

MANAGERS AT MID-CAREER -  
WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

by

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**Managers at Mid-Career:  
Where Are They Going?**

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Submitted to the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management on May 1, 1976 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

This thesis is based on a set of twenty interviews with upper level managers who were in their forties, and who were participating in the M.I.T. Senior Executive Program. The interviews focused on the retirement plans of the twenty men, the retirement planning activities of their organizations, the adult development changes that they were experiencing, the career anchors that their comments revealed, and the changes in their organizations' personnel policies in the face of a changing labor force.

The most striking result of these interviews was the fact that forty percent of the interviewees were actively contemplating early retirement from their organizations. However, the employers were doing very little more than giving financial information to known retirement candidates. There was a strong increase in the family orientations of the men surveyed compared to what they had had earlier in their careers, including the planning of joint husband-wife retirement projects. Of the twenty men in the group, six were in the managerial competence career anchor category, and fourteen were anchored in technical-functional competence.

The Appendices contain a full description of the interviewing method used, the data from the personnel policy questionnaire, and samples of the forms that were used.

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**Chapter I**  
**Introduction**

## Introduction

I wanted to study, by means of this thesis project, the stage in the adult development process that people reach in the forties, the phenomenon of increasing early retirement of managers and professionals, and the ways that companies are reacting to changes in the work force that are taking place now. These were topics that were of personal interest to me, as well as ones that had not been thoroughly covered by other theses and articles in the research literature. I hoped to make a contribution to the information and understanding of these areas by devoting some of my time and efforts to their further investigation.

I had wanted to do this project by means of personal interviews, because I thought that using mailed questionnaire forms would be too remote and distant a technique to get the kind of information I was looking for. I thought people would be more open and ready to express their interior thoughts and feelings on a person-to-person basis.

The age group I was interested in talking to was that of the forties, especially those in their early forties. This was partly because I had just come to my own fortieth birthday, and I was wanting to compare my own thoughts and feelings with others in the same range. Another reason, however, was that this is an interesting age group, because of the transitions that take place during this phase of life, and one that has received comparatively little study.

Finally, I was interested in talking with managers, especially those with technical backgrounds, about their careers and their career anchors. The

group of M.I.T. Sloan School graduates that have formed the basis of the prior career anchor studies have not yet reached this age range. The results of this project might serve as a preview of what that other group will be doing in a few more years.

Based on these interests and qualifications, I decided that the participants in the M.I.T. Senior Executive Program would be excellent subjects for this study. With the cooperation of the Program Director, Alan White, I approached the twenty-eight participants, explained the purposes of the project, and asked for volunteers. Twenty men, the maximum number I could interview in the time that was available, generously offered their time and support for this project.

The twenty interviews took place over a period of three weeks, with as many as two per day being scheduled at the lunch breaks, and in the evenings. Each interview took about one to one-and-a-half hours, during which I kept notes of the key points of the discussion. Immediately afterward, I amplified these notes and tape recorded a spoken summary and commentary on the interview. The details of the interviewing methods I used are in Appendix A.

**Chapter II**  
**The Managers**

## Backgrounds of Senior Executives

The M.I.T. Senior Executive program is designed to teach new methods of "qualitative and quantitative analysis for managerial decision making", and to aid in "enhancing the personal growth of the participants" who are nominated and selected to be in the program. It is hoped that they will be "anxious to stimulate and accelerate his or her own growth and development" through their participation.<sup>1</sup> In general they are expected to be mid-to-upper-level managers in their forties who show promise for advancement into senior, general management positions in their organizations.

The twenty men who volunteered to be interviewed for this project seem to be typical of those who have taken part in this program in the past several years. In age, they range from thirty-eight to fifty-one, with an average age of forty-five. They are all married, with the exception of one whose wife had recently died. They have been married an average of twenty years, with a range of twelve to twenty-seven years. They have an average of three plus children, with a range of one to eleven. The most common number of children is two. The average age of the eldest child is eighteen. The average age at marriage was twenty-five with a range of twenty to thirty-four (see Family Data Sheet in Appendix E).

The reason for using all these statistics is simply to try to convey an impression of the "typical" Senior Executive. They are a fairly homogenous group, with more similar characteristics than differences.



The companies they represent cover a wide range of industries. There are four from energy companies, three from equipment, three from chemicals, two from government, two from metals, two from aero space, one from paper, one from computers, one from autos, and one from a research and consulting company. In size, the companies could be classified (in very general terms) as large, medium and small. There are fourteen people from large companies, four from medium companies, and two from small firms.

In looking at the area of the country from which the interviewees come, I found that the largest number (six) come from the mid-west, four from the north-east, three from the east, two from the west, and one from the south-west. Four come from overseas.

The educational background of most of the survey participants is technical. Thirteen have bachelor's degrees in engineering, and one each has degrees in geology and chemistry. Four have degrees in business administration, and one has no bachelor's degree. Nine went on to get advanced degrees, six in technical fields, and three in non-technical.

When I looked at the functional areas from which these men come, I found that the largest number (five) come from manufacturing, with three each from marketing, and engineering. Two each work in the areas of research and development, and in data processing. Two are responsible for product lines in multi-product companies that are organized in matrix fashion. One each work primarily in finance, patent law, and personnel.

To summarize the background of the test group, I would characterize them as men with technical backgrounds, working for large companies in the industrial parts of the country, who are involved in production rather than services. They are in their forties, married, with average-size families. The positions they occupy in their organizations are in the upper middle to lower senior levels of functional management.

### Career Anchors

One of the purposes for these interviews was to gain more information about the "career anchors" of the group. This type of classification is based on the work of Edgar H. Schein at M.I.T. in studying the career patterns of a group of Sloan School graduates.<sup>2</sup> Knowing each person's career anchor can help in understanding the career path he has followed, and the plans for the future that he has made.

