RE-LINKING WORK AND FAMILY: A CATALYST FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE*

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PART I

BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT*

Since the Industrial Revolution, work life and family life have been structured as separate, with work belonging to men and family to women. Though this conception has never coincided with the full reality of people's lives, workplaces, communities, and families have been organized *as if* only men go to work and only women stay at home. In the second half of this century, the variations from this presumed reality have increased, with more women entering the workplace and, recently, with more men doing somewhat more in families. Despite these changes, workplace structures, practices, and expectations are still based on the notion that employees should be willing and able to make work their main priority, over and above their family, community, or other concerns of their private lives. This situation implies that men's and women's opportunities and responsibilities -- and so the constraints on them -- are not equitably divided.

Concern about the consequences of this inequity -- for business, people, families, and communities -- prompted the project described in this report. We show that the gendered separation of work and family can be bridged, and that it is possible to bring together the needs of these various constituencies by workplace changes anchored in a radically different conception of how these elements are linked.

The strict separation of work and family has not always prevailed. In primarily agrarian societies, women were important contributors to the economy. Once production moved to the factories and cities, men were the breadwinners while women who were economically able stayed at home, with primary responsibility for care in the family and the community. Along with this division of labor, came the sense that work and family are necessarily distinct. While this sense of separation became a societal norm, it was not true in practice for all women -- particularly not for working class and minority women who had to work for financial reasons.

For a long time, it was primarily national emergencies that led to a blurring of the societal separation between work and family life.[1] When nations were in need of women's labor, it became possible to bridge this separation, though only to the extent of concern about the care of children. For instance, during the American Civil War and World War I, some employers opened temporary child care centers to meet worker shortages. World War II gave rise to another round of employer sponsored centers, which had government support. In 1940, the US Congress passed legislation that encouraged the creation of community-based child care programs in defense plant areas to help the war effort.

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* Dana Friedman, from the Families and Work Institute, contributed to this section.

After the war, many women returned home, the work force was replenished by returning servicemen, and work was again *presumed* to be the domain of men, and family that of women. This notion was brought to public attention in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. In the 1960s, with the entry of increasing numbers of white middle class women into paid employment, the participation of women in the labor force began once more to rise and the decade also saw the beginning of the Women's Movement. But serious attention by business to their employees' work-family concerns did not begin until the early 1980s.

Academic approaches to these issues were embedded in the same cultural view of separation. For example, there was a sociology of work and a sociology of the family, a psychology of occupations and a psychology of marital relations.[2] Each sub-discipline had its own specialists with their own theories and language, and there was little communication between them. In the '60s and '70s, a few scholars with interdisciplinary perspectives identified the separation as a problem and began to reconceptualize the relationship between the work and family spheres of life. Prompted by their findings in a study of couples simultaneously leaving college for their first jobs and getting married, and reported in their 1965 article "Work and Family in Contemporary Society," Rhona and Robert Rapoport began an intensive study of families in which both husbands and wives contributed regularly to the economy as well as sustaining a family life with at least one child. The results of this project were published in 1971 in *Dual-Career Families* and in the 1976 second edition entitled *Dual-Career Families Re-examined.* The project began at a time of societal concern about the loss to the labor force of highly qualified women who routinely left their work when they married and had children. The families studied were termed Dual Career Families and this term has since become part of the vernacular; it signified a type of family that self-consciously rejected the conventional pattern of separate and, often, subservient wife with husband as sole economic provider. The dual career families in this study were not primarily concerned with equality or equity. Yet, the choices they made constituted new ways of integrating work and family life. The working partnerships they evolved were associated with the tensions and stresses involved in societies with few social supports and few role models for the pattern; but they were perceived as preferable to the conventional pattern. This study was the forerunner of many studies on dual career and dual earner families. It also has direct links to the present study.

The couples the Rapoports studied were white and highly educated. A rethinking of the links between work and family among working class couples, primarily white, appeared in a 1978 book by Chaya Piotrkowski entitled *Work and the Family System.* Women in these families had always been in the labor force for economic reasons, but the institutional and cultural norm of separation functioned for them as well, despite, or perhaps because of their personal experience.

Some of this '70s writing attempted to reconceptualize the links between work and family, while other research centered on spillover problems from work to family, conflict between work and family life, and the ensuing stress. This latter approach usually assumed a trade-off or adversarial model between work and family. But the academic work did not reach into business, and employees' families were still largely ignored by their employers, who acted as if workers did not have lives outside of their

employment. From the point of view of employment, the two areas were still presumed to be completely separate.

Nonetheless, when Rosabeth Moss Kanter provided the first full-scale review of work and family interactions in her 1977 monograph, *Work and Family in the United States*, she found a number of social forces giving rise to concern about work-family interactions. She traced the historical forces making for the gap between the two spheres and those forces that might reverse that trend. Kanter showed that family life suffered as work achieved primary importance in many people's lives, particularly among those who, while members both of a family system and an occupational system, often act as if they are only in one system. She argued that a better balance would be achieved if families "fought back" and women became more active in work as well as at home.

The work of the '70s began to raise issues about how society and work organizations, in particular, could better take into account the interface between the personal lives of people and their work. To do this requires understanding, according to Kanter, the varieties of "patterns of separateness and connectedness between working and loving, occupations and families...and examining the consequences of these patterns of work-family associations for the lives of American men, women and children." Also, during this time, Edgar H. Schein and associates began to link family issues to career dynamics, postulating a three way model of career, family, and self.[3]

In 1977, Joseph Pleck conceptualized the link between family and work as different for men and women: the boundary, he wrote in an article entitled "The Work-Family Role System," is differentially permeable for each sex. Though more recent empirical work has not always supported this view, whether men and women should be seen as the same or as different has been an academic theme throughout these years.[4] What is clearly true is that women still bear the greater burden of the "second shift" -- aptly named by Arlie Hochschild in an influential 1989 book of that name.

Ellen Galinsky's and Diane Hughes' early 1980s study of work-family issues in a corporation (one of the first), which was also supported by the Ford Foundation, showed that job characteristics were related both to the ability of workers to balance work with family and to the state of their marriage. In other words, what happens in the workplace matters for families. And, toward the end of the 1980s as more and more women from all classes began to enter the work force, Lotte Bailyn began to link the transformations that were going on in corporations -- more participation and self-management, Total Quality Management, empowerment, reengineering -- to the changes occurring in family patterns, and showed how certain assumptions and structures of work were systematically exacerbating the tensions arising from the pulls of these two areas. Her work, summarized in a 1993 book *Breaking the Mold*, is another specific precursor of the present project. It also reflects the concern with total working time (including housework) that Juliet Schor, in her 1991 book *The Overworked American*, brought to public attention.

Though much of this academic work was ignored by public policy and by business, there were important developments also in those institutions. Toward the middle of the 1970s, some industrial countries introduced equal opportunity legislation. Also, economic and demographic analyses predicted a serious skills shortage by the end

of the century. This combined, in the 1980s, with the more rapidly increasing participation of women in the labor force, particularly among mothers of young children.[5] At this point, some businesses began to be concerned about their employees' non-work lives -- as for instance in the development of Employee Assistance Programs -- but they did so without changing the underlying framework of the presumed separation between work and family.

