet not only the needs of their manager, but also the general structure of the organization.

The way to gain approval is for the employee to be willing to essentially produce the same amount of work, be intellectually tied to work even on the day you are taking "off," and accept less compensation for the same amount of work. This bargain allows

employees to work their shortened schedules, but only under a promise of unaffected levels of productivity. Despite the fact that you are working 30 hours per week, the same work product as when you were working 40 hours per week is expected. This type of agreement offers the organization the opportunity to retain the same level of productivity for all workers, even if the worker adopts a shortened schedule. This agreement in turn creates a situation in which a worker is only permitted to work less formal hours at work if they can do so with little or no disruption to the organization.

Within this structure, the balance between employee needs and the needs of the organization can only be resolved within an agreement that satisfy the “business needs.” As the same human-resource manager mentioned, when discussing her own negotiation of temporary alternatives work arrangements: “I would also be available at home if someone needed to get in touch with me and so you work it out with your boss to see if the business can sustain that and you make a commitment you’re going to meet your performance expectations even though your hours are going to change.” In sharing her own personal story of adopting a four day schedule upon her return to work after the birth of her child, this human-resource manager states that she was permitted such an arrangement only by agreeing to be available on her day off as well as accomplish the same work requirements despite the changes to her schedule. Despite the approval of her shortened schedule, she remains expected to keep in contact with her workplace on her day off. This requirement forces the employee to remain tethered to the workplace despite the approval of her schedule to be “off” on Fridays.

This “compromise” of the needs of the employee to be resolved with the structure

of the organization reinforces a gendered structure, a structure in which there is an expectation of employee commitment to the organization above all else (Acker 1990). Given the fact that the employee is allowed to work one less day a week, or part time, they are expected to be available to the organization if their expertise is required. These abstract business' needs represent the needs of a structure that continues to operate under a traditional definition of how employees contribute to the organization and are defined as useful. The need for employees to make commitments to continue with a consistent level of work product despite their shortened work hours displays the fundamental conflict when organizations adopt alternative work arrangements. While they may allow their employees to adopt a shortened schedule, they continue to define the employee's value and contributions by the same measure as when they worked full time.

Human Resources: Liaisons Between the Family Friendly Workplace and Management

Within these organizations exists a clash between the needs and desires of the employees and the traditional structures and policies of organizational life. The mitigation of this conflict falls to human-resource professionals who must act as the liaisons between the employees and their managers, working to make it possible for each to have their needs met.

Encouraging Family-friendly Workplaces within Unfriendly Environments. With a large number of work and family policies being offered at these organizations, one of the responsibilities that human-resource representatives mentioned was their duty to encourage managers to remind their employees about the benefits of working for the company. At Company Brown, a large high-technology firm, a very enthusiastic human-

resource manager stated:

As a management person to my own staff where I've said "hey, this is coming up because I know you're pregnant, or you're gonna get married, something is coming up." [I've said this] to my client group, if I know of some of my individuals that are going through a life change. You know I reminded one woman the other day that they were having the baby thing and told her you know you should check to see when it is...And to that extent that we bring it down person to person when we need to and encourage our management teams to remind their staff of these things because it's not just their responsibility to get the work done but also to manage their employees and remind them of some of the benefits and the positives you get out of working at our company.

Characterizing herself as a kind of an educator, this human resource manager is responsible not only for educating employees, but also reminding other managers about their responsibilities to manage not only employees' job performance, but to remind them of all the benefits that make working for their company worthwhile. As a manager herself, this woman felt that it was important that she remind her own employees about company benefits that might apply to them given their current life situation and she encouraged other managers to do the same. This role as liaison serves to keep employees informed about those policies that they might benefit from, but also reminds managers that part of their job responsibilities include communicating to employees about those extra "perks" that come from working for the organization.

Another human resource manager for Company Orange, a small biotechnology company states that when an employee is thinking about adopting an alternative work arrangement:

They would talk to their manager first, or if they came to me I would say, "Have you talked to your manager?" Then the manager would usually come to me or go to their boss and explore options, and then I could come

in. I could come in at a couple different junctures, but it would always come in through me at some point, [and] so I don't think that there's a step-step-step hierarchy that's formal: it's just people just know that eventually it's gonna have to come through me because there's [like] payroll implications. People have benefits questions, "Ok, how much do I have to work to have my benefits? [or telecommuting, um] It depends on the position, and I kind of triage what is the final approval that needs to happen.

When employees decide to use these policies they must deal with the human resource units because it is human resource that addresses the structural issues (such as payroll implications and benefits policies) that have real-life consequences of the employee.

Human resources serves to keep employees informed about those policies that they might benefit from as well as reminds employees and managers about the structural implications of certain policies. It is these responsibilities as both representatives to the employees and encouragers to management that serves to place the human resource units at the center of the issues surrounding the utilization of these various work/family policies.

The Fine Line between Employee Requests and Management Rules. Despite human resource units having the ability to encourage the adoption of various policies by the organization and the use of benefits by employees, it is the employee's relationship with their manager that remains central to an individual's work-life.

