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Flexible Working Schedules
in High Commitment Organizations:
A Challenge to the Emotional Norms?

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Amy Andrews

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MASSACHUSETTS
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
50 MEMORIAL DRIVE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

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In every organization, certain basic beliefs, values, and assumptions permeate decision-making. Such norms originate in the cultural environment in which the organization is embedded, and are introduced into the organization by its leaders and members. Over time, as such values are tested and validated through shared experiences, they become lodged in the organizational memory. New members are attracted to the organization in part because of "what it stands for", because they feel a "fit" between their own personal values and beliefs and the attitudinal norms they find expressed by organizational members. In organizations that are loosely structured, such norms provide a type of continuity and stability. They guide the definition of objectives, short and long-term.

These basic assumptions about human behavior, which organizational members share to some degree, do not always lie on the surface of organizational life. By their very nature, they are "assumed", unquestioned, taken for granted. They are difficult to identify, question, or debate. Attitudinal norms do their work silently and invisibly.

In this paper, I use case study material to look at the ways in which this dimension of organizational life shapes and informs thinking on one of the key policy issues of the 1990's -- the organizational response to working parents. Drawing on the words and insights of a number of professional men and women, I explore the underlying assumptions about work and professionalism that guide the decision-making of managers and employees as they attempt to negotiate the terms of flexible working arrangements. The argument is that these basic beliefs translate into attitudinal norms that members of the organization share, and that the negotiation of flexible working arrangements can amount to a direct challenge of these norms. In particular, I will examine the attitudinal norm that work can and does make legitimate claims on a professional employee's time, and that such claims rightly take precedence over other commitments.

I. INTRODUCTION

As women and mothers enter the labor force at increasing rates, the profile of the workforce is changing. Organizations that developed elaborate human resource systems -- development systems, benefit plans, evaluation and promotion processes -- around the workforce of the last generation are now finding it necessary to re-evaluate these systems in light of the demographic changes taking place in the current work force. The factors that are motivating the re-evaluation may differ slightly from one organization to the next. Some human resources policy-makers concerned with recruiting and retaining workers are increasingly confronting the need to provide support to their female employees during their child-bearing years. In other organizations, concerns about gender equity and the paucity of women in the executive ranks drive policy-makers to look for ways to retain their professional employees through these critical years. Whatever the reason, debate and discussion about appropriate policies and programs to support employees with children is taking place in an increasing number of organizations.

There are a two basic ways that companies can and do make accommodations

to support employees with families. Bailyn (1990) distinguishes between services that make it easier for employees to delegate family responsibilities and dedicate their time to work, and flexibility in location and time of work that enable employees to attend themselves to family needs. Services would include on-site child care facilities, benefits that subsidize child care expenses, and information and referral services for employees with children, to name a few examples. Flexibility arrangements include flextime, flexplace, part-time employment, job-sharing, and family leave policies (Bailyn, p. 5). In this case study, I am primarily concerned with the various arrangements for providing employees with the flexibility they need to personally attend to family responsibilities. The organization in which the interviews were conducted, Standard Products, is one that has been repeatedly described as being at the forefront of innovations in human resource policies generally, and the provision of family-supportive services specifically. My primary interest will be less on the services Standard Enterprises makes available to its employees and more on the ways in which flexible working arrangements for employees with children are negotiated.

A continuous theme in much of the literature on work and family is that the ideological views of organizational leaders is a powerful factor in determining if and how an organization will respond to these issues. Auerbach (1988) surveyed a number of companies and found that factors such as labor supply, cost, liability, and so on, were important in shaping the organizational response to work and family issues. However, she concluded that ideological views, which permeate society generally and organizational life specifically, are extremely powerful inhibitors of a more sweeping move toward accommodative workplaces.

This case study was designed to explore some of these more contextual,

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grey, and blurry issues. Accepting the point that decisions around work and family issues are loaded with philosophical, political, and ideological implications, I wanted to explore the mechanisms through which such factors are translated into the so-called 'objective' or 'rational' decision-making processes of organizational life.[1]

The interest in the more subtle and contextual aspects of organizational life and their influence on the diffusion of flexible working arrangements is driven largely by the fact that the most extensive and dramatic changes in the organization are taking place in informal ways. As one of the women interviewed said:

A: "These types of different schedules are very dependent upon the person."
Q: "Dependent on you, or your boss, or the two of you together?"
A: "Both."

Nearly every employee interviewed spoke of this phenomenon. Another respondent said, "The thing is, [employees who work flexible schedules] worked it out only with their bosses. There was no company policy. There was no sort of corporate 'top-down' support for really helping people work this out." A third respondent echoed these feelings:

> People are adapting -- that's what the word is. People are adapting to this in all kinds of strange ways. And so it's happening. It's just that it's not happening in a conscious, 'we understand what's happening' way, and 'we're doing something about it' type of way... You know, there just is no comprehension of, at the very high level, of the balance that is happening lower down in middle management, which is where I think it's -- really all this is being worked out.

The organizational policy with respect to flexible working arrangements is for individuals to work it out on a case by case basis. In the absence of rigid and well-defined rules for making these decisions and crafting these arrangements, individuals are forced to articulate alternative reasons and justifications for the observed differences in the arrangements employees receive. In other words, the policy of decentralized decision-making without centralized guidelines creates a window through which ideological assumptions about work and

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professionalism may be seen. In this organization, anyway, the ideology and value system in the firm appears to be the only constant that informs decision-making across cases.

The starting point for the study was that individual decisions are shaped by the social and organizational context in which they are made, and that, conversely, organizational responses are molded by the individuals who are members of the organization. Scholarly acknowledgement of the dynamic relationships between individual decision-making and the contextual environment are common; scholarly research that seeks to unearth the processes and dynamics of these complex webs of human experience are more rare.[2]

My approach is exploratory and inferential. I draw heavily on the words and perspectives of the individuals who are personally struggling with these issues, believing that a great deal of insight flows from their insights into their own experiences. At the same time, we consider the inconsistencies and puzzles in these stories to be rich soil for exploring some of the more subtle and contextual factors that shape the thinking of organizational professionals on work and family accommodation. Rather than looking only at the private lives of these men and women, or the professional/organizational context in which these stories took place, I searched for clues as to the ways in which the two spheres interact, shaping and re-shaping the decisions being made.

Looking at the interaction of the individual and the organizational pieces of these stories necessitates looking at the facts from two directions. First, I explore the ways in which the "personal" is important to understanding the way the organization works. One of the central themes to emerge from the data is that organizational structures and objectives are shaped and defined by the people and the relationships among the people. It is impossible to understand

the "organization" or the work that is done in the organization without understanding the critical role that individuals play in creating the organization and articulating its mission.

Looking from the other direction, I explore the ways in which the "organization" shapes and defines the personal and private lives of the individual employees. I focus in particular on the more amorphous yet pervasive aspects of organizational life -- the ways in which the basic values, beliefs and assumptions deeply embedded in the organizational culture can both support and constrain initiatives to make the workplace more accommodative to family needs.[3] The purpose is to highlight the links between the basic underlying assumptions of organizational culture and efforts to implement flexible working arrangements.[4]

II. METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the dynamic links between basic ideological assumptions about professional employees and work/family flexibility, a case study was built around the experiences and decisions of a group of individuals in a particular organizational context. Gail Hanson (see Table 1) began as the focal person of this study, and the original plan was to concentrate almost exclusively on understanding her experiences in Standard Enterprises and her reasons for resigning. However, as I interviewed the key individuals involved in the decision, namely Jill Myers and Patricia Clark, I became intrigued with their personal experiences in their own right. I discovered a great deal of 'natural variation' in the terms that women in this organization were and were not able to negotiate for flexible working arrangements. A summary of these arrangements appears in Table 1.

TABLE 1.
Outcomes from Five Negotiations Regarding
Workplace Flexibility at Standard Enterprises

Case Number and Year	Employee Involved	Manager(s) Involved	Outcome
1. 1987	Gail Hanson	Jill Myers Patricia Clark	Attempted to negotiate an arrangement whereby Gail would work 24 hours per week with prorated compensation and benefits. Negotiations broke down; Gail resigned.
2. 1987	Patricia Clark	George Cook*	Arranged to work at home one day per week, when feasible, while continuing to retain responsibility and compensation commensurate with a full-time job.
3. 1988-1990	Jill Myers	Frank Rhodes	Arranged to work at home 1990 one day per week, when feasible, while continuing to retain responsibility and compensation commensurate with a full-time job.
4. 1988	Kathy Smith	Jill Myers (Frank Rhodes)**	Attempted to negotiate an arrangement whereby Kathy would work in the office 7 hours per day, 5 days per week, and the remaining 5 hours at home. Kathy's request denied; instead, she had her compensation prorated to 35 hours per week.
5. 1990	Jill Myers	Frank Rhodes Patricia Clark)**	Currently working out the terms whereby Jill will work 24 hours per week in the office, 6 hours at home, while receiving compensation prorated to 30 hours per week.

* Indicates individual NOT interviewed for this study.
** Involved in discussions indirectly.

Seeking to understand the variation across these cases helped us clarify the role of ideology and basic values in shaping decisions about workplace flexibility.

In order to develop a more complete understanding of the personal context out of which these women were operating, I interviewed each of their husbands: Mark Schuler (Gail's husband), Karl Pohl (Jill's husband), and Tom Sanders (Patricia's husband). In semi-structured interviews, these men spoke about their views on work and family issues, and the ways they contributed to the effort to balance work and family. They also responded to questions about the issues men face as they contemplate scaling back their careers in order to attend to family responsibilities.[5]

To understand the organizational context more fully, I interviewed five other individuals who work at Standard Enterprises. Frank Rhodes, Jill's manager for approximately two years, spoke about the organizational culture at Standard Enterprises and the criteria he used for determining whether or not certain types of flexible arrangements were viable. Mary Morgan, a peer of Patricia's, spoke from the perspective of one of the first women to reach professional ranks at Standard Enterprises. Her remarks regarding the evolution of the Standard Enterprises environment and organizational responses to employee diversity were helpful for constructing a sense of the organizational backdrop. Renee Isaacs, one of the few female senior executives, shared particularly poignant stories regarding the trade-offs between work and family that successful employees in Standard Enterprises confront. Finally, I interviewed Saul and Ann Jenson, a husband and wife who each worked in a functional area separate from human resources, where Gail, Jill, Patricia, and Mary all worked. Ann had also worked under a flexible arrangement.

III. SOME STORIES[6]

A. Gail Hanson. Gail Hanson, a bright and well-spoken professional, graduated from an elite business school in 1983. Interested in both marketing and human resources, she took a position in the internal management consulting group of a rapidly growing, innovative, diversified conglomerate -- Standard Enterprises. She was drawn to Standard Enterprises for geographic and job-content reasons, but also recalls that the stated human resources philosophy of the company was an attractive to her. She saw it as a company that valued diversity, valued its employees, and actively sought ways to create an environment in which employees could perform at peak capacity.

Gail and her husband, Mark, had been together for ten years, married for five. They had patterned their lives together according to unconventional rules: Mark arranged his career around Gail's business school aspirations and relocated with her to the area where her first choice institution was located. He was content to work a standard work week of 40 hours, and was supportive of Gail's extremely ambitious career aspirations. They had always thought that Mark would be a primary care-taker for their children, and Gail would be the partner with the heavy career commitment. In Mark's words:

> For a long time we kind of pictured ourselves in the role that Gail is going to this hot business school, she's got an MBA, it's important for her to have a lot of job success. And I thought that was fine. She was making more money than me and I liked the role of 'OK, I'll do more stuff around the house, and you can go do crazy hours at work.'

Gail worked in the management consulting group at Standard Enterprises for two and a half years. She was a strong performer, and earned the respect and trust of her clients in the organization. Steve Katz, a high level executive in the marketing group, was particularly impressed with her talent, and brought her

into his group in early 1986. When he left the company only a few months later, he asked Patricia Clark, his colleague, to provide Gail with the mentoring and guidance she needed.

Gail worked in marketing for about a year, and devoted most of her time during this year administering an annual customer rebate program. But it was a difficult and unsettling year. First, both of the women with whom Gail was most closely associated, Patricia Clark and Jill Myers, were absent on maternity leave in the summer of 1986, leaving Gail with a somewhat vague set of reporting relationships in a new work group. Second, Gail herself became pregnant in the spring of the same year. In late November, she left on maternity leave, only a few months after Jill and Patricia had returned.

When she left, Gail expected to return to a full time position. Mark had enrolled in law school, taking classes at night while continuing to work full time during the days. However, as the time neared to return, she decided a part-time schedule made more sense. In the spring of 1988, the three women tried to work out an arrangement whereby Gail could administer the program she had run in 1987 on a part-time basis.