These classifications were based on the comments the men made about their job responsibilities, their goals, their likes and dislikes about their present jobs, and their present career status. There are five career anchor categories. Here briefly are the labels and descriptions of each:

1. **Managerial Competence**

- Capable and effective in dealing with people
- Able to analyze complex situations under uncertainty
- Possessing emotional stability to deal with crises and responsibilities.

2. **Technical-Functional Competence**

- Challenge of work the prime motivation
- Not as interested in management or supervision
- Rooted in the technical discipline.

### 3. Security

- Linked to the organization or geographic area
- Depends on the organization for recognition
- Interested in overall career stability.

### 4. Creativity

- Strong need to create new business or product
- Success measured by building of assets
- Entrepreneurial instinct.

### 5. Autonomy and independence

- Freedom from organization life
- Individualistic entrepreneur.

The interviewees were all evaluated to determine which of these five anchor groups they most closely fit into. Of the twenty men who volunteered to be interviewed, six were clearly in the management anchor category. The remainder were more or less clearly in the technical-functional category. None were in the creativity or autonomy groups, but three of the remaining fourteen were borderline cases between the technical-functional and security anchor groups.

One of the things I was interested in looking at was the differences between these two career anchor groups in their retirement plans. For those six who were in the managerial anchor group, two are thinking about

early retirement (one a joint project with his wife), and one has given some thought to his retirement at the regular age. In the technical-functional group, five of the fourteen are thinking about early retirement (three of them jointly with their wives), and two have some plans for regular retirement. On a percentage basis, the groups are clearly not different. What is significant to me is that a third of a high level group of managers like this is planning early retirement at all.

In looking beyond the statistics to the reasons they gave for wanting retirement early, both of those in the managerial group listed family reasons as being important in their considerations, but only three of the five in the technical-functional group did. This seems somewhat more significant to me as a difference, especially since the popular concept of managerial careers is that family interests are subordinated to company and career interests by those who are intent on becoming high level managers. In this case, two men who have made it into management, and whose anchors are in managerial competence, are seriously considering their family involvements in making career changes that will cut short their managerial careers.

Of those three technical-functional anchor group members who gave family reasons as one of the important factors, two of them put special emphasis in their comments on their wives. One had begun to do projects around the house in crafts and home decorating with his wife that they found mutually satisfying, and the other had in mind a post-retirement business venture that he and his wife would operate together. I got the impression that

they, even more than the others who planned early retirement, were looking at it as a way to develop a different, closer relationship with their wives than they had been able to build in the earlier phases of their marriages.

### Future Career Plans

One of the areas that I asked each manager about in the interview was his career plans for the next five to ten years. Some had only general plans laid out for themselves, while others had set clear and specific objectives. What became plain to me while I was still gathering the information was the relative modesty of their future career goals compared to the goals they reported having ten years ago.

Of the six men in the managerial career anchor group, two had high goals for themselves ten years ago, four had medium goals, and no one had either low or no goals. High, medium and low are general categories that I used based on the comments the interviewees made, and are not their own evaluations of their goals. In the technical-functional group, five had high goals, three had medium, three had low, and three had no goals ten years ago. In the cases involving no goals, they actually said that they had set no goals for themselves, and "worked at each job like (they) would be in it the rest of (their) careers", and other words to that effect. Two of this group mentioned as a part of their discussion of goals that their work, and their expertise or efficiency in doing it, were important parts of their overall goals.

The answers to the question about future career goals reveal a generally lower set of expectations than the earlier goals showed. Three of the managerial group expected to rise one additional level in their organizations, two planned for two more levels up, and one had a goal of three promotions. The technical-functional group was less optimistic, with five planning on no advancement in the organization, eight expecting one more level, and one planning for one or two more promotions. Three of this group said that their work came first for them, ahead of organizational promotion.

I asked each man how he thinks he has done in his career compared to his goals of ten years ago. In the managerial group, five said they had done better than they had expected, and one said he had not progressed as rapidly or as far as he had hoped. In the technical-functional group, eight said they were ahead of schedule, and six said they were satisfied with their progress.

From this data I believe I can draw some conclusions about the differences between these two career anchor groups. One is that the managerial group had somewhat higher expectations about their organizational advancement, and have higher overall satisfaction with their progress than the technical-functional group. A second conclusion is that the work itself is more important to the technical-functional group than it is to the managerial group. Finally, the managerial group is more confident of their continued advancement in their organizations than is the technical-functional group.

The reasons for these differences can be explained by the basic career orientations of the two groups, and the present organizational structures of most companies. For a person in a technical field, who is anchored in that kind of work, advancement to the upper levels of the organization may be both an unrealistic goal, as well as an unappealing one. The transition from the technical discipline to general management seems to act as a filter through which those who are anchored in managerial competence pass more easily and willingly. Alternate career paths need to be developed so that the many other talented people in the organization besides the managerial candidates can have a sense of career progression too.

#### Commitment to Work

I had expected to find these men to be very dedicated and committed to their work and their companies, and my conversations with them bear that out. They are hard-working people, who have gotten up to their present positions through effort, as well as talent.

One measure of this commitment is the amount of time they spend either at their work places, or working at home on business matters. The average time spent on work by the group was fifty-two hours per week, with a range of from forty to seventy-five hours. Only two of the twenty claimed to work the "standard" forty-hour week.

Another measure is the amount of travelling that they do. I ranked their

travel into three categories, Light (less than two days per month), Medium (two to six days), and Heavy (more than six). Eight of the twenty participants travel lightly, eight travel a medium amount, and four have heavy travel schedules. The average amount of travel is about four days per month, or one-fifth of the time.

These two time demands leave less time than usual for family and personal activities. It was very often mentioned that they regretted that they were unable to spend more time with their families, and they concentrated their attention on their wives and children when they did have free time. Many of their hobbies and personal interests were sports or outdoor activities, such as tennis, hiking, or gardening, that they could enjoy with their families.