This relationship therefore has a more immediate influence on their knowledge and use of certain offered policies and benefits. As was mentioned in the previous section, managers have significant control over the use of certain policies by their employees. In turn, this control leads to a situation in which, despite their attempts to increase the use of offered policies and policies, managers retain the most significant

amount of control over employees and which policies are used within the workplace. For example, a couple of the human resource representatives mentioned their precarious position of educating certain managers about the offered policies, but also their complete lack of any organizational power to instruct the managers to reconsider their positions regarding those policies. One human resource manager (K) for Company Magenta states:

The company policy says we have telecommuting, we have flexible work arrangements. There is nothing that says you have to be in the office um, and yet what we are finding is that our managers struggle with that. There can be no company policy regarding a certain thing, and yet the managers' opinions and feelings dictate what gets done or adopted, so the company says they offer these kinds of work arrangements but when push comes to shove it is the managers that dictate it, even with something like telecommuting.

I: So is there anything from your perspective that you would do to deal with that issue if you recognize that that is an issue?

K: I think that it's going to be a process, right? And I think that some of it has to do with role modeling, and how do we start getting our senior managers really to role [model and] reinforce the ability to have (in the engineers case), work from home. We need role modeling so [a] manager can see how the new way to do work can work and be productive, see the successes. It's sort of like highlighting success stories, and so I think that that is one component, and I think that's one component. I think another component is that we just need to work closely with our managers and not in a formal training but in a communication reminder. Communicate to managers from HR that they need to do a better job, and that these policies exist: "here's one way you might be able to resolve some of that concern you have." You know, "have you thought about A, B or C?" you know? Have an HR person engage that manager and say "what are your objections?" you know because it's going to vary.

This statement was the only one like it that I heard during the course of my interviews, though it reflects similar frustrations voiced by most of the human resource representatives in my research regarding managerial control over employees' use of offered family policies.

However, this woman acknowledges the structural weakness that exists within her organization due to the discretionary power managers have when determining which policies their employees can use. She recognizes the structural weakness that offers complete managerial discretion and therefore inconsistent application of company policies. While numerous policies may be offered and human resources can encourage their use by employees, managerial discretion remains the final variable when it comes to employee use of these policies. This in turn creates inconsistencies within the adoption of certain benefits and policies, but offers no way in which the human resource unit can correct the problem aside from reminding the manager of those benefits the company offers. The precarious role of the human resource unit within this organizational structure limits employee's options regarding their access to various policies. Human resources may have the power to educate and inform individuals within the organization, but their lack of enforcement reinforces their inability to enact any real significant control over the parameters under which these policies are made available to interested employees.

Managerial Practices in the Organizational Structure: The Discretionary Making of Gender Inequality at Work

Management Support and the Adoption of Work and Family Policies. As shown in the previous section, regardless of the policies offered, managerial support plays a significant role in the adoption and encouragement of certain policies within an organization. Of equal significance is the role that upper management plays in the adoption and encouragement of offered work and family policies and this role is no more apparent than through their participation in work-family policies at the organization.

One human resource manager from Company Magenta, when asked why her company has adopted numerous policies to address the needs of employees with children stated, “We have been talking about how important it is to be successful at home and to be successful at work for the entire ten years of our existence, its part of our culture... it really does have to be a top down approach where the CEO and the VPs believe it, that they actually believe it, not just saying it, but they actually believe it.” This type of response was typical from a third of the human resource managers I spoke with: all mention that the support and encouragement of upper management was key to the success of diversity and family policies. Her belief that members of upper management actively support their company’s diversity policies suggests the importance of active support from upper management for certain policies. This statement in turn suggests that upper management has considerable control over the adoption of diversity policies and their success within an organization. When members of the human resource unit — the individuals who work daily with employee benefits, policies — stress the importance of

upper managerial support of certain family and diversity policies, they are drawing the distinction between the basic adoption of family policies and their active encouragement, suggesting a difference between the two.

Performance Evaluations and Managerial Discretion. The gendered structures still existing at the majority of these organizations, while challenged by the interest and encouragement of upper management was also ignored and sidelined by managers who did not see their value. The managerial discretion afforded to managers within the evaluation process (as well as their support for offered policies) creates a system of uncertainty and inconsistency within most organizations. While more than half of the organizations I spoke with offered some level of training and guidance for managers, as the human resource manager for Company Orange, a small bio-tech company stated: “All of our policies, procedures and policies are heavily weighted in managerial discretion. We also realize that that gives us that we have a responsibility to train both in core management skills and also in our processes.” This human resource manager acknowledges that their organization places a huge amount of responsibility on their managers’ shoulders when it comes to evaluating employees’ performances. This responsibility requires that the organization do an adequate job of educating the manager regarding company policies and procedures. This statement summarizes a large aspect of most organizational outlooks on managerial responsibility within their companies: managers are allowed more or less complete discretion over their employees’ evaluations. This discretion requires not only training for the managers by the organization, but also significant confidence that managers are making decisions and interacting with

employees in a fair and balanced manner.

Favoritism and Inequality Implicit in Managers' Employee Reviews.