One might think these to be the best of all possible situations in which negotiations for a flexible work schedule could take place. The organization was one publicly committed to workplace diversity. Several other women at Standard Enterprises had arranged part-time work schedules with their managers. Gail had an excellent track record, with several letters of commendation in her personnel file from satisfied clients. She was negotiating with two women who had each recently given birth to their first children, and who were presumably sympathetic to the emotional and scheduling strains infants could introduce to the work/family equation. Finally, she had a husband who completely supported her

in her professional decisions.

The arrangement did not, however, ever come to fruition. While Jill and Patricia were able to identify a piece of work they estimated would take approximately 24 hours per week, negotiations over the more subtle terms of the working relationship broke down. In particular, they were unable to agree on the extent to which Gail would need to be 'flexible' and increase her time commitment if requested to do so by Jill and Patricia. Gail ended up resigning from the company, and Jill ended up hiring a new person to do the work she had hoped Gail would do. Three years later, when we interviewed Jill, Patricia and Gail, all three still appeared to harbor frustration and resentment about the incident. Patricia commented "It isn't the way I would've liked it to go. There was something underneath not right about it..." Jill recalls feeling Gail was an excellent candidate for the position, and was significantly inconvenienced when Gail turned it down.

> She had already done the job when I was gone. She was familiar and I didn't have to teach someone else, which took me a lot of time. So she had already done it and I was here again and I didn't want to do it. I ended up hiring someone and I ended up doing a lot of the work, but she was a perfect candidate for it.

All three commented that they were surprised they still felt so much emotion and anger around the memory.

B. Jill Myers. Jill is a highly respected manager, a working mother, and a partner in a dual career marriage. She holds a double-major in finance and marketing, along with a masters of business administration. She has had 8 years of work experience, with six of these years at Standard Enterprises. Her boss and her peers have extremely positive things to say about her technical and organizational abilities. They all seem to agree that Jill could "write her own ticket."

Jill's husband, Karl, is a facilities manager in the health care industry.

They met in the early 1980's when they were both in business school; they married in 1985. When Jill relocated to her first job after graduation, Karl moved with her and searched for a job in the nearby area. He is extremely supportive of his wife's career ambitions, and very proud of her accomplishments. Unlike more traditional men, he says, his ego is not threatened by Jill's job success. Karl said:

> She, very frankly, is probably more capable and will probably rise higher in the corporate world than I will. And I have no qualms about saying that because I know that she has great ability and she has great drive and I'm comfortable with that. You read a lot of articles about men not being able to deal with their wives who are making more money, or are being more successful. I'm probably one of the few who -- yeah, I'll admit to some tinges occasionally, but generally I'm pretty comfortable and want to encourage her to do the best that she can do.

At the same time, he is an outspoken individual with respect to work and family balance. For his part, he leaves work by 5 pm daily to pick up their two children at day care, and helps quite a bit around the house. One of the aspects of his current position that he values most highly is the proximity of his office to his home and the extent to which it allows him to spend time with his family. He has also encouraged Jill to consider scaling back her career involvement for a few years while their two children are young.

Jill's personal experiences with flexible work schedules can be thought of as falling into two separate and distinct phases. After their first child was born in the summer of 1987, Jill returned to work full-time following a three month maternity leave. Approximately 18 months later, however, she started working at home one day per week. In negotiations with her manager, Frank Rhodes, she worked out an arrangement whereby she continued to carry the responsibility and receive the salary of a full-time worker. The arrival of her second child in 1990 marked the beginning of a new phase for Jill. At this point, Jill started actively seeking a position in which she could work three days in the office, 30 hours per week. She accepted a reduced salary for this

arrangement. When I interviewed Jill and Frank, they were still searching for a place in the organization where she could contribute with this schedule. While it was not completely clear what type of work Jill would end up doing, a number of individuals were actively working to find or create a good situation for Jill.

Both Jill and Karl acknowledge Karl's influence in Jill's decision to scale back her career. For Jill, getting to the point where she could even imagine working part-time took a couple of years: "I mean, just even getting to that point, that was tough for me. I'd been thinking about it for years, with my husband, we'd been talking about it. He's a real proponent of 'quality of life'". Karl admits that he had a preference for Jill's scaling back with the first child, but that he was "more strident in suggesting that it was time to cut back" when the second child was born. He said, "And now she's happy that I -- I didn't -- I encouraged her. She makes the decisions about what she is going to do."

Jill has also participated in workplace flexibility discussions in her role as a manager. First, in discussions with Gail (above), Jill felt strongly about representing and protecting the organization's interests. Later, while she was personally working one day at home while receiving full compensation, Jill denied a request by Kathy Smith, one of her staff members, to work under the same arrangement. Jill did agree to allow Kathy to cut back to a 35 hour work week, but reduced her compensation accordingly. At the time I interviewed Jill, she was very much in transition. A very hard-hitting and driven worker, she was searching for ways to maintain her professional reputation and involvement in the organization while devoting more time to her family.

C. Patricia Clark. Patricia Clark is an articulate and dynamic human resources manager at Standard Enterprises. A graduate of one of the top business

schools in the country, Patricia has held three positions since leaving graduate school. She started out as one of the few women in a small management consulting firm. She then designed and implemented virtually all of the accounting systems for a small start-up company. When I interviewed her, she had worked at Standard Enterprises for approximately five years in marketing. She is a high-level staff professional with regular access to the senior executives and the Board of Directors of the firm. She has essentially created and expanded her position during her 5 year tenure with the firm. Her job requires both technical expertise and political savvy, skills her peers openly admire in her.

She says she has always found work to be an "all-consuming type of thing". She described an experience from early in her professional career through which she realized she had a talent for organizing massive projects, for "being able to see everything in all these different stages of development and helping them along." She is motivated by the challenge of solving problems.

Patricia's husband, Tom Sanders, is a quiet and committed computer software designer. Employed by a large university approximately one hour away from their home, Tom commutes daily by train, and tends to keep standard "9 to 5" hours. Patricia and Tom had their first child during the summer of 1986. When Patricia returned to work after three months of maternity leave, Tom's mother cared for their son full time. As Patricia says, "I was lucky." It was never a possibility that she would take time off from work, partly because her work was so important to her, and partly because she is the primary wage-earner in her family. Their home is 5 minutes from Patricia's office, enabling her to get home quickly if needed. Patricia began working at home one day per week (on average) when she returned to work in October after her son was born. She continued to receive compensation for a full-time position.

When Patricia speaks of work and family balance, she frequently invokes a 'manager's' voice: "I've learned to manage things more." Earlier in her career, she let work completely absorb her and take precedence over all other aspects of her life. While she still speaks as though work is a priority, she has also been developing strategies for increasing the quantity and quality of time she has to spend with her son and her husband. She said:

> I've now learned how to manage things more...I'm a lot firmer about my personal life than I was when I started. I used to let [the work] just totally absorb me, but now I don't do it.

Like Jill, Patricia Clark has also been on both the manager's and the mother's side of workplace flexibility discussions. Patricia started working at home one day per week shortly after her first child was born in 1987. She continued to carry the responsibility and command the salary of a full-time professional. However, she has represented the organization's interests in discussions with both Gail (1987) and, interestingly, with Jill (1990), and in both cases she was unable to bend enough to meet their needs for flexibility. In both cases, she found it difficult to <u>guarantee</u> the women that the work would not require more time in the office per week than they were prepared to spend.

What is going on in this organization? How is it that some women are able to work out flexible working arrangements with their managers, and others are not? Why do some continue to receive full pay when they claim to work at home, while others have their compensation reduced? How are we to understand what is, on the surface at least, the somewhat puzzling and paradoxical behavior of Jill Myers, denying the requests of fellow employees to work the same type of schedule that she works? What was different about the situations in which Gail and Kathy were involved when compared to the situations in which Jill and Patricia were involved? Why is there a sense that Jill's latest requests for increased

flexibility are less workable than her previous arrangements? Finally, to what extent is the organizational culture or environment which forms the backdrop for these discussions a factor influencing the outcomes?[7]

IV. THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The shared values, beliefs and assumptions of the company are topics on which all of the respondents shared fascinating and thoughtful insights. This description of the Standard Enterprises environment is based primarily on the comments and descriptions offered by the respondents in the interviews. In addition, as Standard Enterprises is quite similar to organizations that have been the subject of substantial inquiry with respect to organizational culture, this description of the basic underlying assumptions of Standard Enterprises is embellished with insights and observations from these studies.

Standard Enterprises is typical of the high-involvement, high-commitment organizations that emerged in the 1980's as model organizations.[8] Strikingly different from the hierarchical organization of earlier decades, Standard Enterprises is loosely organized. One manager, when asked to characterize the unique aspects of the environment, responded, "The ambiguity. The lack of structure. The lack of discipline." Reporting relationships are both complex and confusing. In more than one instance, individuals recounted times when they did not know exactly for whom they were working, or times when the official reporting relationships bore no resemblance to the actual reporting or responsibility structure. Organizational charts and reporting relationships are relatively meaningless, and relationships between individuals are central to defining the work, executing the work, and evaluating the work. Saul Jenson describes the environment as one of "institutionalized anarchy".

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Jobs are defined by the people in them. As one manager said, "This job is now 'me'. Right? It's not a job by itself. It would completely change with somebody else in it." Job descriptions go a certain distance in describing the functions and duties of a particular position, but the more subtle and powerful factors that shape the content and boundaries of a position can not be spelled out on paper. The manager continued:

> While I've got a job description right here for (a particular job) what I don't know yet is how to get this job, this work done. It will be defined by the person in the job. It will be defined by the expectation of the organisation. It will be defined by the politics. She will have to do whatever is required to get the job done.

The fact that jobs are defined by the job holder is in part a characteristic of professional work generally. "In a professional's position, you create most of your own work. It's not so much you're given a list of tasks. You gin it up yourself. You create the work." What is perhaps different in organizations such as Standard Enterprises, however, is the fact that other members of the organization can substantially influence the boundaries of the work in a particular job. The emphasis on consensus decision-making, while useful for increasing commitment to outcomes, means that the "work" that any particular individual may perform can be defined by needs and claims of a variety of individuals in the matrixed organization. In a more traditional organization, a single boss can assign work; in a pure professional role, the individual can create her own work. At Standard Enterprises, the work is a response to the demands of a variety of stakeholders at any given time. The boundaries are difficult to specify.

The key to getting results rests more with personal influence than with positional power. Whereas an edict from a senior manager will send everybody "saluting and marching in the same direction" in a more traditional organization, no such dynamic happens at Standard Enterprises. As Frank Rhodes said: "It's

all influential power. How do you work to get people to have confidence in you, to accept your view, and how do you influence them."

Performance evaluation is problematic in this type of organization. An official evaluation system and format does exist in the firm, but the way in which it is utilized differs across work groups. While the form may be standardized, the way in which actual behaviors and actions of a particular employee are observed, measured, and evaluated on the form is not. Some areas take the process more seriously than others. For example, Frank Rhodes had a very elaborate and extensive process for evaluating his professional employees, sending evaluation forms with specific areas for comment to the various clients that an employee in his group may serve. Pulling all of this information together and adding his own personal opinions, he fills out the standard form. Other managers, he implied, are less diligent about collecting information from the client base.

Not only is the level of commitment to the evaluation process variable across the firm and subject to interpretation, but the measures themselves are extremely subjective. While timeliness and accuracy on projects were discussed on the surface, most of the respondents seemed to acknowledge or imply that the most powerful performance standards were more difficult to pin down. Gail's sense was as follows: "No, they [the standards] were not articulated. I don't think they were measurable. Not with hard objective measures. They were much more subjective... I think what mattered more was who you knew and what kind of impression you made on who you knew."

This subjective aspect of the performance evaluation process is very important. All of the respondents had difficulty describing, concretely, the behavioral differences between good employees and merely adequate employees.

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Searching for words to describe the difference, they would frequently begin to describe the more intangible aspects of performance, such as "style" or "approach" or "attitude". More often than not, the manager would talk about the individual's personality. Patricia Clark talked about "gut feelings" -- "I've got good gut." Frank Rhodes, trying to describe the way the most effective employees can be distinguished from other employees, said:

> You see how they approach the assignments. Willingness. Attitude. Energy. Commitment to the job. I think those are -- you know, you may miss. And people are very good at -- you'll get the impression, and they can really trick you. So maybe an outsider coming in for a couple of weeks may not be able to see it. But somebody who works with the employees, and has seen them and managed them for a period of time [can see the difference].

Just as relationships and intangible aspects of performance serve to structure the environment, shared ideological beliefs serve to guide behavior and decision-making. They help individuals organize and interpret information around them. These shared beliefs flow directly from the history of the company, the vision of its founder, and the experiences of employees in this environment. It is important for employees to share these "feelings" or "values" about work, commitment, professionalism, and ethics to be accepted in this culture. At a minimum, it is important for employees to act as if they hold such feelings. These aspects of the culture can be thought of as the "emotional norms" of the organization, the baseline feelings that serve to bind employees together.