Another aspect of this commitment to work is the degree to which work time and demands took the place of personal interests and personal development. Hobbies and outside activities were often only mentioned after some probing, and were talked of as things that were done if any time remained after work and family demands were satisfied.

Clearly, on the basis of these interviews, most of these men are heavily involved in their work and their organizational lives, and get their primary satisfactions from their careers. Their families are important to them, and come in a strong second, but still second. Their own personal development, independent of their work and families, is given third place, if it is given a place at all. However, it was also apparent to me that this situation is changing for them, and that they are showing



more interest in balancing out the three dimensions of their lives.

### Role of Wives

In discussing the role their wives played in their lives and careers, I asked the men two general questions. One was whether their wives worked outside the home, or had worked previously. The other was about what they thought their wives' roles had been. In only one case was a wife currently employed in a career-type job, in this case a college professor. In five other U.S. cases the wives had recently or were presently working in non-career jobs. In making a distinction between career and non-career work, I am not only looking at the type of work done, but also at the time span and the continuing commitment involved. Of those U.S. wives not now working, four had previously worked as a chemist, a teacher, a bank teller, and a political aide, but had given it up in favor of caring for the family when they had children. Nine U.S. wives were exclusively occupied with their work in the home, and did not have any outside, paid employment.

The wives of non-U.S. representatives were slightly more involved in outside activities, although the small sample makes generalizations dangerous. One was a part-time free-lance writer, and another spent considerable time working in religious activities, but none had paid, full-time employment outside the home. One was working as an interior decorator before marriage, and plans to return to that field now that her children are older. In all the interviews, the men described their wives

as being supportive of their careers, and talked about their having taken the major part in the running of the home and the child rearing. They spoke appreciatively of the understanding their wives had of the interest and time they had spent on their work, and the importance of their jobs in their lives. However, only five of the 16 U.S. representatives described their wives as having been actively involved in their careers, and this involvement was in the form of entertainment of work associates and other business-related social activity. For most of them, the worlds of work and family were largely separate, with little integration on either their or their wives' parts.

The importance of a wife to take over the major family responsibility was obvious in these discussions. Words like "strongly supportive", "understanding", "willing", and "interested" were often used to describe the attitude of the wife. Another indication of this importance is that none of the twenty men interviewed made any mention of having been divorced. This greater than average marital stability could be an indication of the strength of the partnership that is set up between a successful manager, dedicated to his work, and his wife, when she is committed to helping him to be successful.

### Personal Interests

During the interviews, I asked each man what personal interests he had outside his work, and what changes, if any, he had noticed in his personal interests in the past few years. What I was wondering about, and expect-

ing to find evidence of, was the re-awakening of self-development and the turning from work and family to personal activities and hobbies during the forties that is spoken of in the literature.<sup>3,4</sup> I did find that in some instances, but in general I found men turning to their families for their non-work involvement, more than to individual hobbies or avocations.

The responses I got to my question about personal interests included forty-four different activities. This was a more varied response than I had thought I would get. The average number of items listed per person was slightly over four. The more popular activities were reading, gardening or yard work, boating, skiing, golf, tennis, and working around the house. I broke these activities down into general categories to summarize them more. Of the forty-four in total, six were cultural or educational in nature, fourteen were sports-related, six involved handicrafts or skilled manual work, four were public service oriented, and five were social.

I also tried to decide whether these activities were primarily individual in nature, or family oriented. In other words, did they do these things for and by themselves (or with non-family-members), or did they do them for or with their families? The result of this distinction is not decisive, since eighteen were primarily individual, and twenty-one were family-oriented. This is about even, and yet it does not show any strong trend away from family activities toward personal development activities.

The second question, about changes in personal interests, brought positive responses from all but four of the men, who said that they hadn't changed

in this area of their lives. The other sixteen said that they had changed, and mentioned eighteen things that they had either dropped or started in the past several years. In the individual vs. family distinction, three individual activities were added and five were dropped, while six family activities were added and four were dropped. In the five general categories of activities, three educational and cultural activities were added and three were dropped, three sports were added and four were dropped, one craft was added, and two service activities were dropped.

What all this data says to me is that these men are still heavily oriented toward their families, even though most of them do have some things they enjoy doing alone or with others outside the family. But they haven't gotten absorbed in some project or hobby that they have always wanted to do, but never found the time for before. In general, they seem to enjoy spending their free time with their families.

### Retirement Plans

One of the main things I wanted to find out from these interviews was how these managers, and their companies, were dealing with retirement and retirement planning. First I talked to them about what their companies were doing to help their employees plan for their retirement, and to plan for what the companies would do when some of their key people were approaching retirement age. Next I asked them what plans they themselves had made for their own retirement, and when they thought they would retire

from their companies.

I was surprised by what they told me. I had expected a few to have had some thoughts about retirement - some of them were into their fifties. But what I wasn't expecting was that seven of the 16 U.S. managers are considering taking early retirement from their companies! Of these, four are thinking of some type of joint retirement project with their wives, such as operating a small business together, or going on a "peace corps type" assignment overseas. Besides these, three others have started to give some thought to their retirement at the regular age for their companies, even though that is twenty years in the future. For the non-U.S. companies, only one had early retirement plans (which also included his wife).

In trying to analyze and explain this unexpected result, several possible causes presented themselves from the comments the interviewees made. One has to do with the companies they work for. In three of the seven cases of early retirement planning, it is my opinion that a career or advancement blockage is a major factor. By this I mean that the man does not see any real opportunity for advancement in his company, and turns to early retirement and a second career as an alternative. An example of this could be a company with few upper-level positions, which are all occupied by relatively young people, so that no vacancies or new positions to permit advancement can be anticipated for several years. A second explanation would be that there is no further room for advancement within the technical field or functional area that the person is in, so that

advancement would only be possible by going into general management. This relates to the career anchor concept, in that people who have a technical/functional anchor would tend to resist being put into a strictly managerial position. It appears that five of the seven who are planning early retirement are doing so in part for that reason.