During this time, companies slowly evolved work-family policies and programs and centered them in their human resource departments, which defined them as marginal to business concerns. These efforts, despite legal strictures to the contrary, were geared primarily to women, particularly those with children. This led employees who were single or not parents to worry about having to take over the work of those on leave, and also created a category of workers who were seen as not fully committed to their work ("the mommy track"). The belief continued to be that work and family were adversarial and that accommodations to employees' families or other private concerns were not of strategic importance for business.

With the current widespread downsizing of American corporations, work-family policies and programs have flourished, even though it looked as if they might be casualties of restructuring. (A 1991 benchmarking study by the Families and Work Institute found that the strongest predictor of corporate family friendliness was change -- either a downsizing, merger, or replaced CEO.) Companies are concerned about the morale of those who survive a downsizing and on whom they have to depend to do more with less. The provision of inexpensive dependent care initiatives and flexibility are seen as ways to support the remaining work force. Companies also hoped that these programs might help them deal with a problem they were just beginning to be aware of: that though they were recruiting more women, they were not very successful in retaining them or in moving them up the organization.

So now, in 1996, many large companies have work-family initiatives underway, and work-family issues are the subject of numerous conferences by non-profit, government, academic, and business trade organizations. Many federal, state, and city agencies have created work-family task forces, clearing houses, or education campaigns. In addition, a work-family industry has formed and continues to grow. Major benefits consulting firms have developed a work-family practice area and there is a proliferation of work-family managers in companies. And, since passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, the US is now somewhat closer to other industrialized countries in legislating at least some provision for dealing with pregnancy, parenting, adoption, and family illness.

This evolution can be described by some predictable patterns that companies follow as they begin to address work-family concerns at the workplace. The Families and Work Institute has discussed these patterns in terms of stages. Initially, companies are generally focused on child care. At this stage, they recognize the increase in the number of women employed by the company, and believe that by accommodating family needs they may reap greater commitment and loyalty, or fewer absences. Companies at this stage generally want proof of a return on investment in work-family programs in order to legitimize action.

Though there is often talk of child care centers at this stage, companies soon realize that a center is not necessarily the most practical or cost effective response, and settle on developing a referral service for finding child care, flexible benefits that offer pre-tax dollars to pay for child care, or parenting seminars to help reduce stress. A company at this stage is aware of the costs of *not* responding to the needs of employees' children, but once it has developed one or two initiatives, management assumes that it has "solved the problem" and looks forward to returning to "real" business issues.

In a second stage, companies begin to see the benefits of responding, and broaden the kinds of issues they address. The impetus now moves beyond the loss of productivity that child care appears to cause and includes also concerns about recruitment and retention. Flexible work arrangements are the hallmark of this stage. Policies are changed and more alternatives are offered. Training for managers often accompanies the roll-out of these more flexible work options because flexibility is permitted only at the discretion of the manager. Overall, companies at this stage have moved away from a fragmentary approach to work and family policies, and have adopted an expanded and more integrated constellation of policies and programs.

At a third stage, the emphasis is less on recruitment or retention per se, but rather on how to fully engage employees' potential for their jobs. At this stage, companies are forced to recognize that an innovative set of policies and programs will be effective only if they exist within a supportive culture. They begin to realize that even when a full range of flexible work options is offered, people are reluctant to use them because of perceived career sanctions for those who do. Mothers taking the full maternity leave, for instance, may not be promoted or may be passed over for challenging assignments. Similarly, men may be reluctant to ask for paternity leave, even if it is officially available. Trying to deal with this gap between the intent of the policies and their implementation is the critical challenge.

Companies at this stage also begin to broaden the concept of family to include those without children or elderly dependents. They begin to convey a stronger message about including men and non-traditional families, such as gay couples, domestic partners, and grandparents raising grandchildren. As a result, many companies at this stage change the terminology from "work-family" to "work-life" or "work-personal life."

Each of these developments enlarges the scope of assistance that companies provide to their employees in helping them integrate their work and private lives. None, however, deviates significantly from the underlying conception that these two spheres inherently compete with each other, and that companies must do something about the private sphere in order to ensure that their employees will contribute their all to the work for which they are paid. No longer conceived as entirely separate, the two areas are now seen to overlap. Companies acknowledge the overlap by providing special people or departments to deal with the issues so that the main work of the business can proceed without interference from employees' personal lives.

And so, work-family issues remain largely individual accommodations to be meted out by managers. This notion of work-family support as an individual accommodation leads to some of the problems with current practice. Managers generally grant employee requests for family support only for above average performers

who have "given their all" in the past. In this sense, flexibility becomes a reward. Or, the company may expect payback in the future, in which case flexibility is a favor, with the expectation of a quid pro quo. Both ways of thinking lead to merit-based leaves, i.e. time off for family needs only to those who "deserve it." Such an approach inhibits use of flexible work arrangements and does not allow an employee who is seen as an average performer -- perhaps because of work-family conflict -- to receive the support he or she needs to contribute to both the job and the family. There is no collective purpose that is understood or articulated that would account for a more strategic view of these issues. Individuals do not demand such a response because of the potential threats to their jobs in a time of high job insecurity. So the subject of meeting family needs is not linked to strategic organizational goals.

Thus we see the business response to these issues moving from a view of employees' private lives as completely off the screen, to one where their concerns are taken care of on the margins by special groups designed to help individual people deal with family needs. Our vision, on which this project is based, is different. *Rather than adversarial, we conceive of these areas of life experience as intrinsically, inherently, and inextricably linked.* Our work shows a strategic linking of employee work-family concerns (family in its broadest meaning -- see box) to work and business goals. But we are concerned that the linking be done in an equitable way, to the benefit of men and women, business, and also families and communities. Though our project did not focus directly on people's community involvements, this is an important area since the increased emphasis on paid employment by both men and women has decreased citizen participation in community life.

> **Our use of the word family goes well beyond the narrow definition of immediate kin. We intend it to apply to all those involvements and commitments that a person has outside of his or her employment. We use it, therefore, almost metaphorically, to stand for all aspects of an individual's personal life.**

One of the goals of this project -- to further gender equity -- is a challenge, particularly in today's socio-political climate. To many in business the term means pay equity between men and women, or getting women to the top, or numbers that need to be defended against internal or external critics. To them it means affirmative action and dealing with such sensitive issues as sexual harassment. These are all part of what we mean, but are not the essence of our conception of this term.

When we talk of gender equity, we refer to issues that concern women ***and*** *men. This is not only a women's issue. Men have gender, just as women do; as whites have race just as blacks do. Men's over-identification with work and occupation as a source of self-esteem feeds gender inequity just as does the presumption that women alone are responsible for family and community. Our sense of an equitable society is one where each sex depends for its sense of worth and identity on both spheres; where people and families regard the distribution of opportunities and constraints as fair; and where all social institutions value and support both economic and domestic enterprise.*

This is not easy to achieve. It requires looking at and questioning basic assumptions we all have about who we are, how we do our work, and how we participate in our families and communities. Though the workplace often inhibits the realization of such equity, we do believe that it has the potential to effect basic change. Our project reflects this belief.