The respondents used a variety of phrases to describe the organizational norms. "Do the right thing"; "Valuing differences"; "It's easier to ask forgiveness than permission"; "Ask a lot of questions, never accept what people tell you at face value, even if it comes from the CEO". One is struck by the contradictions and seeming inconsistencies: a strong belief and value in individuality and individual differences coupled with a strong sense of community and loyalty to the organization; an embracing of confrontation and conflict along

with consensus and compromise; a great deal of reverence for the founder and CEO and his ethics accompanied by a general disrespect for authority and hierarchy. A basic assumption that is woven into all of these beliefs is that the individual is the source of creative ideas, and that conflict and debate among individuals is the best way to distill the truth or the "best practice". The counter-culture mentality is valued; the rebel is welcomed.[9]

While the basic values or philosophical ideas on which the organization is based may be familiar to all of the participants, the ways in which these notions are interpreted and translated into action vary substantially across individuals and work groups. The general and somewhat vague edict to "do the right thing" can be interpreted to mean many different things, in different contexts, by different people. Individuals debate whether it is a myth, argue about what it means. In a sense, the "culture" of the organization is much like the "culture" in a democracy -- a few simple ideas such as freedom of speech, equal rights and so on are values nearly every citizen holds. The right to debate the meaning of these phrases is in itself a reflection of cultural norms. At Standard Enterprises, debate and confrontation about how these ideas are translated into policy and action are fervent and ongoing.

These two aspects of the organization -- the lack of formal structure and the strong ideological infrastructure -- are mutually reinforcing. As one student of a very similar organization has phrased this type of relationship, "culture" comes to replace "structure" as an organizing principle and it is used to both explain and guide the actions of employees (Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989, p. 72). In an organization that is constantly responding to uncertainty and change, these fundamental values or assumptions about human behavior may be the only rudders by which the participants can steer. To the extent that the

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cultural norms provide members with a common language, a common framework, and something of a common yardstick for evaluating courses of action, it provides a measure of coherence in an otherwise chaotic environment.

Two aspects of this type of organizational context emerge as particularly important. First, there is a great deal of fluidity in the definition, execution and evaluation of work. Individuals and relationships among them define and redefine the work context on an ongoing basis. The goals and objectives for an employee in any given position can be only loosely defined at any given point in time. The work is defined by the people, the politics, the dynamics of organizational life. Second, there is a substantial amount of interdependence amongst the professionals. None of the work is self-contained, easily isolated, broken down, or measured. Work is performed with and through others in the organization, and, more often than not, a wide range of people are directly or indirectly involved in any major project. The ability to build and sustain relationships of trust, respect, and credibility is central to an individual's ability to achieve results.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMONSTRATING "COMMITMENT" TO THE ORGANIZATION

Commitment is one of the key emotional norms that presumably guides behavior in an organization such as Standard Enterprises. It serves as a way to distinguish between strong performers and average performers in an environment where work <u>output</u>, the factor presumably of most interest to the organization, is not easily defined or measured. Faced with this difficult problem of evaluation, organizational leaders fall back on the degree to which an employee appears to feel responsible or committed to the work. The manager must be persuaded that an employee will take responsibility for getting the work done and

will do whatever it takes to complete a task.

Almost all of our respondents spoke of the importance of being committed. What is less clear, however, is how commitment (or the lack of it) is detected. Commitment seems to be an attitude, something felt by the employee and displayed through his or her actions. It is an emotional norm. However, by definition, it can not be directly observed. How is a manager in an environment such as Standard Enterprises to distinguish between a 'committed' employee, one who will get the work done at any price, and a 'less committed' employee?

The most reliable and time-honored way to demonstrate commitment to work is to make sacrifices in other areas of one's life. Historically, men have traded off involvement or investment in family life in order to be present and available to the organization. In doing so, they have signalled that work can and does take precedence over other commitments in their life. The more individuals were willing to make sacrifices for the organization, the more "committed" they appeared. Because time at work necessarily implies time away from other activities, employees who are observed to be present at the workplace for extended hours appear to be relatively more committed than their counterparts who arrive and depart from the workplace at standard times. Whether or not such employees actually accomplish more than their 40 hour per week peers is extraordinarily difficult to measure, particularly in organizations such as Standard Enterprises. Indeed, it is at least plausible that such employees are simply less efficient at work, and require more time to get the same amount of work done. Or, it could be that such employees create work to appear busy, when in fact there is very little value added to the organization from these extra hours. Nonetheless, numerous researchers have commented on the importance of "face time" in organizational life.[10] It serves as an indicator of commitment,

an imperfect ruler for measuring a feeling that the employee has, or should have, about work, even though it is the underlying construct, the actual sense of responsibility for the work, which is actually of value to the organization.

Face time operates as an indicator of commitment because it unambiguously demonstrates that the work of the organization can and does take precedence over other aspects of the employee's life. This emotional norm, that work can and should take precedence in a professional's life, came through consistently in the interviews. While participants value other aspects of individual lives and welcome discussion of family life, they also seem to accept that work is a legitimate priority. They accept the claims the organization makes on their emotional and temporal resources as inevitable. Consider the following comment made by Jill:

> It's hard for anyone to identify with all these things unless they are going through it, honestly. I think that people have to be much more understanding of situations. I don't know how much that's going to change because meetings have to happen, work has to go on, and unfortunately business has to happen. That's why you're at work! That takes precedence over your own life."

"Work", then, is not simply the set of tasks for which the individual is responsible. It is also being emotionally and physically available to the organization when called. In a sense, it is not unlike the work of fire fighters. Daily maintenance and training activities are important, but being available when called is an indispensable aspect of the job. Being available IS the work. The notion of professionalism and sacrifice of other aspects of one's life are very tightly coupled in the organization, to the point that it is almost impossible to imagine exciting work without complying with this emotional norm. As Patricia Clark questioned, "How do you get the interesting challenging job without the willingness to have it be a major part of your life?"

Saul Jenson described eloquently his level of commitment to a particularly exciting project at Standard Enterprises:

> [The] job was it. And there really -- it's as though family just didn't
> exist. We were on a mission from God...It was a tremendous esprit de
> corps...And we became a very tight community. It was like we lived together.
> We were family. And that was part of it.

The basic assumption that work, or at least interesting work, can and should take priority over other dimensions of one's life is reinforced through subtle mechanisms. New employees are socialized in this belief. For example, Gail told a story of a woman who had suffered a tubal pregnancy and had taken a couple of days off of work to recuperate. In casual conversations on the topic, Jill and Patricia both expressed their disapproval. As Gail recalled:

> They were just furious. They would say thinks like 'well, Lynn was involved
> in a relationship that wasn't that good for her work,' and they were pissed
> off about it, because she was going out with somebody else she worked with,
> and 'now she went and got herself pregnant, and she had to have this
> laparoscopy' - 'you know, they're not that bad, but I can't believe that
> she's not going to be back at work tomorrow.'

It is important to keep in mind that this is how Gail remembers this exchange, and therefore contains data about the meaning of the exchange for her. We have no way of knowing or confirming the precise words of this exchange. However, embedded in these comments are certain assumptions and values about the relative priority of private and organizational responsibilities which carried a powerful message for Gail. Clearly, Lynn had put matters of her personal life ahead of her work by getting involved with a peer. The fact that her behavior communicated a priority on her personal life, at the expense of her work if necessary, was cause for criticism. In addition, her decision to take time off from work to recover from her laparoscopy also signalled that other aspects of her life (her physical and emotional health) were more important to her than her work, at least for a few days. In more ways than one, Lynn was signalling that dimensions of her life outside of work were priorities. Such priorities brought forth criticism from her peers.

Comments such as these, over time, define, reinforce, and diffuse the emotional norms of the workplace. In this case, Gail was an observer of an

exchange between Patricia and Jill. However, the indirect message about emotional norms was also clear to Gail. The culture of the organization, as Gail experienced it, was that "you shouldn't take time out"; "you shouldn't take care of yourself."

VI. FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS IN THIS TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT

Flexible working arrangements are not a "right" at Standard Enterprises; they are a privilege. Some employees in some positions under some circumstances can negotiate such arrangements. Others can not. In this section, we explore the criteria that were used in granting or denying the requests of four different employees in five different scenarios (See Table 1). The objective is to distill the unwritten but widely-understood rules that managers apply when allocating such arrangements.

We have shown that understanding how work is defined, accomplished, and measured or evaluated means understanding the complex web of relationships in this organization. The relationships shape and define the parameters of a given job. The work in these types of positions is orchestrating and managing the interpersonal relationships in a complex matrix. Things "happen" as a result of the exercise of personal, influential power. Distinctions between good and average employees are subjective, highly dependent on the quality of the relationship with one's manager.

In this type of environment, two broad sets of rules come into play when a manager evaluates a request for a modified work schedule. The first set involves an assessment of the job or position the employee occupies; the second set involves an assessment of the employee's work style.

The fact that the boundaries of work are so permeable, so dependent upon

the dynamics of relationships, makes defining jobs where flexible work schedules might be practical extremely problematic. While an employee and his or her boss may be open to working out a flexible arrangement, defining the actual content of the job is very difficult. In the matrixed organization, each function is linked to so many other functions that the employee ends up being "on call" all of the time. As Gail said of the job she had occupied:

> And when you're doing something like the rebate program, even though that's something I could sit and do on my computer, most of the work, nonetheless, you have to be on call. You know, what if one of the senior level managers needs to talk to you, or what if you need to make a presentation on the spur of the moment so that everybody understands what's going on? You have to be very "on call".

To some extent, the quality of the relationship with one's boss can mediate the effects of this constraint. In other words, if a manager is willing to absorb some of the organizational demands and in some ways "protect" the employee, this aspect of the work can be managed. To illustrate, Gail felt it was possible for her would-be mentor, Patricia, to act as a buffer for the organizational demands, had she wanted to do so:

> Had Patricia been willing to say to these managers, "Gail's working part-time, so you just have to take that into account, we'll make sure your work gets done for you and it won't be a problem" -- had Patricia been willing to do that, I don't think it would have been an issue for any of those people. But I don't think that Patricia was willing to get on my bandwagon and do what needed to be done.

On the other side, though, the extent to which a manager can effectively do this has its limits. While support and "protection" by a manager is a prerequisite for flexible working arrangements to be workable, it is not a sufficient condition. Evidence for this limit is gleaned from Patricia's comments about her efforts to recruit Jill for a position (in 1990) at a time when Jill adamantly wanted to work only three days per week. Patricia really wanted Jill to do the work, and was trying to persuade her that it would be OK. As Patricia said:

And when I talked to her about it, I said, 'everyone will support you, everywhere, working four days. Three days at work is unrealistic. The way I would do it is we'll pay you for four days. We'll never call you on the fifth day, never, unless there is a dire emergency. That's the way that ought to work. On the fourth day, if you suddenly looked at your schedule this week and you realize you can do all the work at home -- by all means, I'll support you. Everyone will support you.' But that wasn't good enough. It was 'no, I need it -- I need assurances that this job is not gonna get out of control.' And there was no way for me to assure her that I would do everything in my power, my boss would do everything in his power, right up the line, to make sure that didn't happen.

This comment seems to suggest two things. First, that support from a manager is an essential element for a flexible working arrangement to be viable. However, it also seems clear that guarantees are seen as impossible by the managers. At the end of the day, as much as Patricia respected Jill and wanted her to accept the position, she was unwilling to provide the assurances that Jill felt she needed.

The basic assumption that work takes precedence over other dimensions of one's life, in this context of fluidity and interdependence, profoundly shapes the way organizational participants think about employees with flexible or reduced working schedules. As noted earlier, the fact that such schedules are granted on an ad hoc and informal basis means that managers must search for decision-making criteria that are legitimate to members of the organization. They can not rely solely on rules in a written policy. The criterion that managers at Standard Enterprises seem to employ is a rule that the employee refrain from openly challenging the underlying belief about the role of work in one's life. While employees with alternative work arrangements no longer signal their commitment level to the organization through "face time", they are not exempt from the need to comply with the underlying emotional norm "face time" represents -- that work takes priority in one's life. Just as employees who spend extended hours in the workplace signal that work takes priority over other interests and responsibilities, those who work part time out of the office, or work a reduced schedule, must somehow signal a similar sentiment in order to remain respected and accepted in this culture. The key indicator of commitment,

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willingness to sacrifice other aspects of one's life in the service of organizational goals, does not change. What does change is the mechanism or set of behaviors available to the employee for signalling this sense of responsibility.

"Style" becomes the new proxy for assessing the commitment level of employees working alternative schedules. Throughout the interviews, managers invoked issues of style, approach, and philosophy in order to distinguish between possible candidates for alternative arrangements. For example, Frank Rhodes responded this way when asked to describe the difference in an employee to whom he would grant such a deal and one he would not:

> I'm trying to move away from just performance measures and the way they operate. The person who I didn't have the confidence would be able to meet the expectations working outside was very, very concerned with protocol, with discipline and structure, whose job it is, tell me exactly what you want me to do... They want perfect clarity around the job. They're uncomfortable with ambiguity, and they are not particularly interested in pushing beyond their set of responsibilities.