Another factor that I think contributes to early retirement plans is the degree to which his family is important to the person. In six of the seven it was clear that they spent a large part of their non-work time with their families, and wanted this to increase, not decrease. They had often had to give up time with their families early in their careers to further their advancement. They saw that at the higher levels of their companies, family time was often reduced by travel and work demands. They seemed less willing to sacrifice their family involvement to work success than they formerly were.

In particular, they seemed to be interested in establishing a stronger relationship with their wives than they had had earlier. The four who plan joint projects with their wives seemed to want to make up for earlier years when they weren't as closely involved in mutual activities. They seemed to feel that their wives had given up their earlier work or personal ambitions in favor of their husband's career and family needs, and that they could regain lost opportunities through joint retirement ventures.

It is interesting to note that the one case of a dual career family in the sample did not follow this pattern. Although the man is highly tech-

nically oriented, and very intent on his own career, he is not planning for retirement to any extent, and seems to be interested in a long working life. He is family oriented in his non-work time, and seems to have more overlap than most of the others between his work and family lives. He did discuss career alternatives, but they were all centered around his field of work, even though in different organizational settings. He and his wife share common interests, but they are both pursuing their own careers separately.

To sum up on this area then, it seems to me that this strong interest in early retirement, and in retirement in general, represents a significant change in attitude in today's managers and professionals. In particular, I think it shows that family interests and the demands of high-level general management positions are acting as a deterrant to continued emphasis on the work life, and as an incentive to find other alternatives to the corporate ladder as a pathway to satisfaction. In particular, for those who are technically oriented, it indicates a hesitancy to leave the present specialty, and an unwillingness to plateau out in the organization until the normal retirement age.

For employers, I think that this represents a challenge. The people who are thinking of leaving early are a valuable resource to the organization. They have a lot of investment in these employees, and the benefits that could be gained by fuller use of their knowledge and experience are considerable. It would be a profitable undertaking to find ways to keep these senior level people interested in their work and the organization,

and to keep them happy in their careers. Such strategies as reduced work hours, sabbaticals, promotion within a speciality instead of into management, phased retirement, and flexible working conditions could provide another alternative to early retirement for many. More important, though, would be a greater awareness of the changing social attitudes toward work, and the personal changes that take place in the adult development process, and the effects that they can have on the values of the individual.



**Chapter III**

**The Companies**

## Retirement Planning

Besides talking to the Senior Executives about their own retirement plans, I wanted to find out what their companies' personnel policies concerning retirement were, and what actions they were taking in helping their employees plan for and make a successful transition to their retirements. The last three questions in the survey were in this area. I asked whether the companies were helping their employees plan for their retirement by offering financial or psychological/social counseling assistance. Eight of the U.S. companies, and three of the non-U.S. firms had some form of financial planning aid that they gave to employees nearing retirement age. This varied from routine distribution of information and brief interviews shortly prior to the retirement date, to yearly training courses in estate and retirement planning for all professional and managerial personnel. Three U.S. and one non-U.S. company had, in addition to financial planning help, some type of personal counseling to help the employee decide what to do after retirement, and to aid in making the transition. In the one foreign company, this was done by the company's resident psychologist. In five U.S. companies, no formal program of retirement planning assistance was offered to employees.

The next question in the survey was about phased or trial retirement. Phased retirement is the gradual reduction, over a period of several months to a couple of years, of the level of responsibility of the retiree. Trial retirement is retirement with an option to return to work if the retiree changes his mind after a few months. Only one said that

his company does that often, and eight never do. In the non-U.S. companies, only one uses this method of retirement transition. The one organization that does this often is phasing people into retirement by reducing responsibility, rather than offering trial retirement.

The reduction of work hours prior to retirement is done often by only one organization, a non-U.S. company. This is done by granting an extra six months of paid leave in the last five years of work, to be used at the employee's discretion. Eight U.S. and two foreign companies do not use this policy at all.

The overall conclusion I came to, based on this survey and the interview comments, is that companies are not very active in retirement planning, and do not devote much of their resources to insuring that the organization and the employees come through this transition as well as possible. From the personal side, people are not encouraged very much to share their plans or thoughts about retirement with their organization, or helped to face the different way of life that it brings. On the other hand, companies do not seem to be aware until very late of the need to replace some key employee who decides to retire early. Neither the company nor the employee benefit from keeping retirement plans under the surface. A more open approach to this final phase of work life would seem to benefit everyone.

## Career Development Training

Question twelve of the questionnaire asked about the use of career development training in the organizations being surveyed. The response to this question was strongly positive. Only one company, an aerospace company, was said to have no career development training policy. That response is questionable because the company sent that manager to the Senior Executive program, which itself is a form of such training. However, that person did say that the company does not invest much in the development of its employees, which is the important factor.

The other responses were more positive, with fourteen "oftens" and five "seldoms". It seems clear that companies take an active part in helping their employees develop in their careers. Two types of career development training were mentioned during the interviews as being used in the companies. One is the type that helps the manager or potential manager develop his skills in decision-making and analysis, and also his interpersonal skills. This training is aimed at helping managers manage better, and is not technique oriented as much as it is people oriented. Some of the courses that were mentioned are in Management by Objectives and the Theory Y approach to supervision.

A second kind of career development training that people talked about was that which was technically-oriented, and meant to teach a new skill, or upgrade an old one. For technical people, whose careers relate closely with their work, this skill training is as important to their career development as Theory Y is to a manager. For management-oriented people,

the career is seen in terms of organizational advancement and growth in responsibility whereas for technically-oriented people, career development is seen more in terms of greater proficiency and recognition in the work itself. Both kinds of careers, and career development, are important to the organization.