The rest of this report focuses on our discoveries and the methods we used in our work. It should be remembered, however, that this is a study in progress. Most major changes in organizations take 8-10 years. We have made some important changes but making them stick requires further work. It is also important to remember that although we are concerned with work-family integration, the study so far has focused on the work side with some ideas about family. Future studies need to enlarge the scope to include families and communities.

PART II

DISCOVERIES: STRATEGIC LINKING OF WORK, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY, AND GENDER EQUITY

Unless otherwise noted, all the examples and quotes in this section come from the work at the Xerox Corporation.

Introduction

Our project combines work -- its structure and the culture surrounding it -- with work-family issues and with gender equity. These links are not usually made in organizations. Work-family concerns and gender equity are typically seen as problems to be dealt with at the margins, by staff groups separate from line management, and not central to the structure of work or the culture surrounding it. **Our key discovery is that the separation of these issues is detrimental to both business and employee goals.** Reframing and re-linking these elements provide a strategic opportunity to achieve a more equitable and productive workplace. In this part of the report, we describe the findings that led to this central proposition.

The first section of this Part deals with the **link between work, family, and gender equity**. At each site we found that basic assumptions about work need to be questioned and changed in order to create the potential for real gender equity at work, in the family, and in the community. Though in reality it is impossible for either men or women to keep these domains strictly separate, our findings show that the cultural assumption of separation impairs both work efficiency and social stability. The difficulties that men and women encounter from this assumption are different, but in all cases they reflect the current structuring of work, which favors men in the workplace and women in the community and the family.

The second section addresses this issue by stressing the **necessity to reframe work-family issues as systemic concerns requiring systemic solutions** rather than individual issues requiring individual accommodations. This is a necessary condition for productive linking of business goals with private lives. As long as work-family issues are constructed as only individual problems, to be dealt with idiosyncratically by each manager, the synergy we discovered will not be forthcoming. Without a collective understanding that personal issues affect all employees -- often in different ways -- it will not be possible systematically to relate them to the work systems and practices in the work environment.

The third and final section shows the double advantage of linking work-family needs to work. Initially we hoped to show that changing work to help people lead more integrated lives would not unduly interfere with business goals; we found, however, that **these same changes actually further the aims of the business**. The way this takes place differs by site, depending on tasks, types of employees, and occupational and

organizational culture. Though we realize that to achieve true gender equity there must be changes within the family as well as within the workplace, our project did not specifically deal with this connection.

In summary, our work shows that when work-family issues are framed systemically, they can lead to innovations in work practices that help organizations meet their goals and at the same time contribute to the private lives of workers in more equitable ways.

Linking Work, Family, and Gender Equity

What are the barriers to work-family integration and the development of workplaces that are equitable for men and women, even in those companies with leading edge work-family policies and programs? The cultural assumption that separates work from family underlies organizational practices and norms that are problematic for workers -- male and female -- who want to integrate their work and personal lives. As one engineer put it "The problem isn't for those who have decided to put work first and family second. They can do that just fine here. And it isn't for those who have decided to put family first. They won't go far here but that's okay because that's what they've decided is important. The problem is for people like me who want both -- a good family and a good career."

This situation arises from work practices and norms organized around an image of an ideal worker who is "career primary," able and willing to put work first, and for whom time at work is infinitely expandable. At several sites, this translates into work practices that include early morning meetings, planning sessions that run after hours, often ending with the suggestion to "continue this discussion over dinner," and training and development programs that require long absences from home. Moreover, organizational commitment is measured not only by one's ability to meet these work norms, but also through repeated demonstration of a willingness to put work ahead of personal concerns. Thus, at professional levels it is commonplace to be called into work on weekends or evenings to handle emergencies that often could wait till the next day. Informal pressure to delay vacations or schedule them in project "down times" is sometimes intense and commitment is measured by what one manager proudly declared as his definition of a star engineer: "someone who doesn't know enough to go home at night." Indeed, at one site, teams who pulled all-nighters were routinely given standing ovations in the morning by their (presumably less committed) co-workers. At lower levels in the organization this belief in the need to have "career primary" workers translates into tight controls on people's time and flexibility to make *sure* work will not be sacrificed for personal life.

In situations where "ideal workers" are assumed to be those whose first allegiance is to work, people with career aspirations go to great lengths to hide their practical commitments to families. Some people give false reasons for leaving work in the middle of the day; they feel that attending a community board or other civic meeting is not likely to brand them as uncommitted, but taking a child for a physical might.[6] Some secretly take children on business trips with them but make sure no one ever knows. Others leave their computers on in their offices while they pick up children from

sports events so people walking by will think they are in a meeting. Still others send sick children to child care centers and hope they won't get calls to come get them, or on the night shift will lock sleeping children in their cars and use coffee breaks to go check on them. Both men and women with career aspirations strive to present this image of a "career primary" worker who can keep family under control and not let personal issues interfere with work.

While the difficulty of integrating work and family appears to be gender neutral, we found that, because of gender roles and expectations, its effects on men and women are often different. For example, requests for ad hoc, emergency flexibility have few career implications for those -- mostly men -- whose family needs are temporary and short-term. On the other hand, reward systems that value "face time" and perfect attendance have significant career consequences for those -- often women -- who have routine, on-going family responsibilities and must end work at regular hours or use sick days to care for others. Care givers who try to negotiate long-term special arrangements run a greater risk of being branded as less committed or less dependable workers even though many of these arrangements are described in personnel manuals as readily available to all workers.

In the same vein, expectations that women are, or should be, "family primary" tend to taint women as unfit for the demands of organizational life. As a result, some women -- especially those in professional or managerial positions -- feel they have to hide their families altogether. Thus, while men have family pictures on their desks, these women keep their desks clear of all family reminders. While some high level men may be congratulated for occasionally being late for early meetings because they are driving their children to school, many women at these same levels feel pressure to keep their families off the organizational screen, a phenomenon one woman described as "operating under the radar." Indeed, one of the compliments frequently paid high-achieving women is that "you'd never even know she had a child."

Although it is less politically correct than it used to be to suggest that women belong in the home and men belong at work, we found these attitudes and beliefs are still alive and seriously influence organizational practices. One high level male sales representative voiced the attitude of many in explaining: "The problem is greed. If people were content to live on just one income, there would be no problem. What I see is that younger families expect a lavish lifestyle and that means that wives have to work and so we here at the company are trying to accommodate that and, don't get me wrong, I think we should...but on the other hand, it's not really our fault."

This deeply held, but not often expressed, belief that society works best when women stay at home and men go to work, creates real problems for people who step out of gender roles. For example, when women do make the choice to focus primarily on work, there may actually be negative career consequences. One divisional manager, in explaining why one woman had failed a management review process, said: "She probably thought it would be seen as positive that she was willing to sacrifice her family for work. But she has gone through two divorces and who knows who is taking care of those kids...that's not the kind of person we admire." These women are caught in a classic double bind: the work culture mandates subordinating caring for family but punishes them for doing it.