Organizational structures, which are heavily weighted in managerial discretion, restrict the options of many employees to use offered work and family benefits if their particular manager does not see value in such arrangements. For this reason in fact, the human resource representative for Company Blue said that her company has scrapped their entire evaluation system because: “the current process doesn’t really work and from my experience it doesn’t really work in most organizations. Managers have their favorites and they ... many managers have a hard time either telling somebody they’re great or telling somebody their not ... just personalities I think kind of keep that from happening.” Recognizing the real possibility of managerial favoritism or dislike for certain employees, this human resource representative’s company actually decided to cancel their entire evaluation program because it was ineffectual. This recognition was unique among the organizations I spoke with who, all aside from this one, had evaluation policies heavily weighted in managerial discretion, but did not acknowledge the possible concerns of favoritism and unequal treatment arising from such policies.

Some organizations did anticipate the problematic nature of too great of managerial discretion within the organization. The human resource representative for Company Purple, a large biotechnology company, mentioned that within their managerial process, after the employee and manager meet regarding the evaluation: “the next level management team does what we call consensus meeting, so they meet together so for example I’m a manager, the directors would meet and they would talk about all the

managers in their functional area and what we do is called calibration so you don't have one director whose easy and one director whose hard; there's a calibration." This calibration between directors allows for some level of organizational control over the evaluation process. Other organizations mentioned having a similar process in which the managers discuss and calibrate their evaluations before distributing them. This calibration is a way to check that managers and directors are measuring up to one another in their evaluations. This calibration therefore limits the amount of discretionary control one manager can have over the career of an individual employee. By controlling the level of individual discretion held by managers the organizational structure regulates management, leaving less room for individual perceptions and a more consistent definition of "good employees." By retaining an organizational structure centered upon discretionary managerial control, the use of work and family policies, especially those that alter the traditional work arrangement of an employee are seriously impeded by the structural establishment of largely unchecked managerial control.

How Managers Negotiate Their Support for Work and Family Policies

The role of management is key to understanding how the use of work/family policies is negotiated within organizations. Not only is the manager-employee relationship important to this issue, but the open support of upper management is significant as well. In showing active support for certain gender and work-family policies, management can significantly impact the view of such policies within the company.

Seeing is Believing: Upper Management Showing Support for Work-Family

Policies. Not only do the organizational structures impact the use of work-family policies, but also upper management's visible support of these policies remains significant for their perceived acceptance within an organization. For instance, the human resource manager for company Purple, a large high-technology company that just established a women's network states, "this women's network came forward because we had a couple of executive women who said you know I've been on women networks before and I really want to help other women in the organization have a voice." This type of a woman's network is mentioned in about one third of the interviews I conducted, suggesting that such networks are somewhat popular among organizations dealing with gender issues. These interviews indicate that female members of upper management encourage these networking groups for women because women in management positions consider them valuable. This suggests that having women in upper management who not only support these networks, but also are willing to participate in them has a significant impact on the adoption of these types of policies. These statements are in support of the finding by Martin et al. (1988) and McNeely and Fogarty (1988) in which the support of upper management, regardless of their gender, contributed to the success of certain family policies. Having a more supportive management team allows for the adoption of more extensive work and family policies as well. As such, one of the key forms of education regarding offered family policies would be wider acknowledgement of these policies' value by having management not only mention their availability, but actively encourage their use as well.

Another comment that was made by some of the human resource managers was in respect to their CEO and other management who not only made statements in support of diversity and or these work and family policies, but who “put their money where their mouth was,” as one human resource representative Company Yellow, a large hi-tech organization stated. She went on to discuss an art exhibit she organized on-site at her company that featured works of art created by multicultural artists. She said, “when the art gallery opened I wanted the CEO, the CFO, COO the founders all to be there and I asked them specifically to be there. I was really proud that despite their busy schedules and responsibilities they all made time to come to the opening, to meet the artists and look around.” The importance of having active support from upper management was mentioned in a number of the interviews, primarily those interviews where the human resource representative did feel supported by the CEO and other members of upper management in the company’s diversity initiatives.

This importance, while not mentioned in this context, can be compared to the findings of Fried (1998) in which a lack of use of offered family policies by members of upper management of both genders was suggested to have a significant impact on the level of utilization of offered family policies. This suggests that despite the significance of offering these types of family policies, it remains important that employees witness upper management’s support and encouragement of their use.

However, it should be noted that in this research, the policies that were mentioned as receiving active and public support by members of upper management were also those policies that did not actively challenge traditional work models. For example,

policies that encourage a structural change to the organization were not mentioned. Those policies such as flextime and part time were not mentioned as being propelled forward by upper management and instead it was extracurricular policies that, while influential, fail to challenge the structural basis of the organization. Recognizing the importance of managerial support for alternative work arrangements as well as other gender diversity policies at all levels is key to challenging those structural barriers that prevent the use of offered family policies within organizations.

Individual Managers Enforcing Work-family Policies. Primarily, the relationship between the manager and employee shapes and molds the use of those policies offered by an organization. While every company offered some form of work/family benefits, it was the utilization of these policies that was ultimately shaped by the relationship between an employee and their direct manager. While managers exert a significant amount of influence over their employee's work lives, as one participant from Company Brown, a large hi-tech organization stated, "it's usually the interactions that people have with their coworkers or with their immediate supervisor that usually makes or breaks if they'll stay with the organization because like they say, you don't leave your job you leave your manager." At all participating organizations the relationship between the manager and employee was the keystone of the organization, — and depending on the checks and balances of the company, — that manager could have a huge amount of discretionary control over an employee's future.