In some companies, there is a formal system of development that includes the planning for replacement of key people as they move up or out, the recognition of those people who are potential candidates for these jobs, and the development of the existing and potential key people through training and work experience. Three of the companies surveyed have some such formal system, and others have more informal ones that include all or part of these functions. It was pointed out by one man that the practice of promotion from within to managerial positions makes such training and development programs even more important.

#### Family Considerations and Transfers

One of the questions on the personnel policies form (#16), asked about the extent to which companies take an employee's family situation into account when they want to transfer and relocate him, or send him on an extended trip. It had been my impression, partly from talking with some of the Sloan Fellows, that companies moved their more promising employees around a lot to broaden their experience, and that it was expected that they would not object to a move.

The twenty men I talked to said that this expectation of willingness to move was not the case in their companies. Eighteen of the twenty claimed that the families of employees are given extra consideration when a transfer is made, with the intention of keeping the families happy, and providing a good home environment for the employees. These include such measures as real estate assistance, including buying the old house and helping to find a new one, complete moving service for household goods, an allowance for redecorating the new house, company paid house hunting trips, and delayed moves to allow the children to complete the school year. One company insists that its employees who move ahead of their families fly home on weekends to be with them, and most companies allow frequent trips home at company expense.

On the right to refuse, without fear of reprisal or effect on future opportunities, to transfer to a new job because of family considerations, five companies (three from the U.S.) have a policy permitting refusals of transfers. This policy seems to be especially common in non-U.S. companies in their assignment of people to foreign locations for an extended time. In one U.S. organization, the employee is permitted to delay for a year at a time a scheduled transfer to a new duty post by going through a hearing and appeals procedure. When the reason for requesting the delay no longer exists, then the employee is put at the top of the transfer list.

There was also some discussion of the policies regarding business travel. In some cases, although there was no formal policy, it was possible for

the employee to negotiate with his supervisor about his travel for the company, and reduce it if family demands made that desirable. In one case, a special telephone and terminal arrangement was installed to permit conference calls and the transfer of written material between busy locations to cut down on the heavy travel that had taken place before.

In general, there seems to be a better level of awareness and understanding of the effects of transfers and travel on employees and their families. Some companies are taking creative actions to reduce the conflict between work and family demands on the employee, and to facilitate the development of good company-family relations.

### Career Mothers

One of the areas that I was interested in finding out about through the personnel policy questionnaire was the extent to which companies are doing things to make it more possible for women with families to carry on with their careers. I distinguish in this study between jobs and careers for women in the same way that the differences between a job and a career for men are usually thought of. Not only is the type of work important for this distinction, but also the extent to which the work involves a continuing commitment, and is more important to the person and his identity than a source of financial support alone. For example, a person might have a job as a bookkeeper, but get his real satisfaction from playing in an orchestra, and only work for the income to support his music.

Women who work, whether in careers or not, usually also retain the primary responsibility for child care and homemaking. Although there are signs that this dual responsibility is becoming less the rule than it once was, it is usually the woman who fits her career around the demands of the family. It is therefore more important for women than for men that employers adopt more flexible policies about hours and location of work.

To evaluate the extent to which the companies in this survey support "career mothers", I looked at the data from questions 1, 2, 4, 14, 18, and 20 of the questionnaire. The first three questions have to do with the hours of employment and the extent to which they can be tailored to the requirements of children and home responsibilities. The data for flexible and variable hours suggest that considerable latitude does exist. However, several of those who said that they often used these work schedules spoke of them as being customary, rather than official policies, or as informal matters to be worked out between employee and supervisor. Because of this I did not conclude that they were intended to facilitate women working, or that they had that effect to any great extent.

A more meaningful policy of work scheduling for this purpose than flexible hours is reduced work hours. By this I mean the deliberate scheduling of work for less than forty hours per week, or whatever the full-time week is in the organization. For example, a 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. schedule would minimize the time that school-age children would be unattended or in day care. Only one of sixteen companies "often" use this policy and eight "never" do. From the comments that some of the men made when this



question was discussed, it appears that this is a practice that is sometimes used for women in clerical or production jobs, but not often in professional and managerial career positions. In one company in the survey, a special "housewives shift" was set up in the production facilities to take advantage of the availability of women during the middle of the day, and during the evenings, but this was not applied outside those jobs.

An alternate policy to flexible scheduling of time would be flexible scheduling of the place of work. For example, in some types of career work much of it could be done in the home, without a required daily appearance at the office. Question fourteen was an attempt to find out to what extent that strategy is being adopted. Five of the sixteen companies surveyed are using it often, and six never do. Those organizations that do are primarily those that employ scientific or technical professionals, many of whom work largely under their own direction, and who do not require extensive contacts with others in the organization to do their work. Women in those professions would probably find such work scheduling practices easier to find than those whose work is more interpersonal.

Another indicator of support for career women with families might be the extent to which companies jointly recruit for husbands and wives in dual career families. Only one of the sixteen U.S. companies surveyed use this practice often, and six others do not do it at all. However, since dual career families are still more the exception than the rule, I don't think that these statistics are lower than would be expected.

Among the non-U.S. companies, two of the four are doing some joint recruiting, and one of these said that the number of instances is rising. That company asks that the couple itself decide which one of them will have the primary career, and the company tries to optimize that career and accommodate to the other.

Question twenty deals with family benefits, and I specifically oriented it in my explanation toward the support of career mothers. Four of the 16 U.S. companies, and 3 of the non-U.S. firms, said that they do provide some family benefits. However, in three of these seven, the main emphasis seemed to be in the medical care of family members, or in providing a company-paid social worker for family counseling. The provision of day care facilities is very rare, and is oriented more to women in the clerical and production jobs, rather than toward career women.

My overall conclusion, based on the data from this survey, is that there is still little company support for the mother who wants to pursue a professional or managerial career. There seems to be growing recognition that this area needs more action, but that hasn't yet led to significant changes in the actual personnel policies in use, or in the real working conditions in industry.