Men experience a similar reaction when they try to step out of gender roles. Although it is possible for them to achieve near hero status for taking on some short-term family responsibility, it is far more difficult for them to use the family policies for any long term arrangements. Managers who decide what requests for flexibility can be accommodated, often make these decisions based on need. Assumptions about gender roles make it very difficult for men to make a strong case based on need and many told us that they don't even try because they believe these long term accommodations are, in reality, available only to women. As one technical supervisor notes: "Men here are seen as wimps by senior management if they talk about their desire to spend time with their families." Thus, men who want to be more involved in family and community and to share more of the responsibility for private sphere experience face significant *organizational* constraints in achieving this goal. Integrating work and family, then, is a different experience for women and men, presenting different challenges and different organizational obstacles. Thus, the cultural separation of work and family by gender and the narrow organizational definition of what constitutes a work-family need unfairly hinder women while purporting to support them, and do not legitimate men's concerns while maintaining a myth of their ideal worker status. The inequity is in the way work-family accommodations are tied to gender even though on paper, at least, work-family benefits are available to all.

Although both men and women spoke poignantly of the pain and unfairness of having to choose between career and family, we found most do not challenge the gender roles that encourage men to be career primary and women to be family primary. Indeed, these gender roles tend to be accepted at a very deep, often unconscious level. One young man who is on the fast track spoke of how he wants to spend more time with his two young children but fears that if he is ever going to provide for them he will have to make the same choice his father did and sacrifice time with them to focus on his career. His sense of the appropriate masculine role seems to dictate that if forced to make a choice it will have to be career. And one young woman who had just passed up a promotion spoke of how "unreasonable" it was for her to even think of taking the job. As she put it, "I chose to have three kids. I couldn't possibly do that job and stay sane. I chose to have these kids and now I have to take care of them. It's just not reasonable to take on a job like that with kids this age." Her view of herself, her sense of femininity, and the current options open to her seem to mean that she has to choose family. Thus women are unfairly constrained in their ability to achieve in the workplace and men are unfairly constrained in their ability to achieve in the family.

Our project challenges these deeply held assumptions that success -- organizational, individual, and societal -- lies in keeping the work and family spheres separate and distinct. By re-linking these spheres, it provides an alternative vision of an ideal worker, a successful organization, and a functional, equitable society. For example, at one of our sites we challenged the image of the ideal worker by documenting the work practices of "integrated" individuals -- people who are able, despite the cultural imperative to the contrary, to link these two arenas. Our documentation of these people's work practices (many of whom were women) found that they used skills more often associated with the private, domestic sphere of life, such as sharing, nurturing, collaborating, and attending to the emotional context of situations. Since these are less valued and often invisible in the workplace or considered inappropriate to it, we created

a language of competence to talk about these activities and the relational skills they required. We called the people "lead users"[7] and described their behavior in terms of goal achievement. We showed that introducing these skills into those more strongly associated with, and more valued by, the public sphere of economic activity, such as rationality, linear thinking, autonomy, and independence, offers a new vision of an ideal worker as one who combines these characteristics. Moreover, it is clearly in the organization's best interest not only to hire individuals who are fully involved in both spheres but to foster and *encourage* this full involvement. Such a way of thinking, however, challenges organizational assumptions about success by recasting the personal sphere as beneficial rather than detrimental to organizational goals.[8]

Though society seems to be based on a gendered separation of work and personal life, in fact, at every site, men *and* women recounted the ways in which their lives are interdependent blends of work and family, and emphasized their desire to have good careers *and* good families. Some workers -- because of their position, their financial resources, or their being defined as valuable employees -- are able, at times, to manage this boundary on their own. The rest, including many working class women and men and people of color, simmer with discontent. In all cases, energy and loyalty are diverted unnecessarily from the organization because of the culture's adversarial framing of work and family and its effect on existing work practices.

As the next section shows, our project challenges the assumption that work and family are separate spheres by re-linking these issues at the systemic level. We do this by questioning individuals who cast these as issues of personal choice and by suggesting ways in which they are interdependent and connected. For example, with one management team we indicated that by selecting as "top employees" only those who had skills in the public domain of employment -- mostly male -- they were inadvertently undermining the kind of skills and kind of team-oriented worker their corporate vision statement professed to need. With the manager who criticized the female employee for sacrificing family for her career, we suggested that it is the organizational definition of commitment and the image of the "ideal worker" that is the problem. Expecting someone in a management review process to represent herself as someone other than this type of worker is unrealistic. Furthermore, to the extent that this definition of commitment has negative consequences for society -- i.e. divorce, neglected children -- managers and organizations have some responsibility to bear.

Reframing Work-Family Issues as Systemic Concerns Requiring Systemic Solutions

In order to affect these inequitable practices, it is necessary to redefine the relation between work and family as systemic rather than as strictly individual. Indeed, we found that the traditional framing of work-family issues as individual concerns requiring individual accommodations actually had several unintended negative consequences not only for worker's personal lives and the goal of a gender equitable workplace, but also for business goals related to work practice redesign and process reengineering. For example, the traditional view that work-family concerns result from strictly individual choices means that people often keep these concerns private. Since discussing one's experience of work practices that make work-family integration difficult might brand one

as someone with a problem, people tend to keep this experience -- and related innovative solutions -- hidden. As a result, not only do people feel very alone in dealing with these concerns, but certain work-related issues remain *undiscussible at the collective level*, where real systemic change might yield significant business results. Change that does occur is often limited to the scope of an individual's job responsibilities.

What is perhaps more problematic -- and somewhat puzzling -- is that even when individuals go against these cultural norms and use their personal situations to suggest innovations, and even when such individual changes are highly successful and result in collective gains, they are often viewed by management as *negative* and their systemic implications are ignored. One team leader, for example, arranged a four-day schedule to cut down on a long commute and to spend more time with her children. Not only was she served by this arrangement, but because she rotated her group members to take her place on the fifth days, she trained them in self-management. By all measures, including productivity and satisfaction, the group was highly successful. But the arrangement did not last long, and in the end she was stripped of her supervisory duties and moved to the bottom category of performance. Despite the success of her team and the leadership development she was doing, her unusual work arrangement was perceived *not* as an opportunity to extend this innovative practice to all managers regardless of their family situation, or even to re-think criteria for effective management. Rather, it was perceived as a negative reflection on her future potential and management capability.

Similarly, a full-time sales technician who negotiated coming in early and leaving early was forced to give the arrangement up because her managers were unwilling to adjust their daily demands to conform to the schedule they had approved. From the beginning, the "exceptions" that managers required became so numerous that she was putting in extra hours and much of the time was unable to pick up her child at school. In the end, she reverted to her old schedule and became very disillusioned, and management missed the opportunity to rethink the way they used their own and their employees' time. We also find that some employees arrange for reduced pay in order to cut their hours to 35 or 40 per week. Such requests could lead to a productive rethinking of the need for long and rigid hours of work. Instead, because they are seen as resulting from strictly individual anomalies, they tend to reinforce old organizational practices and norms about time, which continue to go unquestioned.