Rhodes does not explicitly say that some more measurable aspects of performance are not factors in his thinking as well. However, he is unable to fully explain why some employees are candidates for flexible working schedules and others are not WITHOUT invoking issues of style, approach, or philosophy.

There are hints that Gail's "style" of work was a factor in Patricia's and Jill's decision as well. During the year she worked with Gail, Patricia developed the opinion that Gail was someone who seemed to suffer under pressure: "She suffered under the pressure of the deadlines that we all just take as a fact of life. Really suffered -- constantly complaining about them and so forth." As a result of such signals, Patricia had developed a gut level feeling that Gail probably did not "fit" in that particular part of the organization, that she was a "very anxious person", that her skills AND personality did not fit the work. Gail's complaints were interpreted as a challenge or affront to the emotional

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norms common to the work group and organization.

When Jill spoke about the situation with Gail, she also called upon style and "her whole work style." She gave some concrete examples of behaviors that led her to develop concerns on this level. She felt that Gail talked a lot, spent too much time on personal phone calls and so forth.

Patricia and Jill did meet Gail during a very emotional time of her life, a time, also, when she was dealing with some significant health problems. As Gail said, "Patricia did not think I handled it well -- 'because you're supposed to handle emotions well. What is this?' And I was simply falling apart for a while. I think I did a great job of handling it myself; I think my problem was telling Patricia [too much about it]. " Critically, however, neither Patricia nor Jill spoke about Gail's output and actual performance. Gail had run the stock program the year before, and received numerous letters of commendation from clients in the organization. However, the output of her work, positive or negative, did not seem to enter into the opinions Patricia and Jill had of Gail. Their opinions were based more on their observations of Gail's demeanor, approach, and attitudes toward work.

In these cases, the quality of work <u>output</u> was not as big a factor in securing a work at home schedule as was work <u>demeanor</u>. Outward compliance with the emotional norm that work can and should take precedence over other aspects of an employee's life was key. As flexible working arrangements and work/family accommodation hit directly at this emotional norm, it is one of the most powerful barriers that employees must overcome.

Jill Myers, for example, when asked to explain the difference in employees who would be eligible for a modified working arrangement and those who would not, said:

> A lot of it depends on if people believe you're going to work hard and you're
> going to put in -- you're going to get the work done, no matter what it
> takes, you're going to do that job whether you're here or at home, you're
> going to worry about it when you're at home, that just because you're home
> you shut your mind to it -- it doesn't happen that way. So if someone says
> that person is a workaholic, in a sense, -- although I don't define myself as
> a workaholic -- then we'll allow them to do it, because I don't have to worry
> about it.

It is important, then, to at least create the image that you are going to "take it home with you and worry about it and think about it and work at it" in order to gain access to this type of arrangement. Employees must somehow convince their managers that they are sufficiently driven so that nothing will distract them from their work. Demonstrating an ability to produce good work is not the equivalent of demonstrating commitment to the work. Accordingly, solid work while at the office is NOT sufficient. As Jill remarked about Kathy:

> It's the whole work performance. I don't see her really -- it's a whole work
> philosophy. She comes here, she does her work, she does a good job at it.
> But I know when she goes home, she divorces herself from it all. I didn't
> feel that those extra five hours would be made up.

Kathy seems to have sent a message to her managers that, during certain blocks of time in her day, work was NOT a priority. While she did good work at the office, her managers saw her as the type of individual who put other aspects of her life (her children, for example) ahead of her work. She "divorced" herself from work when she went home, and THIS was the reason why her managers did not feel comfortable with paying her full time while she worked at home for 5 hours per week. Unable to supervise her behaviors directly, and uncomfortable with her commitment to the job absent supervision, they did not trust that the work would get done.[11]

Gail Hanson violated the emotional norms in the same way as Kathy. In a number of small ways, she sent signals to her managers and co-workers that her baby was her number one priority. She made phone calls about the effects of extensive computer terminal work on her unborn child. She took off work whenever

her physician instructed her to do so. She spoke with Patricia about her concerns for her own health and the health of her child. In a number of indirect ways, even before leaving on maternity leave, Patricia and Jill had reason to believe, correctly, that Gail's priorities were shifting and that the child was going to be a top priority in her life.

When Patricia, Jill and Gail sat down to negotiate the terms of Gail's return to a part-time job, the fundamental issue on which they were unable to agree was whether or not Gail would guarantee that the job could take precedence over her family responsibilities. Defining the responsibilities that Gail would assume was not, apparently, difficult. What the individuals were unable to agree upon was the emotional commitment necessary to make the arrangement work.

As the time to return to work drew near, Gail began drawing boundaries around her personal life and family responsibilities. Knowing that Mark was going to be very busy (finishing law school and taking the bar exam), Gail took steps to arrange her life so that she would be able to provide the necessary parenting to her son. She wanted to work part-time, but she wanted to make sure that the work did not "get out of control" and start eroding the boundaries she felt she needed. Gail did not see this as an unworkable situation. She wanted to work, and wanted to do a good job at what she did. She did not want to commit to more than she was capable of delivering. She wanted assurances that 24 hours per week of excellent work was going to be enough to maintain her standing in the organization.

Patricia and Sarah did not, however, agree that this was a workable concept. Absent a commitment from Gail that the work would come first, they were unable to feel comfortable with the arrangement. In the early stages of the negotiations, they sought a verbal commitment from Gail that she would do

whatever was necessary to make sure the work got done. For example, Patricia started asking her "what about meetings? Will you be able to come whenever there's a meeting?" When Gail would ask about planning meetings for the days she was in the office, Patricia said, "Well, sometimes we can, but sometimes we won't be able to, then you have to have your day care person be more flexible." When verbal exchanges such as these failed to convince Gail's managers that she would re-arrange her schedule when they deemed it necessary, they presented her with a written document outlining the terms of her arrangement as they understood them. The letter said, in essence, that the managers had a right to increase Gail's hours at any point they felt it was needed in order to make sure the work got done, that she had to be "totally flexible", and that she would be expected to attend all meetings scheduled during her days off. Gail refused to work under these conditions. As she said:

> You have to trust that I'm going to get the job done. It's to my benefit to
> get the job done well too. I certainly would not want to do the job unless
> I could do it well. It's been my policy, it's the way I've always done
> things and the way I always intend to do things ... I'll do the job for you,
> but I don't want a letter, a contract stating that you have the right to do
> whatever you want and demand whatever you want from me.[12]

Jill and Patricia were not comfortable with this arrangement. They interpreted Gail's comments as an unwillingness to make compromises for the organization, and this attitude made them uncomfortable at a "gut level" with Gail as an employee.

Patricia and Jill put the terms of the agreement in writing because they felt the need to protect themselves. They conceded that this management practice is not used uniformly; neither of them had the terms of their own situation in writing. Their managers had never served them a contract similar to the one they gave Gail. The contract did not flow from a uniform company practice or administrative requirement. It was prompted by the concerns that Jill and

Patricia had about Gail's commitment to the work. Jill put it bluntly:

> Let's put it this way. There are certain people you have to put things down in writing with, and there are certain people you don't... Frank doesn't have it down in writing for me... So I'm sure she was probably upset about that, that we were blunt and put things down, but we felt the need with her, that was very important. Just seeing how she worked. She was also very cautious. I remember she was working on the terminal, not that much, and she was calling some special society to find out what the effects of it were going to be on the baby, and it was just her whole work style. You see certain people and their concerns and how they react to stuff. You just protect yourself...

Patricia was also uncomfortable with Gail's attitude. It did not "feel" right to Patricia, and she found herself feeling suspicious for reasons she could not really explain:

> I feel bad saying this, but it really is the truth, that I had this little teeny inkling way back that -- she felt like somebody to me capable of ripping off the company. And that's the only way I can say it...Capable. Not that she did it, or intended to do it, but capable of doing it...She wanted it to work all her way.

It is important to note that the impressions Jill and Patricia had developed about Gail's shifting priorities were more or less accurate. It was very clear in Gail's mind that becoming a mother was the most important event in her life at that particular time, and she was consciously trying to structure a work situation AROUND that priority. Jill and Patricia were not imagining this shift. What was different, however, was that Jill and Patricia interpreted the new ordering of priorities as threatening to the organization. They were no longer able to see Gail as "committed to the work" in the way that Standard Enterprises employees are committed, and absent this demonstration or "proof" of commitment to the organization, they were concerned that the work would not get done. Ultimately, their "suspicions" that Gail was unwilling to place work before her family responsibilities were confirmed when Gail refused to work under the written terms they drew up. The conflict over priorities was finally brought out into the open; Gail made it clear that she would not allow organizational demands to encroach upon her personal life past a certain point. She would not agree to subjugate her other interests to the demands of the work. This

violation of the emotional norms of the organization, that work can and should take precedence in one's life, rendered a resolution of the conflict impossible.

The critical role of compliance with this feeling rule becomes more clear when we compare and contrast the attitudes espoused by Kathy and Gail to those espoused by Jill and Patricia. The key difference in the stories is that Jill and Patricia have actively taken steps to signal that, in spite of their desire for a flexible working schedule, work remains the top priority. Both constantly reassure their bosses that they will do whatever is necessary to get the job done. They make themselves available by phone and by computer terminal. They secure child care arrangements that enable them to leave for work any day of the week on relatively short notice. Most importantly, however, they send verbal messages to their managers that they are still 100% committed to the organization.

Frank Rhodes continues to describe Jill as an "aggressive, high-need achievement oriented person", an employee he trusts. Rhodes makes a distinction between committed employees and other employees: "So there are some people who I say -- they're committed to the job and they're gonna get it done. There are other people I'm saying I'm paying them by the hour. I'm basically getting contact time. It may be very good. When they're there, they're really good."

Jill has, until recently been one of these "committed" employees. He sees evidence of the work she does at home (memos from her terminal at home), the thinking she does while commuting. Jill has been effective at complying with the emotional norms of the organization even though she has worked at home one day a week. A key reason the situation has worked is that Jill has not violated the emotional norms of a full-time, committed professional employee. Rhodes can still see her as an "aggressive, high-need achievement oriented person". She is

still part of the club.

Jill has played both roles in this type of decision -- she has been both the manager and the employee. In articulating the rationale employed by managers in such situations, she implicitly endorses the legitimacy of this standard:

> I think managers as a whole, probably myself included but I'm more accepting of it because I'm in that situation, want to have it the easiest for themselves. Naturally, it's easier to have someone who is going to work full-time, jump through hoops for you and then do the twist. You want people to be there for your beck and call, in a sense. You don't want to deal with people's problems....A manager will do that if they know you, if they can count on you, if they think that even if you work part-time you're still going to jump through hoops for them and be there when they want you to.

At many other points in the interview, Jill restated her beliefs that managers and organizations had a right to demand the unwavering commitment from professional employees, in form if not substance. She indicated that she felt the demands were legitimate and that she was willing to comply as a condition of employment. She did not at any point challenge the emotional norm that work can and should take precedence in one's life. In numerous ways, Jill has sent a message to her manager that she will allow the work to take precedence over her family life whenever necessary. Comfortable that she will not let him down, Rhodes has gone along.

Patricia has also repeatedly sent messages to the organization that she gives top priority to her responsibilities to Standard Enterprises. Consider the following remarks by Patricia:

> I find it much easier to take work home than the other way, and I'm one of those people with excellent concentration, so the minute I walk in the door, it's like I've screened out everything else, and I'm now working...When I first returned to work, one of the men in a meeting that I attend weekly, who actually became my current boss, said to me 'Patricia, you never talk about your baby,' and I never realized that I never talked about him .. I never thought about him!

Patricia added that she is currently making conscious efforts to allow more time and thought directed toward her personal life, but she emphasizes that it is a conscious effort. She describes herself as a person who has thoroughly enjoyed work, someone who has let the work run her life. She shared a number of stories

of instances where personal plans were re-arranged or subordinated when the work called. She shared stories of carrying the work home with her, of having difficulty making the emotional adjustment from working with senior executives to dealing with an infant, of waking up in the middle of the night and making notes about work. At the same time, she emphasized that she was very diligent about screening home out of work.