Exploring how managers negotiate their own support for family policies addresses the ways in which managerial perceptions affect worker's lives. As organizations remain

largely driven by the manager-employee relationship, it is important to acknowledge how this relationship shapes the use of work/family policies. One example of the significance of this relationship and the difficulties that exists because of the manager/employee relationship comes from one human resource representative from Company Magenta. When asked how her organization might improve managerial support for offered employee alternative work arrangements she states: "It's a culture change and as much as I hate the word mind set, we overuse it here, it's a mindset change, change the mindset of the managers as they truly control the employees." This comment suggests that the mind set of the managers would need to change for there to be greater use of the offered alternative work arrangements. Because managers dictate the use of such policies, their feelings about policies such as telecommuting, flex-time and part-time schedules seriously impacts the true availability of such policies to employees. Regardless of an employees desire to use an offered policy, they remain controlled by their own manager's perception of whether or not such a policy should actually be used.

Shifting Gendered Organizations and the Practices of Time and Work: Managing Time and Flexible Hours

The time that individuals spent working was characterized as a fluid concept that rather than being managed by the organization was under workers' control. This control allowed for employees to largely set their own hours rather than work traditional 9-5 hours as is required in many other jobs.

Flexible Hours: Employee Freedom to Chose Their Schedules within the Established Arrangements. The "required" schedules of employees were primarily

discussed as an especially flexible issue for most employees. For example, when asked about the typical hours an employee is expected to be at work, the human resource manager for a large high-technology company discusses the typical work hours for employees:

Every employee comes in at a different time. I come in between 6:00am and 6:30am. I leave at four thirty. We have some people who are coming in when I'm leaving; that's an exaggeration but we have a lot of people who are, many people do not start work until 9:30 and they might be here until 1 or 2 in the morning but it's completely flexible....

Typically, the human resource representatives in my sample characterize time spent at the office as a flexible arrangement in which employees were not expected to work specific hours. The time individuals spend at work is largely self-determined within certain parameters. You can work early and leave early or come in late and leave late; these schedules allow for ultimate flexibility for the employee. This flexibility was emphasized as offering employees greater freedom over their day and as a wonderful benefit of working for their organizations.

The Freedom of Telecommuting: Working Longer Hours Away from the Office.

Another benefit that was enthusiastically mentioned by the majority of the human resource representatives I spoke with was the option of telecommuting at their organization, on both permanent and temporary bases. In fact, telecommuting was used in a number of ways across the companies represented in this research. Telecommuting allowed employees who lived out of state to remain with the company or employees with long commutes to periodically work from home. In understanding how organizations adopt and use work and family policies, it is important to note that the most frequently

and extensively discussed benefit discussed by the participating human resource representatives was telecommuting. While it was acknowledged that telecommuting was only intended to allow employees to work from home, not to work while caring for children, the fact that this was the most enthusiastically mentioned alternative work schedule remains significant.

One human resources representative from company Brown stated: “we have a telecommuting policy, but in that policy it is not an opportunity for people to both take care of children and work, the expectation is that if they’re working from their home office they have childcare or elder care ... so you know people do need to make a choice about how they are going to spend their time and they get paid for working.” This quote was the only comment within this research dealing with the organization’s logistical expectations regarding individuals’ with telecommuting schedules. This human resource manager acknowledges that telecommuting is not a means by which individuals can remain home to care for their children while working; it is only an alternative arrangement for an individual to work the same hours and be working the same type of schedule, only at a more convenient location.

However, telecommuting was consistently characterized as offering employees the ability to work from home while dealing with temporary family issues and problems. For example, one human resource manager for a large high tech company, Company Black, told me a few stories about telecommuting and its ability to aid in the temporary combination of difficult family situations and work. One such story was:

So you know with that technology, our technology, ... allows for you to have Internet connection. As long as I have the Internet I can push a

button on my computer that virtually connects me to the company, and I have access to everything at the company, including the priority information because it's a very secure connection, firewalls and everything that will allow you to work from just about anywhere. A good example of this is my sister had ... surgery in November, and she is divorced, and I didn't want her to be alone, so I asked my boss if I could go to Michigan while she was recuperating after getting out of the hospital, and he said "Sure." So I went for a week and she had the high speed DSL, and I worked from her home. So we have a very liberal policy when it comes to that.... You know, for example, one of my co-worker's wife is pregnant and they are having some complications with the pregnancy, and he lives in Dallas. We have an office in Dallas that he is based at, but sometimes he comes here for business travel. You know [We] had a meeting yesterday, and he is working from home, and probably will for the next couple weeks, I would guess. Until they can figure out what is wrong, he has to stay home, and so he is gonna work from home and take care of the little ones, and our boss just said if that was what he needed. ... Our boss was very sympathetic to those needs, and again our technology allows us to work from home so it is usually not a big deal.

This story highlights the typical issues surrounding telecommuting. Telecommuting was not discussed as a benefit that was a permanent solution for family issues and difficulties, especially for workers trying to develop some type of a permanent solution for their conflicts between work and family. This policy was useful because it allows workers to deal with an ill spouse or other family member without taking significant time off. Because employees work for high-technology companies, they are easily able to dial into the companies network and work within the same network conditions as if they were at their cubicle.