### Foreign Assignments

An interesting fact came up in my interviews with the four men from non-U.S. companies. In discussing their careers with their companies,

they all said that they had worked in foreign assignments at company facilities in countries other than their "home" countries. One man felt that the underdeveloped countries were the areas that had the largest potential for expansion for his firm. But the practice of sending technical and managerial personnel from the parent company to other countries was also causing one of their biggest potential personnel problems.

It is usually the practice in these companies to send people on foreign assignments for a fixed term, ranging from about three to eight years in length. At the end of the assignment, the person is either brought back to the parent organization again, or is sent to another foreign assignment. I should make it clear that these assignments are made with the willing consent of the person and his family. I was told that people are free to turn down assignments without penalty or future prejudice. The company seems to be generous in making sure that the person and the family are satisfied, with special educational allowances, higher pay rates, better benefits, and home leave at company expense being some of the things that are done to compensate for the dislocation and different living conditions.

The problem arises with the return to the parent company and the home country. Often the person comes back without any position to go into, and is put into a "pool" until an opening develops or is created. During his absence, he may have become out of touch with the company, and the changes that have taken place there. Likewise, the person may have changed, and the company may not realize that he has, or in what way.

For technical people, the changes in their field may have passed them by, without their keeping up, and they may be less valuable than a newer employee. Managers may have lost track of the company political situation, and be less effective in their inter-personal dealings than they were. Finally, the autonomy that a person enjoyed in a distant location may be much more than he will have in the headquarters of the company.

For the family, a similar transition takes place. The social conditions in their home country may have changed noticeably in their absence. They may have to adjust their living standard down somewhat. Their friends may not be as close, or may have moved, and their friends from overseas may not have come back at the same time. The children will have to readjust to their old schools and friends.

The four men I talked to said that this is a serious problem at this time, and will be worse in the future. They said that it is getting harder to recruit people to go overseas, and especially to the less developed countries. The companies are aware of this problem, but haven't found ways to combat it effectively.

This is an interesting problem in itself, but I thought it was worth commenting on for another reason as well. It seems to me that non-U.S. companies have been international in their outlook, and in their operations, for a longer time than most U.S. companies. But now there is a growing trend for American firms to look overseas for markets and manufacturing locations, in addition to their sources of raw materials. I think that this internationalization of U.S. business will bring about

the same situations that the non-U.S. companies are facing. It would be well to be forearmed with the knowledge of this readjustment syndrome, and to make plans to minimize its effects, before going further into foreign assignments of American technicians and managers.

**Chapter IV**

**Conclusions**

## Conclusions

After talking to these twenty managers, and thinking about what they said about themselves and their companies, I have come to some conclusions that I would like to summarize briefly.

### Retirement

One of the areas I was most interested in finding out about was the retirement planning they and their companies were doing. I found that most companies do little more than explain the financial aspects of their retirement plans to their people. They seem to have little interest in, or awareness of, the human or organizational implications of leaving the company. This is especially critical, since 40% of the men I interviewed plan to take early retirement. These managers have a strong level of interest in their own personal retirement plans, but these do not seem to be communicated to their companies, and their companies seem to be assuming that they plan to continue until the regular age for retirement. That is a wide communications gap, which may be detrimental to both company and employee.

The people in this survey who talked about leaving their companies early are, as Beckhard has said<sup>5</sup>, the people who have done very well thus far in their careers, and who seem to have continuing potential for advancement. They are certainly not people who have nothing to look forward to in their organizations. However, what they see ahead of them doesn't seem to have the same appeal that it once had. They now are more

attracted by the pull of their families and their other non-work involvements, and less inclined to seek their fulfillment in their work and organizational careers.

### Personal Development

In some of the studies of adult life cycles, considerable emphasis is placed on the importance that personal interests play in the lives of men in their forties<sup>6</sup>, and in their decisions to retire or change careers<sup>7,8</sup>. Although there was some evidence of an awakening of interest in personal activities, not involving either the family or the career field, it was not as strong as I had expected to find. While some of the men did say that they had recently developed new hobbies or outside involvements, or had picked up old ones that had lain dormant for years, there was far more expressed interest in family and spouse relationships and activities. Even among those who planned to leave their companies early, the majority talked of this as an opportunity to establish a new relationship with their wives and children.

The only explanation I can offer for this difference is that these men have been intensely work oriented, and have had to forego their family relationships earlier in their careers. I think their need to make up for those missed family experiences is a stronger influence on them than their missed personal development opportunities. I would expect this aspect of their lives to become more dominant later, when the family ties have been strengthened.



## Work and Family

Families are still expected to accommodate to the needs of companies and ambitious managers. That is the conclusion that I arrived at after talking to these twenty successful managers, and asking about their companies' policies about family considerations and transfers. The typical view of the situation<sup>9,10</sup> is confirmed by the tributes by these men to the wives who supported them in their careers by shouldering the family responsibilities, and moving as the promotional opportunities arose. There was some indication that companies, and managers, are becoming more willing to consider the human costs involved, but in most cases the needs of the company and the career clearly came first.

I believe that this has played a significant part in the decisions of some of these men to retire early. The conflict between the career and the family needs was becoming too great. Since no alternative within the organization, other than stagnation, seemed to be available to them, they chose an alternative outside their work and careers. I think that this represents one of the greatest challenges to employers today: to provide another alternative to leaving altogether, that will be an acceptable way to harmonize these conflicting forces.

## Career Women

While this was not a primary area of study for this project, I did get some information from the survey and the interviews about women in careers, and I did come to one conclusion. While there is an increase

in the number of women working in career positions, and there is some movement by employers to facilitate their entry into the organizations, it has not led to significant changes in the personnel policies that most directly affect working women, especially those with families. Until greater flexibility is built into company personnel policies, women will be at a disadvantage in seeking to enter and continue in meaningful careers.