In another case, two workers, one in sales and one in management, requested a job-sharing arrangement that would allow each of them to spend more time with their families. The extensive proposal they devised, outlining the specific ways to meet business needs under the new arrangement, had the added benefit of suggesting a way to revamp the sales management development process. The outlined proposal included an apprenticeship model of training whereby the sales representative took on limited management responsibilities under the tutelage of the sales manager. Such an apprenticeship would have improved on the current organizational practice of "throwing sales people into management" with little training, which was generally accepted as detrimental to organizational goals. Despite this potential advantage, the proposal was rejected. Because the motivation for the proposal was viewed as stemming from a private concern (wanting to have more personal time) rather than a work concern (wanting to increase organizational effectiveness) it was narrowly interpreted. The innovative, apprenticeship approach to training and developing sales managers got lost in

this narrow interpretation and an opportunity for re-thinking standard operating procedures and capturing the synergy in crossing the work-family boundary was missed.

The important point here is that the construction of work-family issues as individual concerns that can be addressed through flexible work practices, sensitive managers, and individual accommodations is quite problematic. As the examples above indicate, not only may this approach fail the individuals (often women) involved, in some cases it leads to severe career repercussions. Nor, despite their potential to do so, did any of these requests for flexibility raise systemic questions about work. If they had, we believe this questioning might have led to creative, core innovations in work practices. Instead, we find that **flexibility at the margins undermines flexibility at the core.*** Because these requests were dealt with at the margins as strictly individual issues, they ultimately neither helped the person's needs nor provided the impetus for creative change in core business practice. Instead, they further reinforced the view that employees' personal lives are idiosyncratic, private affairs that are best kept hidden. It is this view, our work has shown, that needs revision.

What our method did was to surface individual work-family concerns and re-frame them as systemic problems in the way work is done rather than as individual liabilities. At one site, where long hours were the norm, we found that time was not so much an individual problem, but was systematically badly used by the whole product development team. At another site, we noted that requests for flexibility floundered not because they were poorly conceived by the people making them, but because they became mired in the general culture of control of individual behavior. At yet another site, we saw that requests for part time work were due not to unusually demanding family situations but to routine work practices that seemingly require 50-, 60-, and even 70-hour work weeks.

Legitimating these issues as discussible in the workplace, both on an individual level in interviews and collectively during roundtables and group feedback, turns out to be quite liberating for all concerned. First, it makes people realize they are not alone in having to deal with the effect of work demands on their lives outside of work, and it shows them that their individual needs for change are actually the result of problems with the system of work. Further, the realization of joint concerns leads to a new, more creative, more collective way of thinking about work practices. In fact, we found that some of the most innovative ideas underlying successful interventions come out of the process of bringing personal issues from the individual to the collective level. Since this reframing makes work and family mutually reinforcing rather than adversarial, it engages people's energy to make innovative changes in existing work practices. This is the strategic business opportunity that can lead to bottom line results. As the next section will describe in more detail, capturing the synergy in this approach means normalizing work-family issues as part of the routines of work and **specifically including them in reengineering or work process redesign**.

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* Dana Friedman contributed this formulation.

Capturing the Synergy: Re-Linking Work and Family

Our project demonstrates that linking work and work-family issues is a strategic opportunity to redesign work in fundamentally creative, innovative, and equitable ways that benefit business objectives and people's personal lives. Furthermore, it shows that failure to make this link has negative consequences for workers, the business, and the goals of an equitable workplace for women and men.

Despite the potential benefits, we found that making this link in the current business context is not easy. On the contrary, there are significant organizational constraints -- in the form of attitudes, assumptions about gender roles, informal work practices, as well as formal organizational policies and structures -- that resist this linkage. At each of the companies, we found that work-family benefits are designed and administered by the human resource function and implemented by line managers. The fact that strategic initiatives are associated with line managers and work-family concerns with human resources reinforces perceptions that business issues are separate, conceptually and functionally, from individuals' personal lives. Work-family issues are seen as relevant only to worker satisfaction and unrelated to business outcomes.

In this context, the request for a work-family benefit -- such as family leave, flextime, part-time work, compressed work week -- is seen by managers as a possible problem and therefore risky to grant. Even though managers may sympathize and want to grant the request, especially for their most valued employees, they are uncomfortable with the potential negative consequences of these arrangements. Not only might productivity suffer, but their own workload in negotiating and monitoring these special arrangements is likely to increase. In addition, it is felt, these "merit-based" accommodations run the risk of opening the flood gates and generating similar requests from seemingly less worthy employees which, if not granted, might lead to backlash and charges of favoritism. And so managers often end up sending signals that using these benefits presents problems for them and for the business. The result of these informal practices is that work and family continue to be seen not only as separate concerns but as *adversarial* -- gains in one are assumed to lead to a loss in the other. With this framing of work-family concerns as problems rather than as opportunities, it is no wonder that organizational practices -- even in companies with "leading edge" policies -- are slow to change.

The interventions described below will show how our project reframes these perceptions and helps people see that accommodating employees' personal issues presents unique opportunities for companies to change the way they organize and structure work. Though the general principle is the same -- *finding the key link between work-family concerns and patterns of working* -- the details of the link and the interventions necessary to produce productive change vary by site. It matters whether tasks are professional or routine, whether work-family benefits are easily available or not -- and to whom, what the demographic composition of the work force is, etc. The following are examples of how this linking was effected at various sites which differed according to these dimensions.

At one site, an administrative center, work was mainly routine. The work force was primarily female, hours were rigid, and employees' work-family problems were

openly and clearly evident. Here we worked directly on work-family concerns and found that **how a site deals with work-family issues is a clue to what is preventing them from meeting key business goals**. At this site, management was trying to shift the structure to empowered work teams, and this effort was not proceeding smoothly. Control dominated the culture: "driving the business need" meant controlling where, how, and when people worked. The culture was individualistic, one that people described as sink or swim. Although an array of work-family benefits was theoretically available, only a limited version of flextime was actually allowed. Managers were afraid, given the culture of control, that if other benefits were made available, productivity would fall. This restriction on flexibility meant that people who, for instance, needed time to care for children or elders had to make sub rosa arrangements using personal leave and sick time. The costs to the site were considerable in terms of unplanned absences, lack of coverage, turnover, backlash against people who took the time they needed, and mistrust of an organization that claimed it had benefits but made their use so difficult. This way of dealing with work-family issues created a closed loop that reinforced existing practices, stifled innovation, and bred distrust of the empowerment concept. When, on the basis of our work, management openly recognized these issues and extended the use of work-family benefits to *all* employees, teams came up with collective approaches to flexibility that had dramatic results. Nearly everyone worked out a different schedule. The site experienced a reported 30% reduction in absenteeism, customer responsiveness increased as times of coverage were extended, divisions between employees decreased since apparent favoritism was reduced, and self-managed teams that previously had little responsibility are now active participants not only in decisions about work schedules but in other business issues such as team selection and evaluation. In addition, working on the work-family issue gave managers insight into the negative consequences of the culture of control and why this site had been having such difficulty in moving to empowered teams.[9]