Regulating Time in Telecommuting: Making Sure You are Working. These human resource representatives perceptions of flexible start times and telecommuting are examples of how these benefits offer employees some increased level of autonomy over their hours and time spent at the office. However, at the same time this arrangement

makes it difficult for employers to distinguish between the time a worker is expected to be working and their personal time away from the job. In fact, one example that was mentioned was the difficulty organizations have regulating time off for employees because of their ability to work from home as telecommuters. As one human resource representative for Company Magenta, a large high-technology organization commented:

Most have their cell-phone, black berry, lap top, so even when they're home, even when there, we have a problem managing our leaves because we have someone at home on medical leave, but they're on email or they're on a conference call with their department or they're dropping by to help. You're not allowed to be working, turn off the computer stay away.

This statement, while not specifically mentioned by other human resource representatives does speak to the general comments made surrounding employees' ability to telecommute and the increased flexibility in their definition of working. The lines between work and home have blurred so that, while an employee might have stayed home from work in the past due to illness, now they can work from home. This blurring in turn makes it difficult for employers to regulate time off because today an employee could be working from any location. Telecommuting allows workers to be plugged into work practically 24 hours day/7 days a week, thus altering the definition of work for both employee and organization.

Telecommuting serves as a solution for employees experiencing conflict between their work and family lives by allowing workers to continue working at the same level while simultaneously dealing with whatever issue has arisen in their lives. The enthusiastic discussion by the majority of the human resource managers regarding telecommuting suggests that there remains more organizational enthusiasm for those

alternative work arrangements that do not challenge the overall structure of the organization. Policies such as telecommuting and flexible work hours offer employees a sense of freedom and control over their time. However, along with this freedom comes a reinforcement of structural norms that encourage substantial time be spent devoted to work. Both telecommuting and the lack of strict control over employees' use of time at work offer a new conceptualization of what it means to "work" for a company. Having more autonomous control over the hours you set and where you work creates a new sense of freedom from more traditional work arrangements. As one human resource manager for Company Purple suggested:

That we no longer have this homogeneous society, and we no longer (within the next five years, I think) are going to be in a position where a CEO of an organization can kind of mandate what they want employees to do: it's going to be [that] there's going to be a need for us to engage the employee, to do what's good for the organization to become successful, but to do that in a way that is less of a mandate and more of a courtship, a call to action that comes intrinsically from them.

This new conceptualization of time challenges traditional organizational forms and offers employees more control over their time and organization of their employment. As this human resource manager suggests, her organization was altering its policies surrounding work and time because it was no longer easy to place strict demands on how individuals conduct their work.

Flexibility is the norm within these organizations, individuals wishing to work from home every once and a while are not perceived as a problem by the organizations and are viewed instead as a wonderful benefit to the organization. The above example, while not typical, does suggest a changing relationship within organizations between the

management and their employees. Employees have greater control over how they spend their time and they can make some decisions about what hours they work and even the location of their work. The enthusiastic characterization of telecommuting and flexible work hours by my sample suggests that these benefits are viewed as a hugely beneficial change.

Moreover, the human resource managers frequent discussion of telecommuting when asked about family policies and alternative work arrangements suggests that the flexibility of work remains of paramount discussion to the rethinking of work. The flexibility of hours spent at work, as well as telecommuting, does indeed offer employees greater autonomy over their time spent working. However they fail to offer employees alternatives to the traditional employment arrangement in which less time spent working is acceptable for some employees. Flexible work hours allow employees who prefer to sleep in to do so, however they simply remain at work much later into the night than employees who come in during more traditional work hours. Similarly, telecommuting allows for workers to work the same hours, only now they do not have to take the time to dress or drive into work. The issue of time is of the utmost importance, the time that employees are able to continue to contribute to the organization despite their other responsibilities. Things that an individual might have taken time off to deal with in the past can now be done while working.

Not only was telecommuting characterized as a work and family benefit that can be used as a short-term solution to work and family conflicts, but it was also discussed as a tool that employees could use to better manage their time spent between work and

home. Employees who are expected to work at least forty hours a week can take time off in the middle of the day to see their child's baseball game or take a sick child to the doctor without having to worry about staying late to make up lost hours. With telecommuting as one human resource manager for a large high tech company suggested:

I feel like they need to get at least their forty [hours] but also quality work for their time. Also those hours don't have to be the traditional 8-5, and if that means working in the evening, that is fine, and I don't think its for family friendly purposes, but I think it has family friendly purposes; but if I have to work at 11 after the kids go to sleep, that's fine, or if I have to work on the weekend, that's fine. I think it takes a huge amount of pressure off because tomorrow when I have to take my son to the doctor I can leave here early to do that with the full understanding that I'll either come in early or work late....

These comments suggest the freedom that telecommuting offers employees with children, this participant was able to take care of her children's needs without the perception that she was not contributing a full day's work.