While the content of comments is fascinating, the subtext is most relevant for this analysis. Patricia's statements help create the image, whether real or constructed, that her natural tendency is to allow work to penetrate the walls of her home, but not vice versa. She consistently sends signals that work is a priority and that she is willing to take concrete steps to re-arrange her family responsibilities to be available to the organization. Such statements, coupled with the silences regarding her child, are consistent with the basic underlying assumptions of Standard Enterprises regarding commitment. She is safely within the boundaries of the emotional norms.[13]

There is no evidence, then, that either Jill or Patricia have challenged or questioned the emotional norm that work must take precedence over other spheres of a professional's life. They have found ways to endorse this belief, directly and indirectly, while working a modified work schedule. They have not tripped the wires of emotional commitment that lie at the core of the Standard Enterprises culture. They have not forced their organizational peers to re-evaluate the core assumptions about professional work and commitment. They have not make their managers nervous in the same way that Gail and Kathy have.

The most powerful illustration of how commitment is demonstrated by subjugating other areas of one's life to the work is seen in current evaluations and re-evaluations of Jill Myers. When we interviewed Jill, she had only

recently returned from maternity leave for her second child. She had decided to cut back to three days of work per week, 6 hours at home, for a total compensation package prorated to 30 hours per week. Same employee, same peers, same organization. The only thing that had changed between the situation when Jill had one child and the situation when she had two was her willingness to let the work define her schedule. She had reached a point (with the encouragement of her husband) where she was unwilling to invest much more in her career at the expense of her family life, temporarily at least. What is interesting is that her manager (Rhodes) and prospective manager (Clark) both expressed some doubts as to Jill's commitment to work. As Patricia said:

> Jill is very competent in the area, and many of the issues are the same. She's now had her second child. She -- I don't believe -- wants to return to work. She's not saying that, but I think if she had her druthers, she'd stay home... She views the world differently. Her priorities have changed. Her career is not the first thing on her mind right now. I don't question these things. But what is tough is just that balance. How do you get the interesting challenging job without the willingness to have it be a major part of your life.

Rhodes's comments are almost identical. Asked if the situation had changed between Jill's first child and second, he said:

> Yeah, they were quite different. Nothing changed with the confidence and the competence. But I'm -- and I'm still -- the jury's still out... I didn't know whether the job was do-able, was one issue. Then these are the pieces that she and I have talked around, but we're still not 100% open with each other. She knows -- I mean, we're pretty open with each other, and I think she knows -- cause we've talked about it, at some level -- is her commitment has shifted.

Both recognized her talents as a professional and both respected her values as a mother. However, neither Rhodes nor Clark had been able to find a position that would suit Jill's needs. They both felt something was going to have to give, that Jill was going to have to make some tough decisions. While her peers could still acknowledge Jill's skills and competence, they were finding it more difficult to continue to consider her a "professional" employee. Level of commitment, or compliance with a central emotional norm, appears to be the

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criterion that separates the professional employee from the "low level" employee. Perhaps the most revealing remark on this level was made by Rhodes, when asked if he would still rate her as a top 10% performer as he had done before:

> Depending on the forced ranking criteria I was using. If I were doing one as far as somebody of capability, yes. Intellect, ability to do a number of jobs, yes. If I were forced to say okay, the life boat exercise -- says okay, if I'm gonna keep one person with me -- well, you need a real high energy, high commitment, high skill, high diversity of skill and very flexible person, if you're gonna have one person. She may not make that cut....But she could change that , if she wanted to. It's within her control.
>
> [Q: By driving her hours back up?]
>
> Subjugates her other objectives.
>
> [Q: To the work?]
>
> Right.

VII. ISSUES OF GENDER

Do the emotional norms surrounding professional work at organizations such as Standard Enterprises operate evenly for both men and women? We did not identify a single male employee working a modified schedule at Standard Enterprises in order to make himself available to his family. While a handful of men were reported to be working reduced schedules, the balance of their time was apparently devoted to other professional activities, not their families. As such, we are unable to make comparisons between the experiences of male employees as we are with female employees. We observe no "natural variation" in the behavior of men in this organization with respect to flexible working arrangements. Nonetheless, we are able to make some inferences based on our interview data. In particular, there is some evidence that men can trip the wire and break the emotional norms more easily than women. It may be more difficult for a man to maintain the image of "aggressive, high-need achievement orientation" while asking to work at home or work a reduced schedule. Indeed, it may be impossible for men to remain "part of the club" while working a reduced

schedule in order to be with their families, and this may explain the fact that no male employees at Standard Enterprises have attempted this.

When Frank Rhodes was asked if he would entertain the request by a father to work at home one day per week, he said he would use the same criteria as for a woman, but that "it would feel a little funny":

> As far as do I have the confidence, is there enough of a commitment and a motivation driving why this person wants to do it. If they just want to be at home because they like to fly model airplanes, or embroider, I probably would be less inclined to make it happen. But for somebody who is clearly an aggressive, high-need achievement oriented person like Jill, who needs to be a great parent and a great employee, I'd be willing to say yes. But if I've got somebody who says well, I just want to goof off, take my time, I don't have -- and this is the value judgement that I put on it -- is that a strong enough personal drive, that says they are committed to do that, and therefore they will also be committed to do this, versus I really don't want to work, so just cut my hours so I can do something else that I'd rather do. I would not be as inclined to do it. I don't care whether it's a male or a female.

Again, the criteria used in determining an employee's eligibility for a work at home schedule is an emotional criterion. Is the employee 'one of us'? Is he or she a committed, driven person? Rhodes's remarks suggest that men's requests for flexible work schedules are a priori more suspicious. In other words, men may need to do more to demonstrate that they still <u>feel</u> the same way about work, that they are still committed people, if they ask for flexible schedule. As with requests from female employees, the criterion of work <u>output</u> does not appear to be nearly as important as making sure that the feeling rules are not violated.

The difficulties men face in challenging these basic assumptions are also highlighted in comments made by Karl, Jill's husband. Karl works for a medium-sized health care organization where he is able to work a standard 40-hour week without much difficulty. Still, as he thought through the possibilities for scaling back to a modified schedule, he became caught in the emotional norms with which male employees must comply.

Karl acknowledged that women in professional positions in his organization had been able to negotiate reduced work schedules in order to care for children.

Asked to describe the characteristics of the job that would allow an employee to negotiate such an arrangement, Karl provided a thorough list: individual contributor, professional attitude to do the work regardless of what was required, and so forth. The employee would have to be highly thought of and trusted by senior management. Critically, however, when asked what would happen to a <u>male</u> employee in an individual contributor's position who was well-liked and well-respected and so forth, Karl felt it would be even more difficult for him to negotiate such an arrangement and then to be viewed positively afterwards. As he struggled to make sense of this apparent inconsistency, Karl offered the following explanation:

> It would be viewed rather negatively [Pause]. Why do I say that? I guess because it would be such a novelty around here that people are oftentimes aghast at novelties...It would be a 'break the ice' kind of thing. As I say that, I want to think a little bit more about that. [Long pause] Most of the senior managers -- in order to become a senior manager, you have to have been a relatively driven person career-wise or otherwise you probably wouldn't be there. And driven people like to be working with other driven people, people who want to create a better organization, make more money, do greater things, whatever...For a manager to come forward and say, Yeah, I've been driving right along with you guys for a while but I don't want to drive this fast any more, I want to spend some time with my family -- That would be like saying 'I don't want to be a part of this club any more' [Pause] Although it may be arranged on an individual basis, I think the individual would lose a lot of effectivity in the organization, the ability to influence the other senior managers.

What was imaginable for a female professional, albeit subject to critical limitations, was not thinkable for a male professional. Same type of job, same type of employee. Different gender. In Karl's mind, it would be nearly impossible for a male employee to maintain an image of "wanting to create a better organization, make more money, do greater things" -- an image of being committed -- while working a reduced schedule. Gail's husband, an attorney, who had a female peer working a reduced schedule, was also unable to imagine a man working the same type of schedule. Though working a modified schedule was appealing, he said he would change careers rather than challenge the norms of the workplace in which he worked.

Our female respondents had as much difficulty imagining their male counterparts in modified schedules as did our male respondents:

Jill Myers: If you want to get ahead, males are not going to be able to do that. I don't know, maybe lower down, depending on the job you can.   It depends on who you're dealing with.   If you're in senior management, middle management, I don't think you're going to find as much of that.

Patricia Clark: [Describing a man she felt might be willing to stay home with children] He's really the nurturer...It's very clear...but I think he's a unique person. He is not -- he is a unique man. Just in general. He doesn't feel like the typical men -- man out there. Different personality totally.

In both reactions, the impulse is that men who would work such schedules would be different, not necessarily respected, and certainly not rewarded in the organization.

Empirically, in this organization at least, there is no question that male employees requesting modified work schedules would be breaking new ground. The question we raise, but can not yet answer, is whether or not a situation or set of norms could be constructed such that such men would continue to be respected and admired, as Patricia Clark and Jill Myers have been, once acknowledging the claims of their families on their temporal resources. Is it possible for them to remain 'part of the club'?

The perception that Standard Enterprises is a chaotic and unstructured organization is widely shared by organizational members and by the organization's observers. The lack of emphasis on formal lines of authority and explicit rules and regulations lends credence to this perception. However, these data suggest that the environment is not completely without structure, hierarchy or rules. Managers do exist, and they do grant or deny their employees' requests to work flexible working schedules. In making such decisions, they reference the informal and unwritten rules of organizational life, rules embodied in the emotional norms of the workplace. The manager begins by evaluating the parameters of the employee's job and the extent to which an identifiable piece of the work could reasonably be performed away from the office. Identification

of such an element is the first and easiest hurdle to overcome. Interestingly, however, this issue did not surface as a 'show-stopper' in any of the decisions we studied. Satisfaction of this requirement seems to be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for access to an alternative working schedule. Even more critical is the manager's assessment of the employee's commitment level, an assessment based primarily on the extent to which the employee appears willing to place the demands of the organization ahead of other competing responsibilities. To remain accepted and credible within the professional ranks of Standard Enterprises, the individual must be willing to subordinate other objectives to the work, or must at least be willing to ACT in a way that is consistent with this feeling. It MAY be true, in fact, that a great number of these employees simply espouse this value while at work because it is expedient to do so -- and because it gives them access to certain professional rewards that are highly coveted. We are not saying, for example, that Jill and Patricia ACTUALLY place work before their families, or vice versa. We are simply arguing that they have been more sensitive to the emotional norms of the workplace which expect such commitment, and that their compliance with these norms is at least part of the explanation for their ability to work at home part time. Finally, we have seen some evidence that male employees may have to comply with a more stringent set of emotional norms than their female counterparts. Indeed, the rules may be so stringent for men that it is not even possible for them to elect a modified work schedule while their children are young and, simultaneously, to retain their status as 'committed' employees. Rules and standards may not be explicit and rigid at Standard Enterprises, but they exist nonetheless, and compliance with these rules is critical if employees are to gain access to modified working arrangements.

VIII. Implications: Organizational and Personal

The motivation for this case study was to better understand how subtle ideological and cultural factors shape decisions about workplace flexibility. Such factors are important to understand, particularly in organizations such as Standard Enterprises where personal relationships and ideological common ground are so central to defining work and performance. The extent to which an employee is able to retain an image of being one of the committed employees while working a flexible schedule determines both access to and sustainability of such arrangements.

Subtle, informal, barely-visible decision-making rules such as the ones discussed in this paper can generate subtle, informal, and sometimes-unrecognized effects. Rules that operate through the subcontext of organizational life, while informal and unspoken, shape and mold behaviors in powerful ways. Working invisibly, they make some decisions or behaviors thinkable while making other configurations or outcomes impossible to imagine. In this section, I attempt to make visible some of the implications of the processes identified in this case study. I begin by examining the implications for the individuals involved in such decisions, and move to an analysis of the implications for organizations generally.

Implications for individuals. Some of the strains at the individual level are not so thinly veiled. Stress, lack of personal time, guilt, and conflict about priorities are themes that arise in the interviews time and time again. Consider the following comments by Gail and Jill:

Gail: To be honest, yes, I felt guilty (about getting pregnant). I felt scared. I was frightened at people's reactions. I felt really guilty...There was some real self-recrimination and self-doubt going on.

Jill: I believe it's a slowdown forever, because you lose time. You don't just get back into where you stopped. People view you differently, things are moving. I just personally, also, have a different view of myself that is changing. I was very career-oriented...Now, it's like 'Oh, God, who am I now' and there's a real identity crisis of who am I?

Common issues for men and women in dual-career families, stress and role conflict are topics for a plethora of articles in academic and popular publications. There is very little about this that is invisible or new.

The more subtle issue that emerges from these data is that individuals tend to internalize conflicts that are in fact embedded in the organizational context in which they work. Gail and Jill appear to experience the conflicts in isolation. These are women who, at one time anyway, enjoyed feelings about work and the role of work in their lives that were congruent with the organizational norms. As they have attempted to adjust their priorities to include the children in their lives, they have found that their feelings about their shifting priorities create dissonance in the workplace. Regardless of the fact that they are highly-trained professionals dedicated to doing the best work they can possibly do, they feel marginalized in the organizational context. The feelings they associate with 'good employees' and 'professional employees' are inconsistent with the feelings they experience as parents. They value spending time with their young children very highly. These feelings are threatening to the underlying basic assumptions of the Standard Enterprises culture, and therefore inadmissable. Critically, Gail and Jill resolve the dissonance by internalizing the stress. Rather than questioning or challenging the emotional norm of the organizational environment that employees should act as though work is their first priority, they question themselves.