Another very different example comes from a product development team, which consisted of professional engineers, mainly male. Work-family issues were not explicitly discussed or overtly recognized as a concern by most workers at this site. However, the long hours seen as necessary there made life difficult for employees. At this site, we found that **concern with work-family issues serves as a diagnostic tool that leads to cultural assumptions underlying difficulties of meeting an expressed business goal**: in this case, shortening time to market. The team operated in a continual crisis mode that created enormous stress for people. One person, for example, loved her job but complained that it made her feel like a "bad person" because she wasn't able to "give back to the community" as much as she wanted to. This crisis mode also interfered with the team's ability to get products to market in a timely fashion. The source of these difficulties was a work culture that rewarded long hours at work and emphasized individual problem solving. Indeed, it was well recognized that people were more highly rewarded for solving problems or crises they had created themselves than they were for preventing these crises in the first place. Although management recognized the problems produced by this culture of crisis and indiscriminate use of time, their efforts to change the situation had failed. They failed because they did not confront deeply held cultural assumptions about work, which became our main targets. We challenged the way time was allocated and helped work groups to take control over time and how they used it.

Based on an analysis of how time was used, one group structured its work days to create periods of uninterrupted time, or quiet time, where people could devote

attention to their individual deliverables. Time was also allocated for interactions. This intervention helped the group see that they could change the way they worked. They could use their time differently and plan their work to minimize unnecessary crises. Their product, to the surprise of some, was launched on time and the group won a number of excellence awards. By minimizing unnecessary crises and taking control of time these employees reduced the pressure on them and thus were able to help their work-family integration. In addition, managers discovered that many unnecessary interruptions came from them and learned to change their behavior, vis-à-vis their engineers, away from continuous surveillance and frequent ops reviews.[10]

In another case we worked with a sales and service district. The work force was mixed here, with sales similar to the engineers of the previous example though more evenly divided between men and women, and service primarily male blue collar. Here was a clear example of how **appealing to employees' work-family concerns can provide the motivation and energy for productive efforts at reengineering and restructuring**. Employees in this district were under enormous pressure at work which limited their options for integrating work and family. For the sales organization, the pressure came from ever increasing targets in a highly competitive environment, while in the service function, it was the requirement for constant availability to respond to customers quickly. Although the district was called a partnership, individualism was the norm and collaboration within and across the functions was quite limited. Finger pointing and blame were common as employees in each of the functions were on their own to deal not only with work problems but with family demands as well. This specialization and functional separation meant that information about customers was rarely shared and help with family issues or emergencies was not common. The intervention involved a cross-functional team selling, servicing, and supporting a particular product group. The goal of the team was to restructure the ways the functions worked together in order to ease their lives. With the impetus of helping themselves as well as the business, the team found ways to collaborate in new and unexpected ways. Service helped sales identify new marketing opportunities and problem sites. Through better communication with sales, service employees could better plan for installations, removals, upgrades, and software fixes. As the different functions began to collaborate, they found ways they could cover for each other and be more responsive to customers. Teamwork had an impact on members' family lives as well. They knew they could count on each other for coverage, and improved communication meant that people had more complete and honest information which helped them predict and plan their family lives with greater confidence that these plans would hold. As a result of these efforts, sales in the group increased over budget and service improved, despite downsizing and growing external competition.[11]

Finally, in another sales environment,* we found that **looking at work through a work-family lens can highlight the importance of *how* work is being accomplished -- the process -- as well as the outcome**. At this site, it was the habit of sales teams to work around the clock to complete a proposal for a prospective customer. In the morning, they were rewarded with cheers from managers and co-workers, complimenting them on their commitment and willingness to get the job done. One manager, in response to our interventions, recognized that this behavior reflected poor

* This example comes from the work at Tandem Computers, Inc.

work habits and had a negative impact on these people's ability to balance their personal lives. Not only were their families suffering, but it took many days to recover from the all-nighter and people were less productive during this recovery time. He therefore commented to his team that he was not impressed with their behavior, that it demonstrated an inability to plan adequately, and began to share his perceptions with other managers. As a result, new work habits began to be recognized and rewarded, and norms started to change.

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Each of these examples shows the benefit of joining strategic business issues with the realities of employees' lives, as well as the invisible costs of ignoring the link between work and family. As corporations engage in significant changes in the workplace, our findings suggest that linking these efforts to work-family concerns enhances their chances for success. Such linking energizes employees to participate fully in the process because there are personal benefits to be gained. It also uncovers hidden or ignored assumptions about work practices and organizational culture that can inadvertently undermine the very changes that corporations seek.

PART III

MAKING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE*

Introduction

The agenda of our project is to investigate the barriers that stand in the way of work-family programs achieving equitable arrangements for men and women, and to experiment with changing them. This was accepted as a joint goal by top management in each corporation. To accomplish this goal, we identify, at every local site, the work practices that stand in its way and then link them to a relevant business need.

As is obvious from the preceding section, we try to make changes in work practices that will mutually benefit organizations and employees. By *work practices* we mean all those assumptions and mind sets, those ways of thinking and acting, that have made it difficult to cross the boundary of work and family. When we seek to change work practices, we are not talking primarily about individual behavior. Rather, we mean collective patterns of action, informed by collective values and goals, and deeply embedded in societal structures and norms. Making significant changes thus requires an intensive method that actively engages the way people think and act.

This method -- which we have called Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR) -- is *action* research because it involves learning by doing. Our goal is both to increase knowledge and to effect change. We need to work from where people are, and research is necessary to properly identify this state. But it cannot be done only by asking, which provides information on what is espoused, not on what people actually do in the setting. And so we are necessarily in an action research mode -- an attempt to change even as we try to understand -- in order to surface actual work practices and to allow them to be questioned. *Research* and *intervention* are intertwined in the process.

But it is a particular kind of action research, one that includes an *interactive collaboration*. What this means is that we are in a continual state of *mutual inquiry* with our action partners in the sites. It is not only we who are learning something about how the system works, but they are as well -- both partners become aware of existing disconnections. Nor is it only we who plan the changes to be introduced: this is done in full collaboration with our partners. In this state of mutual inquiry, critical knowledge flows back and forth between the researchers and the action partners. Neither one is the sole expert. Both are needed, in interactive collaboration, to surface the structural or cultural barriers that make it difficult to connect work, family, and community, and thus to meet the double goal of aiding both the organization and employees. Both are needed to examine old assumptions, to make the new connection, to consider alternatives to accepted work practices, and to design relevant changes.

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* Maureen Harvey from the Xerox team and Barbara Miller from Artemis Consulting contributed to this section.

The method we use is not linear -- it does not start with a diagnosis and end with a series of recommendations. Rather it is cyclical: it begins with data and involves a mutual and collaborative exploration of these data; this may lead back to the mutual search for new data or to joint designs for experimental interventions; these, in turn, provide more data for mutual interpretation. And so the cycle continues.