It is assumed within the organization that when an employee leaves early they will be working late or early to make up the time difference. In this case, telecommuting offers employees the ability to work essentially any time of day and from anywhere as long as there is an Internet connection. This freedom allows full-time employees to balance their time commitments to their families and to work full time because now their work can be mobile, conducted anywhere at essentially anytime of day. This arrangement allows employees to balance between their work and home lives in a new and previously impossible way. Organizations benefit as well because now, instead of losing time from employees in the form of PTO, their employees with children can work from home even after their children have gone to bed. It is in this way that organizations

do not significantly alter their definitions or expectations of employees even when their employees use work and family policies. Work can be accomplished in new ways and time has become less significant an indicator in regards to specified scheduled hours at the office in regards to the measurement of employee contributions.

However, the “balance” between work and family cannot be achieved using these more flexible work arrangements, as currently the most encouraged arrangements do not alter traditional definitions of time spent working. The hours an employee must continue to contribute to the organization remains of constant importance. Because many types of work can be easily accomplished away from work, there is a less clear divide between when an employee should be working and when they should not.

Employee Services: A New Way to Manage Employees' Time

When we did discuss the benefits and family policies offered by the company, human resource managers from four of the seven large high tech companies, notably, mentioned that their company offered extensive onsite employee services. These human resource representatives characterized these employee services as tools that the company offers employees to better manage their time spent at work and at home. These benefits included, but were not limited to, everything from on-site dental care, haircuts, car detailing and basic maintenance, subsidized cafeteria and dry cleaning. These services were characterized as offering employees the chance to accomplish some of the daily tasks that must traditionally be accomplished outside of work hours.

Like telecommuting, these onsite services are characterized by human resource as allowing employees to better manage their time. Despite their jobs requiring significant

time from their employees, the organization wants their employees to spend their off time at home with their families rather than running errands. The human-resource representative for Company Brown, a large high-technology organization characterized these benefits as:

When you look at the whole package, we really help the employee focus on their work and know that they have these other resources that will help them balance that work/life aspect. So, you know for example, if you're looking for daycare, and you know you're the new mother, first, you just got this extra weeks paid time off and then you know that we have a child care referral service to help you find out about day care providers near you, and what's required near you; and as I have just recently had a child, having that benefit is a great help because you don't have to worry. Work life is about alleviating the worry, the work, and the stress. We also have some one site stuff so it may vary site by site, but we have dry cleaning, an onsite dry-cleaning service we have onsite dental; we have a book fair that comes twice a year...car detail. So we're doing a lot to make sure that the employee feels that they can come to work and have a lot of their lot of benefits that go beyond the traditional medical, dental, vision, but I think in its entirety, personal needs [are] met concurrently.

This characterization frames onsite benefits as a helpful tool that allows employees to alleviate the stress often experienced between work and home. These services allow employees to focus on their jobs when they are at work without having to worry about how to find a good day care for their children, or making an appointment with a mechanic to get their oil changed.

However, another explanation made by the human resource manager for a large high-technology company was that: "employees are here so much and many of them are expected to be here so much that we do everything we can to make their few hours at home theirs, not running around doing errands." These onsite benefits allow individuals to feel more confident making choices such as finding good childcare, but simultaneously

they allow employees to better manage their time spent at work and at home. These onsite services allow employees to focus on work while they are at work with the convenience of more mundane daily chores being satisfied on the job site. Accordingly, the company assists employees partially to deal with the responsibilities of the domestic aspects of their lives. In this sense, these organizations are offering employees the ability to be “ideal employees” as conceived by Acker (1990). The organization, in offering their employees these onsite services such as dry cleaning and oil changes, even subsidizing cafeterias, offer employees the ability to leave behind some of their domestic responsibilities and focus on work. These services do challenge traditional work structures as employers are taking on some of the responsibility for their workers personal lives, however this responsibility is being accepted as a means to increase the time employees spend working. These benefits consequently do offer employees the tools to have less stress on their own time, but they again reinforce the organizational structure in which employee time commitments to work remains of primary importance. Again, those policies allow employees to retain high levels of time commitments to the organization that enthusiastically supported them.

Valuing Contributions Despite Limited Time

While flexibility and on-site services allow employees to more efficiently and productively manage their time between work and home, they do not challenge the gendered ideal that the ideal employee is the one who commits the most time to the workplace. A couple of the human resource representatives I interviewed mentioned the difficulty their companies were experiencing, struggling to balance the concerns of the

business with the needs and values of their employees. While only a third of the human resource representatives I interviewed mentioned this conflict, when it was mentioned it was considered difficult to create an atmosphere in which those employees who do use alternative work schedules continue to be valued and appreciated for their contributions. The human resource manager for Company Green, a small biotechnology organization acknowledged:

As long as you are doing your job, who cares what your hours are? I think where it would come into play is in what kind of career that person would want to have. Or I remember we had a very high performing employee. She made tons of jumps, she pushed our goal forward, we could not be here today if it was not for her diligence and like her skill. [She] had a baby, decided she wanted to go part time, so that is going to redefine what her career path is here, so always looking at in terms of succession planning. Allow the employee to work part time, redefining her career path but they allowed it despite her being a high achiever each person is driving their career development. If I decided you know that I'm not happy at the manager level, then well I would have to be willing, I would have to understand, that I made that choice and I'm going to work those hours. Therefore, probably the head position is going to as we grow is going to go to someone else. Address the choices individuals make in their careers and they don't get the raises or promotions but the role you do have in the company remains just recognize the limitations.