Of course, there is an alternative path that has traditionally been followed by men but is increasingly available to women. Rather than scaling back at work, care for children can be delegated while the individual invests heavily in professional achievement. Individuals can comply with the organizational norms and more or less subjugate their other concerns to the needs of the

workplace. While the stress that flows from this strategy is of a different variety than that experienced by individuals like Gail and Jill, it is experienced in a similar way. Individuals in this case study tended to internalize the conflicts they experienced, and tended not to question the organizational assumptions that contributed to the stress.

Consider the story of Renee Isaacs. Renee Isaacs is one of the most successful women in Standard Enterprises. She and her husband have two teenage children and enjoy an extremely comfortable standard of living. She is the model of the woman who did it all, achieved exceptional things in the professional world while having a family as well. In hindsight, however, she regrets deeply some of the choices and tradeoffs she made. Over the years, she says, she chose to escape into her work. She found it easier to deal with the problems at work than the problems her children had in school. She drew more satisfaction from work. Her remarks at this stage in her life:

> I think I probably would have taken off several years instead of choosing to go right back to work. I think with the benefit of hindsight, which of course is real easy for me to say given my position, the security of having achieved where I am, it's easy to look back and say, 'That's how I would do it.' I'm not sure I'd have the guts to do it that way, but my relationship with my son to this day is mediocre to poor and I think it's traceable back to -- I had an escape valve. There were many years in which after dinner -- which I didn't eat with the children, the children were always fed before I got home so I had dinner with my husband -- where I went up to my study and I sat and did work for the office and I was unavailable for my young children, to play with, to parent, to put to bed, because I was all-consumed with responsibilities at work because I really enjoyed it and I didn't enjoy, because I never had to get used to doing, the mothering tasks of reading to them. I can't even count on one hand the number of times I sat down and read them a book. Or played a game with them. I don't have the kind of -- even though I think I have a good relationship with my daughter -- it is not the quality of the relationship that I think I would have been enjoying if the foundation had <u>been</u> there for her as a young child. Or even as a not-so-young child...I put a lot more of my emotional energy and alot more of my <u>self</u> into work than I did into being a parent.

Renee does not talk about a connection between the attitudinal norms at Standard Enterprises and her choices with respect to family. She insists on accepting full responsibility for her decisions. Likewise, she accepts all of the guilt she now feels:

> No one's going to write on my tombstone, 'Renee Isaacs: Senior Executive of

Standard Enterprises'. Hopefully someone will write on my tombstone 'Loving wife and mother.' No one will remember, hopefully, when I die at 85, that I even worked here. But hopefully my children who I haven't done a real terrific job raising, they will get through whatever resentment they feel about that, if they're in touch with it, and we will have been able to establish a relationship where they will care to write on my tombstone 'She was a loving mother.'

While Renee resists explanations of her choices that implicate aspects of organizational life, her comments contain the seeds of a story that could read differently. In her interview, Renee said that she did not realize, at the time, that she was making choices. She says she was not aware of the trade-offs, the costs, the long-term implications of her decisions. She didn't even think about it at the time. One can not help but wonder about the extent to which Renee's daily experiences in an environment in which children, child care, and parenting were de-valued contributed to the choices she made. Indeed, the notion of placing family responsibilities above work responsibilities may have been so foreign in the professional world that the "choice" did not even seem to exist.

Balancing work and family responsibilities is stressful and difficult. It is made more difficult by the fact that success at work depends on one's ability to act as though work is the top priority in one's life, regardless of family responsibilities. Whether one follows the path of Gail and Jill, slowing down the career to care for children, or the path of Renee, delegating care of children to others, a certain guilt for things not done seems to follow. Unfortunately, it appears that individuals all too often blame themselves for failing to meet the demands they feel from both work and family responsibilities. The emotional norms of the workplace exacerbate the conflicts, but, because such norms are invisible and assumed, individuals do not challenge them. They personally accept responsibility for failing to meet the accepted standards for parenting and for being professional employees, regardless of the fact that

fulfilling the emotional demands of both roles may be impossible under the current configuration of alternatives.

Implications for the organization. At the organizational level, the fact that allocation of flexible working arrangements is shaped by informal rules and emotional norms has a couple of veiled implications. As the rules or criteria for gaining access to flexible arrangements are not clearly articulated or acknowledged on an organizational level, the ways in which the standards operate at cross-purposes with more explicit organizational goals are not immediately obvious. At least three goals to which Standard Enterprises is publicly committed appear to be undermined in subtle ways by the dynamics explored in this case study.

First, to the extent effective utilization of human resources requires flexible employees who are able to move easily into new roles and assignments, reliance on informal rules and the quality of interpersonal relationships for the allocation of alternative work schedules may be problematic. Interorganizational mobility for such employees is virtually impossible. Most of the women and a few men we spoke with turned down professional opportunities in new positions in order to preserve their work arrangements. The managers we interviewed openly acknowledged that they would be unlikely to consider this type of working arrangement with employees they did not know, and, in turn, the employees we interviewed did not expect managers in other areas to hire them while they were working alternative schedules. Frank Rhodes: "And if I knew the person -- once again, have some knowledge of the person -- an applicant coming in that I didn't know, other than the interview, I would be cautious." As Jill searches in the organization for a position in the most recent stage of her life, she focuses on opportunities with managers who are familiar with her work:

> Now, if I was to just go out there and interview for jobs, I'd be surprised
> if a lot of people would be open to it. They don't know me. Why should
> they? They want a certain amount of work done, why should they want to
> worry, or have to bother with someone with a schedule like mine?

Even if a manager were willing to hire an unknown commodity under these terms,

the pressures of re-establishing oneself with a new work group and new client

base are immense. Jill indicated that she was factoring all of these elements

into her thinking.

Patricia has been in her current position for almost five years, a career

pattern she says is highly unusual at Standard Enterprises. She has chosen to

remain in the staff position she currently holds, in spite of the fact that she

feels she has paid a professional price for it, because of her child. She finds

she can manage the boundaries and demands on her time better:

> One of the reasons why (I've stayed in this job) is because I'm much more in
> control of my working life in this job than I am in many other jobs, where
> you're at everybody's beck and call. There are very very stressful and
> pressurized moments in this job, and I just have the opportunity to manage
> it.

Patricia says this choice is unusual in Standard Enterprises, where the norm or

mentality is that if you stay in one job for over a year you must be deadwood.

Accordingly, she feels she must battle the perception that others have formed

that her skills and capabilities are narrow and limited. If it is true that

Patricia could have contributed more to Standard Enterprises in other positions

that afforded more opportunities to develop her skills, then Standard Enterprises

has paid a price for this decision as well.

Gail's situation illustrates the perils of trying to negotiate a "special"

arrangement in a work group in which she was not established. In recounting the

sequence of events that led to Gail's decision to leave the company, Patricia

raised the issue of Gail's somewhat awkward position in the group:

> Shortly after she was hired into the group, the man who hired us both left...
> She was very uncomfortable in that situation. He was very worried about what
> would happen to her, because she had just been hired in. She wasn't from
> marketing; she was from the management sciences group. She didn't really
> have a niche where she would fit in. And he was worried -- everyone was

worried.

Gail confirmed this: "Because it is so personality-specific, when Steve left I was lost. I floundered." Clearly, in everyone's mind, Gail's job was defined more by the relationship she had with this individual than by organizational needs. When the relationship dissipated, it was no longer clear what role, if any, she was to play in this organization. One month later she became pregnant. Jill and Patricia were both gone on maternity leave during the months she worked prior to leaving on maternity leave. When it came time to negotiate a flexible working arrangement with Jill and Patricia, she did not have a well-established relationship and rapport with them. This was clearly a factor in the breakdown of negotiations between these three women.

If relationships are so key to making flexible working arrangements a viable option for employees, individuals who currently enjoy or expect to need a flexible working arrangement pay a dear price when they accept opportunities that would otherwise allow them to develop their skills. In Patricia's case, she has turned down such opportunities; in Gail's case, acceptance of a developmental opportunity ended up making it virtually impossible to negotiate the type of flexibility she felt she needed.

A tension emerges, then, between the organization's needs for employees who are willing to take on new opportunities and able to "move to the work", and the stated goals of making the organization more responsive to family needs of its employees. Under the current norms, reconciliation of these two objectives is difficult.

A second problem for the organization is that of achieving goals related to gender equity. Standard Enterprises is publicly committed to the goal of increasing opportunities and representation for women. A number of strategies

are in place to recruit and promote women into higher levels of management. However, to the extent that the emotional norms of the workplace constrain options for men more severely than for women, the informal rules tend to undermine the stated objectives of the organization. If women opt for such schedules and men do not, or can not, the long-term implications for gender equity at higher levels of the organization are disturbing. While Standard Enterprises is extremely proactive with respect to gender equity issues, it is difficult to overcome the powerful undertow of the basic assumptions about work that operate differently for men and women.

Of course, two organizational responses to the observed inequities are possible. Making flexible working arrangements more accessible to male employees by explicitly restructuring the emotional norms of the organization is one option. Promoting female employees who comply with the current norms of placing work above all other responsibilities to roles at the top of the organization is a second option. While both strategies effectively equalize the choices available to male and female employees, the second option may have a hidden side effect.

Renee Isaacs has complied with the emotional norms of the workplace, and is now something of a hero within the organization. She is seen as a role model on which other women can pattern their behaviors and succeed. Her mere presence in the executive offices is both proof of the gains the organization is making with respect to gender equity and fuel for ongoing efforts. In a sense, the fact that such women have been able to succeed in the organization while managing to raise children is interpreted by some as evidence that individuals committed to the organization can succeed, regardless of their family responsibilities. HOWEVER, Renee is now an active voice inside of Standard Enterprises encouraging

young mothers to consider taking time off from work to be with their children. She actively encourages women to think hard about the choices they are making. In this case, the personal sacrifices that Renee has had to make to succeed in the organization do not remain contained, but spill over into the organization. Investing as it does in the training and development of women managers and pursuing fervently the goal of gender equity at all levels of the organization, Standard Enterprises is now faced with the fact that the women such as Renee who have succeeded by conventional standards may actively undermine the gender equity initiatives. Renee is encouraging women, not men, to take time off from work, and the organization's initiatives toward achieving a more balanced senior management team are frustrated.

At present, the informal and unstated rules by which flexible working arrangements are allocated at Standard Enterprises operate differently for men and women. While it is extremely difficult for women to retain respect in the organization under such arrangements, it is unthinkable for men to do the same. Without acknowledgement and evaluation of how cultural norms operate to perpetuate unequal choices for men and women, organizational efforts to achieve gender equity will be subtly undermined.

Third, the way in which the emotional norms at Standard Enterprises operate to shape and mold employee behaviors creates a challenge for those concerned that the culture be one in which diversity is valued. While the stated goal of "valuing difference" is widely embraced as central to the Standard Enterprises culture, the data in this case study suggest that there are certain limits or parameters to this philosophy in actuality. Differences with respect to demographic characteristics such as age, race, and sex are legitimate, as are differences of opinion. Differences in values and priorities with respect to

professional achievement are less welcome. While this may be an environment in which rules and structure are shunned, it is not one without rules and structure altogether. It is a culture in which individuals are bound together by a certain set of assumptions, beliefs, and values. Diversity is valued only up to the point where the basic belief system remains in tact. Differences that constitute a direct challenge to this belief system are more difficult to reconcile. In this case, violation of the underlying assumption that work can and should be the top priority in a professional's life led Gail's peers to form a conclusion that she did not 'fit' in the organization. She was too different.

Experiences such as Gail's can become seeds of skepticism about the organizational culture. Gail said that Standard Enterprises's claims of valuing difference appeared to her, in hindsight, to be less than true. She saw the notion of valuing difference as narrowly conceived to include some differences but not others. She felt very strongly that her differences were not embraced or valued at Standard Enterprises. From the organization's standpoint, such gaps between the articulated values of the culture and those actually experienced by employees can create very critical credibility problems over the long run.

IX. Issues and Analysis

This study began as a search for the links between the basic underlying beliefs and assumptions underpinning organizational life and the decisions that individual employees make regarding work/family accommodation. Examining the remarks and perspectives of a number of professionals within a single organization, one with a purportedly "strong" or unique culture, some of the ways in which private decisions are made in the context of organizational life are

beginning to emerge. Before I go much further, a few reminders are in order.