This process, we believe, has led to the results reported in Part II. However, it is important to emphasize that what we want to leave behind is the stance of ongoing inquiry (rather than only the particular changes at the experimental sites) that connects work to family, to community, and links work-family to the way work is accomplished, and does all this in a manner that is equitable for both women and men. This link to gender equity is sometimes the most difficult of all.

In this part of the report, we present the key tenets of the CIAR method as it has evolved in our experience. Though we hope that organizations will find it useful to incorporate these ideas when they engage in change, we have to say that the approach is not always simple and smooth. *Outsiders* can help to overcome some of the *resistances* that are bound to be encountered, and we present our understanding of this resistance with some suggestions about how to engage it for effective change. Finally, we discuss some considerations about sustaining the changes made.

Making Change with CIAR

There are three key aspects to the method as we have used it in the corporation context.

First, we look at work through a work-family lens, something not usually done in corporations and therefore likely to be greeted with some astonishment if not outright resistance.

Second, we link what we learn about work in this way to a salient business need. Making this link is a critical step in the process.

Finally, we push for change at each step of the way: during interviews with individual people, in group sessions, and also in the jointly designed experimental interventions already described.

Although the project described here took place within large international firms headquartered in the US, *we believe the process used can be adapted and made applicable to many different kinds of organizations -- large corporations and small businesses, non-profit organizations, small public agencies, and even large government bureaucracies*. The important condition is that our partners in the organization recognize that current practices are problematic for achieving the goals of gender equity and work-family integration and are willing to join in a process of mutual inquiry, exploration, and action oriented interventions to address these problems. Addressing the problems in this particular way can lead to multiple benefits. Goals of equity and integration can be met with no loss -- and great potential for gain -- in productivity and effectiveness.

Viewing work through a work-family lens

Using a work-family lens to surface assumptions about work practice requires collecting data about the nature of work in a particular setting. Often the first step is a survey, in order to convey the extent of work-family concerns in the site. Such a survey can also serve as a base line measure to evaluate change. The task of understanding work practices, however, depends on *conducting individual interviews* not just with women or those with dependent care responsibilities but with all types and levels of employees: managers, supervisors, line workers, support staff, etc. The focus of the interview is to *engage people in a process of reflection* on aspects of the work culture and structure that make it difficult, either directly or indirectly, to integrate work and personal life. It is during the interviews that the systemic link between work practice and work-family integration is first made through asking the following three open-ended questions:

> How does work get done around here?
> What is your personal story of work-family integration?

and then making the link between the two by asking:

> What is it about the way work gets done around here that makes it difficult (or easy) for you to integrate your work and personal life?

The systemic issues revealed by this interview protocol deal with such things as how work is structured, what skills and behaviors are rewarded, how one demonstrates competence and commitment, how time is valued and used, and where one experiences pressures and stress. This is what we mean by viewing work through a work-family lens.

A further step in the process is to *collect observational data about work culture and work practice* by shadowing different employees within the work group, and attending a full range of meetings. These observational data are key to the next step, which is to *conduct group interviews or roundtables*. The purpose of the group discussion is to make these issues discussible and to create a shared understanding of the ways in which individual experience is influenced by systemic work factors.

We believe this reflection process is facilitated when led by someone outside the immediate work group, who can question and probe assumptions about work that are usually taken for granted An outsider, whose presence is legitimated by management, not only has the ability to break the usual silence around these issues and give people permission to talk about their feelings and their personal dilemmas but is also in a unique position to help make the *connection between individual experience and systemic conditions*.

Applying the findings to a salient business need

How work and family issues play out at a given site or in a given work group is a local issue, dependent on the nature of the task, the size and composition of the group, and the specific pressures and resource constraints the group may be experiencing. It is important to make the connection between these issues and concrete salient business

needs the particular group is facing. Making this link is crucial. It establishes a mutual agenda, marrying individual issues of work-family integration with business goals in ways that can potentially benefit each. The *role of the outsider* here is to *hold up a mirror* for the group, to reflect the work norms and assumptions that are barriers to work-family integration in a way that highlights the consequences of these barriers for other business needs, such as time to market, quality, or customer responsiveness. This mirror is based on putting the observed data into an analytic framework. It reflects back to the group the patterns and themes that have emerged by using a work-family lens, and highlights the gaps, contradictions, and dilemmas that have surfaced. It is our experience that a work-family lens identifies work practices that are so taken for granted that they do not get questioned in the usual approaches to work redesign. Thus, the connections that can be made tend to be unexpected and new. Though this may well be greeted with doubts by the people involved, it also creates the condition for thinking creatively about possibilities for change.

Pressing for change

Interventions take different forms. Some engage individuals to think about these issues in new ways. Others are spontaneous, small scale interventions undertaken by individual group members to restructure the work practices associated with their own jobs. Still others are planned pilots, sanctioned by management and clearly labeled as "experiments."

Making connections and pressing to change people's assumptions and mind sets occur at all stages of the process. In talking with individuals, for example, we found they could only go so far in questioning the systemic factors that determine routine work practices before they began to feel hopeless that anything could really change. So we would "push back" on denial of connections and question assertions about unchangeable conditions. Discussing these factors collectively, however, created a different dynamic. Here we could pose hypothetical conditions, e.g. about how to get work done in a reduced number of hours. The role of the outsider in this situation is to help the work group come to a collective understanding of the systemic implications of their individual experience and how it can be brought to bear on whatever business need the group is facing. In roundtables, individuals challenge each others' assumptions and previously unquestioned limitations on what is fixed and what can be changed in work practices. It helps people believe fundamental change might be possible and encourages out-of-the-box thinking and solutions to addressing assumed constraints.

The collaboratively designed experimental interventions, described in Part II, build on this new understanding of all those involved -- the employees at the work site and the action researchers.

Ensuring Success with CIAR

We have outlined the main steps in the process we used. Their success in achieving mutually satisfactory goals, however, depends on a number of specific conditions, namely, to create safe conditions for individuals to participate in the change, and to provide an appropriate structure that enhances joint ownership of the process.

Creating safety and minimizing individual risk

It is important in the process of designing planned, local interventions to give voice to different perspectives and to air conflicts about the findings and their implications. This means sharing and discussing the findings in a spirit of openness and collaboration where fears and concerns can be raised and new possibilities entertained. By giving people permission to talk about their feelings and their personal dilemmas in the context of redesigning work, we found that a surprising level of energy, creativity, and innovative thinking gets released. However, it can be risky for employees to suggest work practice innovations that link work with family because these connections are rarely made or discussed. Raising these issues may be problematic for those who fear they will be branded as less committed or dependable if they acknowledge these difficulties. By the same token, managers, who are used to seeing these issues as zero-sum where gains for the family mean productivity loss for the business, may fear they will bear all the risks of innovation.