This comment was typical of those made by the other human resource representatives who discussed employees at their companies who worked shortened schedules. The statements focus on the organization's acknowledgement of the value of these employees' contributions, while at the same time recognizing that within their organizational structure, employees are restricted from receiving certain rewards such as earning managerial roles. This behavior acknowledges the reality that structurally, these organizations remain focused on employee time spent on the job rather than contributions to the job. Such characterizations in turn allow employees to remain valued members of

their organizations despite their desire to spend less hours working for it Anderson, Morgan and Wilson (2002), Clark (2001), Kelly and Voydanoff (1985), Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1996) suggest that employees who feel a significant strain between their responsibilities at home and at work are more likely to feel dissatisfaction in their work, a desire to leave their company for a more family friendly one and experience a decrease in productivity. My findings support the idea that if organizations wish to retain their most talented and innovative employees (regardless of whether or not they have children) they must ensure that those individuals who do have a family feel little strain between their work and home.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research finds three significant gendered aspects of work and family policies in high-technology and biotechnology firms. First, despite the fact that most organizations have come to adopt numerous work and family policies (i.e. flex-time, part time and other alternative work arrangements), the conflict between these policies and the organizations already established structures reinforces the status quo while discouraging the true integration of these policies into the general work structure. Second, by allowing for largely unchecked managerial discretion over their employees' use of alternative work arrangements and performance evaluations, organizations fail to require a standard of expectations for employees seeking alternative work arrangements and other policies intended for better balance between work and home. Finally, by encouraging the use of certain policies such as telecommuting over other less traditional arrangements, organizations come to reinforce a gendered organizational structure in which those employees who devote the most time to the organization remain the most valued.

These findings expand our understanding of gender inequality within organizations by exploring how organizations put into practice their offered work and family policies. This research challenges traditional accounts that stress the importance of the adoption of various work and family policies at organizations, while failing to recognize the importance of implementation and use of these policies. The adoption of work and family policies at organizations is no longer the issue of concern, instead recognizing the structural constraints that reinforce traditional gendered work structures must be explored if family policies are ever to be widely used.

Exploring how organizations integrate work and family policies into their pre-established work structures brings into focus a complicated issue: how to introduce policies that allow for better balance between time at work and home in a work structure that was established under the assumption of a complete separation of the two spheres. This issue is not one of social justice but basic functionality. Recognizing that both men and women are making valuable contributions to the paid workforce, it remains in organizations' best interest to retain the best and brightest employees, not just those that can remain in the workforce fulltime and uninterrupted. Employers have attempted to deal with this issue in many ways, whether it is the result of litigation or legislation or basic concern for their employees. They have adopted work and family policies that allow for workers (workers who might otherwise quit altogether) to remain in the workforce by adopting an alternative work arrangement, or making use of on-site childcare. It is not to say that the adoption of these policies is insignificant, it is of undeniable importance that these policies have been adopted. However, the failure to adopt structural changes within the organization makes it difficult for employees to use these policies. Because organizations retain their traditional structures and expectations of their employees (i.e. only allowing managers a specific number of employees rather than breaking down their budgets by hours worked), they retain a structure that, despite offering alternative work arrangements, actively restricts their use.

Because organizational structures are based upon a specific work model, a gendered model as Joan Acker (1990) refers to it, the introduction of work and family policies does little to create an environment for the open use of work/family policies.

The lack of organizational structural changes reinforces for employees that despite offering these policies, their use is not encouraged. These structures not only discourage employees from asking to use such arrangements, but they also creates an environment where managers are not able to approve the use of such arrangements because to do so has negative consequences for their entire group. A fundamental assumption within organizations remains that employees are measured by their physical presence at the workplace rather than their contributions. By continuing to remain focused on the individual and their time commitments to work, it remains difficult to integrate a series of policies whose entire intention is to make it possible for workers to still contribute even under a more flexible arrangement.

Second, the significant discretionary power that managers are permitted within organizations serves to create an environment in which there exists the lack of clear and established guidelines that dictate how managers treat the use of family policies by their employees. Because managers retain discretionary power over their employees, it remains largely up to the individual manager's interpretation of the usefulness of these policies that determines whether or not an employee is able to adopt these policies. The lack of any established parameters under which managers are expected to operate within regarding the use of alternative work arrangements creates an environment in which employees cannot readily anticipate the outcome of their request for an alternative work arrangement. Depending on an employee's manager, their ability to use offered policies is drastically helped or hindered. This uncertainty creates an unpredictable environment that lacks the crucial structural support needed for the application of these policies and

policies. This situation forces employees to deal with two unknown variables; how their managers feel about allowing employees to use these types of policies and whether or not their argument for why they should be permitted such a schedule will be accepted by their manager.

The focus on encouraging employees to make the case for why their use of these offered policies is worthwhile to the organization reinforces the gendered structure of these organizations. This process ultimately labels those employees who wish to work a shortened schedule outside of the norm as deviants and places the burden to use such policies on the employee. Employees end up offering to work for less pay or benefits despite their employer requiring that their work product not be negatively impacted by their shortened schedule. This requirement only allows for the adoption of shortened schedules if, despite their lack of face time, the employee continues to contribute with the same level of work product. This benefits the employer significantly, now able to pay less money for the same work despite the employee's formal commitment of less time to the organization.