Standard Enterprises is not a "typical" organization with respect to human resource issues. It is a company that has publicly committed itself, time and time again, to taking all possible steps to provide for and support its employees. It is committed to gender equity. It has poured millions of dollars into training programs, benefits, and other resources for its employees. It has even taken a number of initiatives to study, debate, and respond to the current issues around work/family balance. A number of benefit programs have already been restructured to facilitate the diffusion of flexible working schedules to more employees. This is a company that is on record as acknowledging and supporting its employees with children. Patricia's remarks on these aspects of the Standard Enterprises culture are representative of remarks made by others:

> The Company prides itself...in being at the forefront of human resource issues, so if anything, it's that pride that drives them...It's an ego thing. There is something about the Company -- it's a young group of workers still, most of them are babyboomer types, the age group, the very senior age group is very small, so that most everybody has been influenced by all the things that influenced me and my friends. The peace movement, women's lib, all that junk ... and I think a whole corporation made up of those folks in conjunction with a founder who is extremely ethical, extremely ethical, is sort of congealed into an atmosphere that is very permissive, receptive to this kind of change, and who even enjoys the underground culture part of it, you know what I mean. Sort of beating the system a little bit.

This study suggests, however, that initiatives to achieve gender equity and workplace flexibility may ultimately be constrained by some basic and deep-seated contradictions, rooted in the organization's very identity and the ideology around professional employment, so deeply held by professionals in the organization.

In their very interesting study of emotional labor in high commitment organizations, Van Maanen and Kunda (1990) argue that certain types of organizational cultures exact more work of the emotional kind. They suggest that emotional labor becomes particularly important when the objective structure of the work is ambiguous. The more ambiguous the work, the more the feelings that

the employee brings to the work are of concern to the manager:

> Organizations displaying pronounced concern for culture
> are precisely those organizations where member adherence
> to a set of feeling rules is considered by management
> crucial to the enterprise. (Van Maanen and Kunda, p. 56)

Picking up on ideas advanced by Arlie Hochschild (1983), they submit that some employers are no longer satisfied with the physical or mental/intellectual labor of employees; such employers also demand a type of emotional labor. Culture, they argue, becomes a control device which informs, guides, and disciplines the emotions of organizational members.

Van Maanen and Kunda expose the possible underside of the "organizational culture" fad which has captured the fascination of American managers. Their work exposes the mechanisms by which those who consciously and strategically seek to define and redefine organizational cultures in order to obtain more commitment or effort from employees accomplish their ends. The idea, essentially, is that leaders (and their consultants) manipulate the culture, which in turn affects the emotions of employees, which in turn affects the employees' behaviors. Their work identifies ways in which "organizational life can be structured to channel, mold, enhance, sustain or otherwise influence the feelings organizational members assume toward the organization itself, others in the organization, customers of the organizations, and, crucially, themselves." Comments from our interviewees suggest that it is extremely difficult to break free from this ideology, and that the psychic costs of liberating oneself are high.

The appropriation of emotions by the organization has ramifications for the establishment and diffusion of alternative working arrangements, as is evident by comparing and contrasting the ways in which the women in our story finessed this issue. The picture that emerges is that individuals who bluntly challenged this "feeling rule" and openly stated that family was their top priority were

unable to maintain the trust of their co-workers they needed. Those who actively
endorsed this rule were trusted -- and privileged to more flexible working
conditions.

Gail Hanson, the individual in our story who has most clearly challenged
the emotional norms of the Standard Enterprises culture, still carries the
emotional norms from the organization in her mind. After leaving Standard
Enterprises, Gail Hanson was hired to work part-time in administration at a local
university. Though the job was originally designed as a full-time position, Gail
was able to negotiate a part-time, flexible schedule as a condition for accepting
the job. This agreement was made only after she visited with and obtained an
agreement from her manager and her peers. Even though Gail made the fact that
her family responsibilities were a priority clear to her co-workers at this new
job, she <u>still</u> expressed some reservation about claiming these values when we
interviewed her:

> I had to fight for myself. I had to really step back and think about what
> priorities are and -- you know, in the long run, if I take some time off from
> my career or if I slow down, that's ok because what's important to me now,
> ... and I would not have said this when I graduated from business school ..
> there's just more important things to me in life right now than my career.
> That's the kind of thing I'm not sure I want anyone else at [this job] to
> know....but you know, I think they know that about me. I actually think I
> make that pretty clear when I interviewed...

Two aspects of this statement are interesting. First, Gail distinguishes between
the emotional norms she complied with as a business school graduate entering the
professional world and her current emotional state. The feelings she has now of
putting her family ahead of her career goals still seem to run counter to the
emotional norms she associates with the ambitious professional she feels she once
was. Claiming that there are other aspects of her life that are more important
to her than her career means she must make a distinction between her priorities
when she worked for Standard Enterprises and her 'new' priorities. The two do
not mix. Second, Gail is still a bit ambivalent about the propriety of this

feeling, even in an employment situation in which she has made these priorities explicit. It is a feeling or set of values she continues to experience, on some level, as deviant. Her view of herself as a competent professional who produces quality work and her view of herself as a parent who values her child above her career are still difficult to reconcile. She still feels that her reputation with her co-workers is somehow tarnished if they know of the precedence she gives to her family life.

We see in Gail's remark a conflict between her ideas about professionalism and work and her personal feelings about taking care of herself and her family. Her comment illustrates the tension and dissonance between the prevailing or dominant ideology about professionalism -- that work can and should take precedence in one's life -- and the subordinate ideology about the value of family and children. A value on family and children appears to be a marginalized emotion, one not easily expressed in the context of organizational life -- at least not without some degree of fear.

The tension between the prevailing notions about work and professionalism in this organization are directly at odds with the ideas which women like Gail and (increasingly) Jill hold. In challenging the prevailing or dominant ideology of the organization, these women introduce a new type of conflict into the organization. Conflict in organizations can be either overt or covert, expressed or suppressed. Dominant ideologies can operate to suppress conflict in organizations by marginalizing the world views or perspectives that groups with less power may hold. Such ideological assumptions are not necessarily more rational or more meritorious than alternative normative views; they are simply espoused by those who wield power in organizations and they are recreated and reinforced in the daily events of organizational life.[14]

One way to interpret what we observe at Standard Enterprises, using Schein's language and perspective, is that the organization is in a stage of experimentation and debate around workplace flexibility and family issues. Organizational learning occurs as individual members offer different interpretations of the stated organizational "values" or mission. As different ideas or strategies survive the test of debate and confrontation, and ultimately time, they become transformed and accepted into the "basic assumptions" of the organization. Once accepted by enough members, they become invisible and unquestioned. It is possible that the current experimentation and debate around workplace flexibility will eventually lead to a shift in the basic assumptions about work. If the values in this organization's culture are socially constructed through shared experiences, then we might expect a new notion of professionalism to emerge as more and more employees break the prevailing or traditional emotional norms. It is quite possible that the confusion, pain, and inconsistency that we observe today is simply a stage in the evolution toward a new and different set of emotional norms. Alternatively, the dominant ideology of the more traditional organization may come to negate the emerging ideology that would be more family friendly.

Three scenarios for the future are possible. In the first scenario, the organization of work and the attitudinal norms characteristic of organizations such as Standard Enterprises are re-evaluated and restructured to enable men and women with family responsibilities or loyalties to remain productive in their organizational roles. The fundamental assumption that professional work requires employees to place work above all other priorities and commitments in their life would be re-examined. A new way of thinking about commitment would emerge, one based on trust and accountability for reasonably defined projects. In this

scenario, the proposal Gail made to assure her peers that she would execute the stock program in a quality manner would be sufficient; she would not be required to comply with an emotional norm of placing work above her family. She would be held accountable solely for the output of, rather than the emotional input to, her work.

In the second two scenarios, the work organization and the basic attitudinal norms underpinning it would remain essentially unchanged. In such a context, two paths are possible. In the first, the option to scale back one's career is exercised primarily by women. The Gails, Jills, Kathys, and Patricias of the organization make adjustments in their commitment to work in order to care for their families, and continue to pay an organizational price. However, as the penalties for taking time out of work and breaking the cultural norms remain asymmetric for men and women, the men of the organization do not make such concessions. The long term implications of this scenario for gender equity at higher levels of the organization are bleak.

Finally, it is possible that the cultural norms of the work place will remain unchanged, and that women will increasingly comply with the demands, both emotional and temporal, of organizational life. A sort of self-selection would take place, whereby individuals (men and women) with minimal or non-existent family demands would make the investments necessary to succeed by conventional standards. Those with commitments outside of the organization would remain in lower level positions. Consistent with a conservative, neo-classical model of labor markets, there is a certain intuitive appeal to this scenario. However, our discussion with Renee revealed costs to this picture that are too often invisible.

X. POSSIBLE LEVERS FOR CHANGE

If some of the most powerful factors inhibiting the diffusion of flexible work arrangements lie below the surface of organizational life, the strategies for bringing about change on this issue need to be broadened. It may not be sufficient to lay policies and procedures on top of an organization where there are deep-seated attitudes and emotional norms limiting take-up of the options. In this section, we advance the ideas and suggestions from our respondents for how organizations such as Standard Enterprises might approach change on this issue.

One suggestion that came up was that the organization needed to think about better defining the work and the jobs that need to be done. Only with better definition of the work would it be possible to conceive of smaller "chunks" of work for which employees might be responsible. In our framework, this would amount to downplaying the role of relationships in defining the work at Standard Enterprises, thereby marginalizing the extent to which emotional norms entered the picture. By making the entire system more objective, more measurable, the subjective and uncomfortable influences we explore in this case study would presumably be less salient in determining outcomes. Whether or not organizations that only recently began to embrace fluidity and "lack of structure" will embrace a return to more clearly defined work and roles is an open question.

A second suggestion, one made by a number of respondents, implied a redefinition of the organizational "culture". At Standard Enterprises, the founder and CEO is an extraordinarily ethical and charismatic leader. Mary Morgan spoke at length about the ways this individual defines and redefines expectations of employees. He defines the behavioral and emotional norms for the professional workers. Mary detailed the ways he actively cultivates emotions

such as humility, sense of humor, flexibility, simplicity, and courage in those who work for him. He rewards individuals who comply with these norms, and humiliates those who deviate.

These norms permeate down through the organization. With respect to work and family issues generally, and workplace flexibility specifically, our respondents spoke of the need for some leadership at this level. The problem, they said, was the fact that the executives of Standard Enterprises were predominantly male, and that they simply did not think about these issues. As Patricia put it:

> [I]t really has been my experience, that people are pretty much ok with your trying to balance these things. However, the big however, is I think that's less true as you go up in the management structure...I don't really want to say it's just age. It's not that they're not sensitive...But there's a difference. Their whole experience is wildly different. But they're not insensitive. It's just they probably don't make allowances, probably don't even think of it. Just don't think of it.

Renee also spoke of the need to educate the men with whom she works about the tradeoffs that she and her women peers must make. These women feel that a greater amount of sensitivity to and respect for work/family issues in the executive ranks would be an important factor in the diffusion of flexible working arrangements.

Finally, an education or training program offered to expectant parents in which the contradictions between organizational norms and family demands could be openly acknowledged and discussed might be considered. Such a forum might accomplish a couple of things. First, every woman we interviewed spoke of being completely unprepared for the changes that a new baby would bring to their lives. Gail felt she could have handled her situation more effectively had she known what to expect, but, as she said, "How was I to know? I had never had a baby before." Patricia also spoke of being "totally unprepared for it" and not being able to anticipate the implications for her work. An open forum for discussion

might help women (and perhaps even their husbands) deal more proactively and effectively with the decisions about work that need to be made. Being able to plan for such changes would seemingly help individuals make clearer decisions, which would in turn make it easier for the organization to make accommodating arrangements.

A second and critical benefit of such a forum would be to foster a sense of community around these issues. The women we interviewed seemed to have struggled through these issues largely on their own. More often than not, they tended to internalize the conflicts they felt, experiencing such conflicts as internal, personal failings. Isolated from each other and embedded in a culture that tolerates but does not value the claims of family life, the individuals in our study did not really question or challenge the attitudinal norms of the organization. Only a few were able to recognize that the organizational context in which they work, and the emotional norms that permeate that environment, contribute to the dissonance they experience. A forum in which such emotional norms could be identified and discussed might help the employees think of strategies for ameliorating these aspects of organizational life. Those who ultimately chose to scale back work could do so without feeling so isolated, and those like Renee who remained deeply involved would at least be aware of the choices being made. Such forums might also assist in surfacing and addressing the possible gender bias in the way organizational members respond to employees working modified schedules.