Coincidentally, many of the policies that would be an aid to women, such as flexible work conditions, would also be helpful to men who want to reduce the work component of their lives in favor of family or personal interests<sup>5</sup>. This is another case in which measures that would benefit women would also benefit men.

### Further Study

As I have worked on this project, some other related areas of study have suggested themselves to me. I would like to briefly set them out for anyone who might be interested in pursuing them.

One idea that I think would have been interesting, but hard to arrange, is to interview the wives of the men I talked to as well. I would like to have had their views of their husbands' careers and organizations, and what they had had to give up in their own lives to support their husbands. Also, I would have liked to talk to the wives about their retirement plans - that is, what they wanted to do with their lives after their children left home.

A second topic that I wish I could have gotten into was the area of personal development. I was unable to find out enough, partly because of time limits, about what relationship existed between the early retirement plans and personal development. I didn't find out enough to decide in each case whether these men wanted retirement or a second career. I had a feeling that some of them would be as actively involved in their "retirement" projects as they ever were in their first careers.

And finally, I believe that more study needs to be done on the alternatives to leaving the company at early retirement age. I would like to find out what other alternatives would have been acceptable, and what the companies would have been willing to consider. Some of the possible alternatives would probably have been psychologically or socially unacceptable (eg. demotion and reduced hours), which is an organizational-cultural problem that needs to be faced. But I think that this is an area that could fruitfully be addressed in a future thesis.

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## Appendix A - Interviewing Methods

I interviewed each of the twenty men in the group for about one hour to an hour and a half, either at their lunch break or in the evening after classes. In both cases, I tried to create an informal, relaxed atmosphere that would facilitate open discussion. I arranged for a separate place to talk, away from the rest of the group, with as little distraction as was possible under the circumstances. I think in general that the physical arrangements were conducive to successful interviews.

I had developed an outline from which to ask questions, and to help structure the interviews uniformly. A copy of this outline is shown in Appendix B. I also used a questionnaire form, Appendix C, to gather the data on personnel policy changes. I began each interview by restating the purpose of the interview, and then introduced the questionnaire. I explained what kind of information I was looking for in the personnel policy area, and helped him define the group or part of the company to which the answers would apply. Then I asked him to go down the list, checking the appropriate boxes. If there were questions about the terms used I gave examples to clarify the meaning of specific policies. I also asked each person to add any items he could think of that weren't already on the list.

After the form had been completed, I usually asked for examples of the actions that the company would take in implementing some of the policies which had been identified, and otherwise tried to make sure I understood his responses. I especially asked questions about the transfer policies

(Item 16) and the retirement planning activities (Item 21). This usually took another five to ten minutes. Often during this discussion the conversation started to shift toward the person's own job, making the transition to the next phase of the interview easier.

The second part of the interview centered on the man and his job at the present, and on his career development. I first tried to get a clear understanding of his position in the company, the type of work he did, and the reporting relationships between him, his superiors, and his subordinates. I then asked him questions about his likes and dislikes about his position to try to understand his personal, rather than organizational, relationships to the job and to the people with whom he worked. From this information, I hoped to be able to identify for each person his career anchors.

The next few questions had to do with the person's goals and his career development. I tried to ask these questions in as neutral a way as possible, and with as little implied structure as I could, so that he would feel free to answer with as little question-induced bias as possible. I feel I was largely successful, based on the variety of responses that I got. Some were quite structured, revealing some previous self-analysis in this area, while others were more free-form, implying a lack of recent goal setting and evaluation.

The last part of the interview focused on the family structure, and the relationship between work, family, and personal development. To introduce this subject, I tried to lead in from the second part as an oppor-

tunity came up, and began by asking non-intrusive, informational questions -- length of the marriage, the number and ages of the children, and personal interests and hobbies. This approach was usually successful in entering a subject area that created some apprehension, without losing the openness that had been developed in the first two parts of the interview.

I then asked each person whether his wife worked, or had worked before, and about the role she had played in his career. I asked for an estimate of his typical work week in hours, and about the amount of time that he spent in travel away from his family. By looking at the responses to these questions, I hoped to evaluate the degree of integration or segmentation that existed between his work life and family life.

Toward the end of the interview, I usually brought up the subject of retirement, and the life cycle concepts that had been introduced in class by Edgar Schein. I was interested in finding out how much they were thinking about their retirement, when they planned to retire, and how they planned to live then. I also wanted to find out if they had done any introspective thinking about themselves and their adult development, and the impact that their careers and family lives had had on that process. The responses to these two sets of questions varied from quite open and thoughtful, to closed and denying.

At the end of the formal interview, I made it a point to close up my notes, put my pen down, and just talk for a few minutes. This often had the effect of relaxing the interviewee and leading to some of the most

informative comments of the whole interview. At this point many seemed to feel more free to be themselves, and say what they really wanted to say "off the record".

To record the information from the interview, I used two media. During the talk, I made short written notes on the outline itself, in the form of words or phrases that would jog my memory later. When the interview was over, I would go at once to a private room where I would expand on the notes and then tape record a spoken narrative summary of the whole interview, based on my notes. This gave me not only the short version in writing, but an expanded version on tape, which I could refer to later during the analysis phase of the project. This dual mode of information storage had real advantages over using either mode alone, and is preferable to taping the whole interview for at least two reasons. First, tape recorders make people more reticent about what they say; secondly, tapes of whole interviews would have been too time consuming to work with in the analysis phase, and costly to have transcribed. I recommend the dual mode method for anyone doing this type of interviewing. Another idea that I found very helpful was to try, as nearly as possible, to capture the exact words that the man used in the interview. In making notes, and later in the typing, I tried to say what he said as nearly in the way he said it as I could. I also tried to keep out my own interpretive or evaluative comments during the recording of the information, making it as nearly a "transcript" as I could. At the end, I usually added a strictly interpretive summary in my own words, in which I tried to sum up what I thought was important about the interview. I feel that



this clear separation of data gathering from interpretation is very important. Otherwise, when going back later to analyze the information, you run a risk of being confused about what were things the person actually said, and what were your interpretations of their comments.