In fact, this seemingly obvious solution of allowing for shortened schedules within the parameters of established work levels, establishes a norm in which the organization retains complete control without having to alter its structure. Because the organizational structure was not at issue for the majority of the organizations in this study, when employers adopt these alternative work arrangements, they fail to explore how their organizational structure will impact the use of these policies by employees. These policies were treated as any other policy introduced at the company rather than as

uniquely different in their implications to the organization. This lack of consideration makes the integration of these policies into organizational life that much more difficult.

Finally, the recognition of how organizations come to encourage certain family policies over others becomes significant with the deep structural reinforcement of time as the most valuable commodity that can be gained from employees. Organizations with significant enthusiasm for policies such as onsite services and telecommuting are adopting policies that benefit the employee while simultaneously reinforcing a traditional work environment. In their attempts to allow for better balance between work and home, these arrangements allows employees to complete those tasks at work traditionally done while away from it. The convenience of on-site services such as dry cleaning, dentist appointments or haircuts eliminates employees' need to spend time thinking about those errands and other responsibilities outside of work while at work. Similarly, telecommuting allows an employee to work from home, saving them the hassle of getting dressed for work and commuting to work. These benefits such as onsite services and telecommuting were the most enthusiastically discussed policies by the human resource representatives epitomizes the encouraged use of those work and family policies that most clearly conform to traditional organizational values. This reinforces the message that despite the wide array of offered policies for better balance between work and home, the organization most readily supports those policies that allow for heavy time commitments from their employees.

The growth of offered family policies by organizations has been a welcomed change at companies over the past thirty years. This increase has included laws

mandating maternity leave, paid and unpaid leave for caregivers, and numerous other policies that have developed at companies, both large and small. With the growth of the technology field came an opportunity for these new organizations to challenge traditional organizational models. This field can offer valuable insights into how work is organized within companies today. While it is important to recognize the achievements of family policies over the years, it remains that these policies are being integrated into organizations that retain their gendered values in which time spent at the workplace remains the clearest indicator of an employee's commitment.

The poor adoption and implementation of these policies could be overcome. While it is significant that organizations have begun taking into consideration the work and family balance for their employees, these policies are being introduced into a structure that is in direct opposition to the values and measures most organizations have established for their employees. By establishing clearer boundaries under which employees use these policies, rather than allowing for complete managerial discretion, employees could more comfortably ask to use these policies with a more clear expectation if their request will be accepted. Also, if organizations wish for better employee retention, especially of the best talent, they must alter their organizational measures and definition of what makes an employee valuable. This change would involve all levels of the organization; managers need to reward those who come up with the most valuable ideas rather than those able to work the longest hours and upper management needs to encourage rewards for employee contributions aside from time. Introducing family policies that allow employees to spend less time at work without

establishing an organizational value for those policies discourages their use.

While this research does allow for a better understanding of work-family policies within high technology and biotechnology organizations, its widespread application to other fields and individuals has some limitations. All of the organizations included in this research employ principally highly educated and professional workers; most employees have above a high school education and are considered “white collar.” Also, these individuals employed at these organizations are, on average, quite young, with most employees an average age that falls in their early to mid-thirties. The majority of employees at these organizations earn a salary significantly over minimum wage. Also, while I did not research ethnicity at these organizations, all of the organizations mentioned their concerns in employing larger numbers of minorities, especially women, Hispanics and African Americans. This research also did not deal with the heterosexist assumptions built into the adoption of work-family policies that families are comprised of a mother/father heterosexual relationship in which one spouse, usually the mother, can be the primary care giver for children. Future research should also deal with the gendered assumptions that exist within lower income jobs and how the conflict between work and home is dealt with in blue collar or “unprofessional” occupations.

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Appendix

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How many employees work for your company? How many men, how many women?
2. What is the average age of your employees?
3. Have you noticed any difference in the gender makeup of the company since adopting your gender policy?
4. What was the rate of employee attrition before adopting the policy?
5. Was it different for men and women? What is it now?
6. Are men and women concentrated in different positions within the company?
7. Has this changed at all since the adoption of the policy?
8. How long have you worked with the company?
9. What is your companies mission statement in regards to diversity policies, especially in regards to women?
10. What is your company's formal gender policy?
11. What led to the adoption of this policy? How long had your company had a gender diversity policy?
12. Was there a specific catalyst for your company's adoption of this policy?
13. What considerations were made when choosing this particular policy?
14. Who in the company had the main influence over the specific gender policies you adopted?
15. Did your company seek any outside information when adopting their policy?
16. How many people use the benefits of these policies?

17. How do you think these policies are doing?
18. Ultimately, what do you believe the benefits of adopting these policies are, if any?
What are the costs associated with these policies?
19. Where there any initiatives that were suggested but not implemented?
20. Has the company eliminated any of the gender policies as far as you are aware? Why do you think this is?
21. How many women hold upper management positions in this company? Has this number changed at all since adopting you gender diversity policy?
22. Does your company have a specific formula for performance evaluations? What is it?
23. Finally, what would you consider a good employee in regards to this company?