XI. Conclusions

Precise characterizations of the Standard Enterprises culture are difficult to come by. Individual respondents seem to have different interpretations of or

feelings about key dimensions of the corporate culture. It is as though the boundaries of the culture are defined by the internal debates. As such, they elude definition in the static sense. While defining the beliefs and traditions that are at the core of the Standard Enterprises culture and operationalizing exactly what they mean in practice may be difficult, if not impossible, specifying beliefs that are outside of the culture, or deviant, is somewhat easier. At Standard Enterprises, making family (or anything outside of work) a number one priority does NOT make an individual a good employee. Such attitudes may be tolerated, and the character or integrity of the individual may be respected by his or her co-workers. Perhaps such attitudes would be tolerated as symbols of the ways in which diversity is part of the Standard Enterprises culture. But tolerating or accepting such attitudes is quite different from seeing a congruence or synergy between such views and employee performance or dedication.

Three aspects of organizational life, then, work simultaneously to sculpt and shape the environment in which the work/family debate takes place. First, the organizational culture. Second, the ways in which success is defined, measured, or, more probably, perceived, in the organization. Finally, the ways in which gender and conflicts around gender are processed, expressed, or resolved. Our research reveals that all three of these issues play a powerful role in shaping thinking about what is possible or probable in terms of organizational responses to work and family issues.

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1.   In this case study, I make no attempt to draw distinctions between 'ideologies', 'basic assumptions' and 'shared values'. All of these terms are used interchangeably to designate ideas and beliefs that permeate the thinking of organizational members and guide their decisions.

     Bendix (1956) defines managerial ideology as "all ideas which are espoused by or for those who exercise authority in economic enterprises and which seek to explain and justify that authority" (p. 2, footnote). 'Shared values' or 'assumptions', on the other hand, can be observed in groups which have no hierarchical structure and can exist without serving any ulterior purpose.

In using these terms interchangeably, I remain agnostic on the issue of whether or not basic values I discuss are naturally occurring in the organization (basic values), or, alternatively, whether leaders within the hierarchy construct and cultivate these basic beliefs within the organization with the purpose of legitimizing control and power (an ideology). I see this as an extremely important and critical issue to understand, but one which must await more in depth research and analysis. I concentrate more on the <u>effects</u> of the system of shared beliefs on the diffusion of alternative work arrangements than on the <u>origins</u> of these beliefs.

2. See Kanter (1977) for an interesting and thorough analysis of the research on work and family issues and the historical tendency for researchers to think about the two spheres as separate and distinct. She traces the historical roots of what she terms "the myth of separate worlds", the notion that the occupational lives of individuals at work are not affected by family issues, and vice versa, that dominates research. She identifies five aspects of work structure and work organization that impact the family system: 1) absorptiveness, 2) time and timing, 3) reward and resources, 4) world view and culture, and 5) emotional climate. While each of these aspects is explored to some degree in our case study, we concentrate on the fourth dimension of world view and culture. Kanter's comments in 1977 seem appropriate a decade or so later. Commenting on the extent to which socialization into the workplace can spill over into family life, she writes:

> Indeed, it is striking just how little attention has been paid to work in studies of adult socialization. While there has been research on how people are socialized <u>into</u> jobs, there has been virtually none on the socialization effects of jobs for other life settings. Yet, not only do work situations carry characteristic orientations, they may also include specific and formal learning events that can themselves have spillover potential (p.46).

3.   One difficulty with thinking about organizational culture is the fact that the boundaries of the phenomenon are difficult to define. Organizations are embedded in a wider and equally pervasive culture which informs our thinking about work, professionalism, rationality, and so on. One might imagine a set of concentric circles, with the norms of a work group surrounded by the norms of an organization which are in turn surrounded by the norms of the wider community in which the organization operates. Distinguishing what is unique to one part of the system from all other parts of the system is, arguably, an exercise in futility. Understanding the ways in which "organizational culture" is both defined and reinforced by cultural norms in the rest of society is the focus of

interesting recent research. (Adams and Hill Ingersoll, 1990).

Because of this somewhat imprecise specification of where organizational culture begins and ends, I prefer to work with the concept of a dominant ideology which operates in and through organizational contexts. The conflict I am exploring is that which exists between the ideas, beliefs and assumptions which are dominant in organizational life and the ideas and beliefs which are characteristic of individuals who feel their family responsibilities are their first priority.

4. We draw on Schein's (1985) concept of the basic underlying assumptions in this analysis. Schein identifies three levels of organizational culture: the artifacts and creations (technology, art, visible and audible behavior patterns); the values (hypotheses about acceptable norms and strategies that are testable in the environment and by social consensus); and basic assumptions (regarding reality, time, space, human nature, and human relationships). According to Schein, values are notions that the organizational leader or members may hold about reality. Such stated values are debateable, and subject to testing over time. If a particular value proves robust and produces successful outcomes overtime, it becomes embedded in the deeper level of organizational life that Schein calls 'basic assumptions'. At this level, alternative assumptions are no longer visible. Schein writes:

> Basic assumptions...have become so taken for granted that one finds little variation within a cultural unit. In fact, if a basic assumption is strongly held in a group, members would find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable. For example, in a group whose basic assumption is that the individual's rights superaede those of the group, members would find it inconceivable that they should commit suicide or in some other way sacrifice themselves to the group even if they had dishonored the group. In a company in a capitaliat country, it is inconceivable that one might sell products at a financial loss or that it does not matter whether a product works. (Schein, p. 18).

5. Interestingly, ALL of the women we interviewed spoke highly of the level of support in taking care of household and child care responsibilities they receive from their husbands. In Arlie Hochschild's (1989) terminology, these are all couples which would be characterized as following the "egalitarian" model of relationship. However, our interviews revealed evidence that suggests that the behavior of these couples, like those Hochschild followed, is not always consistent with the notion of equality that they profess to hold. For example, while Patricia Clark says the idea of her husband taking off time from work was discussed, she also seemed extremely interested in seeing him focus on establishing himself professionally. Patricia:

> I thought it was really unfair. I had years to devote singlemindedly to my career, and he, just because of circumstances, didn't, and that didn't seem right, so we decided not to do that... I've also, for the same reason, decided that I'm not aggressively pursuing, furthering my career, because I don't think you can have 2 people doing that at the same time.

Although she earns far more money than Tom does, she is also the one who takes

time off from work. She appears to have primary responsibility for child care.

Similarly, both Jill Myers and Karl Pohl talked about Jill's investment and dedication to her career being somewhat stronger than Karl's. However, Karl actively encouraged Jill to scale back her career while their children were young. According to Jill, the possibility of Karl taking time off had never been seriously discussed: "I just don't think it's accepted for a man to do that." And from Karl's point of view, it would never be possible:

> Here, in this environment, if I asked my boss to be the Director of Employee Relations on a part-time basis, he'd laugh! It just wouldn't be possible, I don't think.

Similar incongruities between the stated philosophy of equality and the actual decisions and behaviors of the couples appeared in each of our interviews, to greater and lesser degrees. This is not to minimize the ways in which these men DO actively contribute to the effort around household and child care responsibilities, for they all are certainly more involved than the traditional male model. What is interesting are the apparent gaps between the espoused model and the actual model in use. For a fascinating and more extensive account of this phenomenon, see Hochschild (1989).

6. These profiles have been constructed from the comments of the respondents. Each of the respondents provided a retrospective account of events, answering questions about what had happened at previous points in time and how they had felt about such happenings at the time that they happened. The precision with which the respondents accurately recalled details can not be evaluated. However, these stories do reveal the way the respondents themselves see and make sense of their journey, and are rich and meaningful if read in the proper light.

7. Throughout this paper, we will argue that the emotional norms of the work place hinder initiatives to make the workplace more flexible for working parents. There is a normative statement implied in these pages, that the costs of the current "system" are high, too high in fact. The counter argument, of course, is that there are certain rewards to individuals and to the community that flow from the contributions of committed workers, workers who place the demands of work above all else in their lives. Individuals select themselves into and out of these positions. Using a rational choice argument, we might say that individuals choose these jobs.

What we are arguing, however, is that the organizational context acts in subtle ways to re-order and re-define the priorities and decisions that employees make. Sometimes, these decisions, or trade-offs, are best for the organization, but extremely costly to family life. As our data will show, such decisions even carry subtle costs for the organization as well.

8. In Walton's (1985) framework, Standard Enterprises would be representative of the type of firm following the "commitment model" of organization, as distinguished from the "control model".

9. For a more extensive analysis of this type of organization, see Schein (1985). The organization referred to as "Action" is very similar to Standard Enterprises in many respects.

10. See Jackall (1988) for a fascinating discussion of perceptions and the management of perceptions in organizational life. In a detailed and insightful analysis of the social construction of organizational life, Jackall shows how the "face" an employee wears or puts on a particular set of activities is critical. In particular, he documents the kinds of behaviors, attitudes, and norms with which employees must comply if they are to be successful in management. The construction and maintenance of appropriate images and illusions is central to advancement in Jackall's analysis.

11. Walton (1985) compares and contrasts two distinct organizational models along a number of dimensions. The "control model" of management, the traditional type of organizational structure, is characterized by clearly defined job responsibilities, standards, the notion that labor is a variable cost in production, and specialization. The "commitment model" of management, descriptive generally of Standard Enterprises, is one with broader job definition, fewer hierarchical levels, emphasis on employee voice and a view of employees as stakeholders. [Walton also identifies a third model, the transitional model, through which organizations may move on the path toward commitment.] Each model is based on a distinct managerial philosophy or attitude toward employees. The theme of the control model is "to establish order, exercise control, and achieve efficiency in the application of the workforce" (p. 243). The theme of the commitment model, on the other hand, is "to first elicit employee commitment and then to expect effectiveness and efficiency to follow as second-order consequences" (p. 245).

     Elements of Gail's negotiations with Patricia and Jill seem to suggest that the themes underlying the control model of management are not easily or completely filtered out of commitment-type organizations such as Standard Enterprises. Indeed, in this case, commitment itself seems to have taken on controlling aspects. When commitment becomes a condition of employment, it takes on a controlling function. In this case, the organization seems to have moved beyond "eliciting" commitment to actually "demanding" compliance with a commitment standard based on the precedence of work in one's life.

12. Expanding on the ideas in Walton (1985) and Hackman (1985), the "commitment model" of management is based on an entirely different orientation and philosophy about employees than is the "control model". The control model is based on a rather negative view of human nature generally, and the motivations of employees specifically. Control, standards, guidelines are needed to monitor behavior and insure performance. The employer must take steps to protect itself against the abuses of employees.

     The commitment model is based on a more positive view of employees. The idea is to empower employees to do their best, the presumption being that doing

a good job is the natural orientation of most employees. The presumption is, theoretically, positive.

Gail's comment in this section is illustrative of the type of relationships that would exist under the commitment model. Relationships based on trust, rather than control, are the ideal. The fact that Patricia and Jill felt wary or uncomfortable with this view suggests that some of the underlying beliefs about human behavior that mark the control model persist on some level in Standard Enterprises.

13. Pleck (1976) discusses four structural dimensions of the work-family role system: the male work role, the female work role, the male family role, and the female family role. He explores the inter-relationships between these different roles, and the implications for the emergence and diffusion of a less sex-segregated society. One dynamic that perpetuates the traditional allocation of roles, writes Pleck, is the asymmetrically permeable boundaries between work and family roles for men and women. For women, family responsibilities tend to permeate the work role; for men, the spillover works in the opposite direction. Pleck suggests that a more equal distribution of roles will require a reconceptualization of the work roles for men (and for women) so that the demands of the family roles can be shared.

Interestingly, 15 years after Pleck's article, his analysis is still apt. Patricia's words and perspective on work and family reflect the work role Pleck associated with men. To succeed, then, women appear to be adopting the work role orientation of the traditional male employee, allowing work to permeate family but not vice versa. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that the restructuring and redefining of work roles Pleck envisioned is taking place in a broad way.

14. One technique for exposing the ways in which such normative assumptions operate is called "deconstruction". Deconstructionists examine the silences, the gaps and pauses in the words which individuals use to explore the limits or boundaries of the ideological framework from which the individual speaks.

> It is in the significant silences of e text, in its gaps and absences that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt. It is these silences which the critic must make 'speak'. The text is, as it were, ideologically forbidden to say certain things; in trying to tell the truth in his own way, for example, the author finds himself forced to reveal the limits of the ideology within which he writes. He is forced to reveal its gaps and silences, what it is unable to articulate. Because a text contains these gaps and silences, it is always incomplete. Far from constituting a rounded, coherent whole, it displays a conflict and contradiction of meanings; and the significance of the work lies in the difference rather than unity between these meanings. (Eagleton, 1976: 34-35; quoted in Martin, 1987: 6-7).

While we are working with the spoken, rather than written, words of our respondents, this analytic technique can provide an interesting and provocative lens for examining the tensions around workplace flexibility at Standard Enterprises. This analysis is not meant to constitute a definitive or irrefutable argument about the ideological sub-strata of the organization. Rather, this exercise is designed to make visible the underlying conflicts and

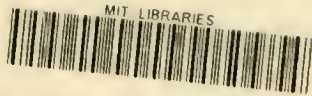tensions these employees seek to resolve as they attempt to structure their professional lives around their family responsibilities.