## Appendix B

### Career Development

1. Describe present job
2. Management responsibility
3. Like most
4. Like least
5. Goals 10 years ago
6. Present career satisfaction
7. Goals 10 years ahead
8. Room to advance
9. Concerns about career

## **Non-Work Life**

1. **Family Structure**
  - years married**
  - kids ages**
2. **Other interests**
3. **Interests changing?**
4. **Career wife**
5. **Role in your career**
6. **Integration/segmentation**
7. **Time spent on work/family/personal**
8. **changes**

Appendix C

Name \_\_\_\_\_

III Personnel Policies for Professional and Managerial Employees

POLICY	FREQUENCY OF USE			
	Often	Seldom	Never	Don't Know
1. <u>Flexible work hours</u>				
2. <u>Reduced work hours</u>				
3. <u>Four day week</u>				
4. <u>Variable work hours</u>				
5. <u>Sabbaticals</u>				
6. <u>Lateral transfer for development</u>				
7. <u>Alternate career paths for mgt/tech</u>				
8. <u>Promotion within speciality</u>				
9. <u>Job rotation</u>				
10. <u>Inhouse training</u>				
11. <u>Career change counseling</u>				
12. <u>Career development training</u>				
13. <u>Flexible pay schedule</u>				
14. <u>Flexible work conditions</u>				
15. <u>Flexible benefit packages</u>				
16. <u>Family consideration in transfers, trips, etc.</u>				
17. <u>Job sharing</u>				
18. <u>Joint husband/wife recruiting</u>				
19. <u>Leave for personal reasons</u>				
20. <u>Family benefits (day care, etc.)</u>				
21. <u>Retirement planning</u>				
22. <u>Phased/trial retirement</u>				
23. <u>Reduced hours before retirement</u>				
Other: _____				

Appendix D

Name U S Companies

**III Personnel Policies for Professional and Managerial Employees**

POLICY	FREQUENCY OF USE			
	Often	Seldom	Never	Don't Know
1. Flexible work hours	5	5	6	0
2. Reduced work hours	1	7	8	0
3. Four day week	0	1	15	0
4. Variable work hours	3	8	5	0
5. Sabbaticals	0	3	12	1
6. Lateral transfer for development	8	5	3	0
7. Alternate career paths for mgt/tech	4	9	2	0
8. Promotion within specialty	12	3	1	0
9. Job rotation	7	6	3	0
10. Inhouse training	14	1	1	0
11. Career change counseling	4	10	2	0
12. Career development training	11	4	1	0
13. Flexible pay schedule	10	0	5	0
14. Flexible work conditions	5	5	6	0
15. Flexible benefit packages	2	7	7	0
16. Family consideration in transfers, trips, etc.	14	2	0	0
17. Job sharing	1	2	13	0
18. Joint husband/wife recruiting	1	6	9	0
19. Leave for personal reasons	8	7	1	0
20. Family benefits (day care, etc.)	3	1	10	2
21. Retirement planning	9	2	5	0
22. Phased/trial retirement	1	7	8	0
23. Reduced hours before retirement	0	8	8	0
Other: Psychiatric evaluation service	0	1	0	0
husband/wife co-relocation	0	1	0	0
Leave for education, govt. service	0	1	0	0
Re-employment of retirees	0	1	0	0
Pre-promotion training	1	0	0	0

## III Personnel Policies for Professional and Managerial Employees

POLICY	FREQUENCY OF USE			
	Often	Seldom	Never	Don't Know
1. Flexible work hours	2	0	2	0
2. Reduced work hours	1	0	2	1
3. Four day week	0	0	4	0
4. Variable work hours	1	0	3	0
5. Sabbaticals	0	0	4	0
6. Lateral transfer for development	3	0	1	0
7. Alternate career paths for mgt/tech	2	2	0	0
8. Promotion within speciality	2	1	1	0
9. Job rotation	3	1	0	0
10. Inhouse training	3	1	0	0
11. Career change counseling	1	2	0	1
12. Career development training	3	1	0	0
13. Flexible pay schedule	3	1	0	0
14. Flexible work conditions	0	2	2	0
15. Flexible benefit packages	1	0	3	0
16. Family consideration in transfers, trips, etc.	4	0	0	0
17. Job sharing	0	0	3	1
18. Joint husband/wife recruiting	0	2	1	1
19. Leave for personal reasons	3	0	0	1
20. Family benefits (day care, etc.)	2	1	1	0
21. Retirement planning	4	0	0	0
22. Phased/trial retirement	0	1	1	2
23. Reduced hours before retirement	1	1	2	0
Other: Post-recruitment interview	1	0	0	0
Family health care	1	0	0	0
Resident psychologist	1	0	0	0
Post-retirement employment	1	0	0	0
Pre-retirement leave	1	0	0	0

Appendix E - Family Data

U. S. Companies

<u>Age</u>	<u>Yrs. Married</u>	<u>Age at Marriage</u>	<u>Oldest Child</u>	<u>No. Children</u>
38	16	22	15	4
40	20	20	19	5
41	15	26	9	3
42	20	22	16	2
42	16	26	15	2
43	21	22	20	4
44	22	22	21	3
44	24	20	16	1
45	12	33	11	2
46	22	24	19	4
46	24	22	22	11
46	22	24	17	5
47	27	20	26	5
47	16	31	14	2
49	24	25	20	2
51	26	25	24	3
<b>Ave.</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>17.8</b>

Non-U.S. Companies

42	17	25	16	2
49	21	28	5	1
50	16	34	15	2
51	21	30	20	4
<b>Ave.</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>14.0</b>