Although our findings indicate that these fears of productivity loss are unfounded, we believe that collaboration and sharing the risks across levels of hierarchy are important aspects of the process. In concrete terms, this means getting some sign from upper levels of management that they are willing to suspend, at least temporarily, some of the standard operating procedures that have been identified in the work groups as barriers both to work-family integration and productivity. Such a sign from upper management is another critical component of the process as it helps people believe that change at the cultural level is possible and protects individual managers from bearing all the risks of innovation. At our sites, these signs took different forms. At one site it was the suspension of a complex operations review process; at another it was the suspension of work rules that narrowly defined how customer needs could be met and the granting of a grace period to accommodate possible short-term productivity losses; at a third site it was the suspension of rules about how functions relate to one another. The point is, for this type of intervention to work, people need concrete evidence that they are truly empowered to control some of the conditions that affect their own productivity and managers need some assurance that they will not be penalized for relinquishing this control.

Creating appropriate structures to enhance joint ownership

Joint ownership is critical. Unless the organization accepts the learnings as something they have achieved, the central discovery of the project -- that employees' lives must be valued and legitimated and made part of the central core of the business -- will be difficult to sustain. It is for this reason that the partnership exists from the very beginning.

This partnership requires strong internal sponsorship. One form would be an *internal steering committee* that, as closely as possible, replicates the organization's structure.* This means membership on the committee should include senior level representation from all functional areas, including Human Resources. However, because

* This structure was used at Tandem Computers, Inc.

work-family issues are closely aligned with personnel concerns, it is important to note that the presence of Human Resource personnel is not to oversee the intervention but, as a full participant, to support the systemic exploration of the connection between work structure, work-family integration, and gender equity in the organization. In working with such a committee, it is important to sustain close relationships to ensure their participation in what is happening at the local sites. Only with such continued involvement can ownership be achieved and the process be sustained.

Finally, to ensure mutually beneficial change, it is important that productive gains be shared by the organization with its employees. But even when all these conditions exist, there are many points in the process that generate resistance among those involved.

Engaging Resistance

Using a work-family lens to promote change in organizations requires a *process of reflection* that raises some difficult and emotional issues. Assumptions about work that drive organizational practices and norms touch core beliefs about society, success, gender roles, the place of work and family in our lives, and hence are resistant to a process of reflection and change. We found, however, that such resistance -- both within the organization and among research team members -- almost always points to something important which needs to be acknowledged and worked on collaboratively. Engaging with this type of resistance means listening and learning from people's objections, incorporating these concerns or new ideas, and working together to establish a mutual agenda. This process of learning together and exploring possibilities led to creative options none of us had foreseen. Ironically, this collaborative approach of learning together was a source both of energy for the project and of resistance. We were repeatedly pushed to act more like traditional consultants -- to come up with solutions, action items, or a "six step" plan. Offering collaboration in place of "expert" advice was often met with anger and frustration and a sense that the process was taking too long.[12]

Research team members also exhibited resistance: they would shorten the process by simply telling people in the organization what to do, or resist collaborative discussion about their own limitations in engaging in the process. But it is not a process that can be short-changed; it requires trust, openness, and a willingness to learn from and be influenced by each other.

Resistance surfaces around a number of issues. There is resistance to the connection between work-family issues and core business goals. People continually asked us during interviews, during feedback sessions and roundtables, what work-family had to do with work. Undertaking pilot experiments that would change ways of working with anticipated benefits to employees was similarly challenged: how would the change in the workplace affect people's lives? These are difficult connections to make. When people talk about making it easier to integrate work and family life, they talk generally about changing the culture of long hours but are puzzled about how to do it: "We could never deliver the product if everybody worked fewer hours." Our suggestion is that we all explore the possibility of changing the *way* the product is delivered.

Roundtables are an important resource for engaging resistance on the connections between work and family issues. They engage people who are often closest to the issues and thus yield many ideas for new arrangements that had not been previously considered.

Our position as outsiders allowed us to help re-frame old ways of thinking and to enter into a dialogue about what to learn and do as a result of the findings. It also enabled us to validate divergent opinions and to model and facilitate disagreement and dialogue among group members. The goal was always to shift the discussion *from what is, to what could be* in order to agree on possible experiments. This collaboration was necessary to allay the fear and engage the resistance associated with experimenting with change.

As can be seen, resistance takes interesting forms on both sides. There is both dependence and counter-dependence. On the one hand people looked to us to provide answers and were often frustrated when we continually turned to them to work with us on interpreting what we learned and on designing pilot interventions. At the same time, the mirrors we held up and the proposals we made for experimentation and for how to disseminate the learnings were often abruptly rejected. We had our own resistances as well. The role of expert is a comforting position and we found ourselves falling into it. Similarly the role of researcher just gathering data is much less controversial than pushing back on people's assumptions which can make these discussions more contentious. We struggled to keep the focus on the collaborative interaction where mutual learning could occur on both sides. Having the support of a team and an outside consultant were invaluable in dealing with these resistances, ours and theirs.

We found that dealing with resistance is a central feature of our method. It is a signal that what is happening is affecting people and the organization. In this sense resistance is positive even though we may have to keep reminding ourselves of it. But recognizing the successes in the project and sharing them with different parts of the organization contribute to institutionalizing the process and how to carry it out.

Sustaining Change

The collaborative interactive action research method produced notable operational local successes, which have continued past the experimental phase at a number of sites, though at different levels. For example, at the administrative center, the system as a whole continues to this day. At the product development team, it is mainly the changes in managerial behavior that persist. In the sales environment, the remaining change applies to an individual: the manager, despite the fact that his group has been disbanded, continues to work in a very different way; he now works on the assumption that he is at the office from 7 to 4 and takes no work home, and he pushes back on people who make arrangements that do not fit these constraints.

The next challenge is how to *sustain* these efforts and to *diffuse* them beyond the local sites. Innovations are fragile; existing systems continually threaten to overwhelm and/or wipe them out. Sustaining the local changes means that the innovations must spread further and deeper into the organization. Our approach to this challenge is to

extend the underlying model, that is, to use collaborative processes and structures to enhance the possibility that local changes will be sustained and that the learnings from them will spread.

Before we discuss the varied ways that we try to sustain and diffuse the changes we began, it is important to be clear about what it is that we are trying to sustain and diffuse. We hope to leave behind a process that enables the organization, in its totality and parts, continually to use a work-family lens to inquire into assumptions about work and then translate the ensuing insights into real changes in work practices. What changes as a result of this process is the mind set of individuals, groups, and the organization about the connections between work and other parts of peoples' lives. No longer is this seen as a concern to certain individuals (mothers) but rather as a systemic issue whose solution lies within the organization. There is a second part as well and that concerns the dual agenda of the work reported here. Benefits that accrue to the organization as a result of these work practice changes must be shared with employees if one is to ease their lives and to promote gender equity as well as organizational effectiveness.

To sustain and diffuse the desired changes, mutual learning needs to occur at all levels: the individual, the group, and the system as a whole. At the *individual* level, it is important to establish meaningful relationships in order to enable mutual learning. We do this by enouraging people to talk about their family and work experiences. The opportunity to open up about these issues is often the first time people have had a chance at the workplace to talk about things that matter to them deeply. Further, we have these discussions and establish these relationships throughout the organization, from top management to front line workers. During these interviews, we challenge assumptions people make about the impossibility of change. We and our partners are thus able to explore resistances in a collaborative setting. Such discussions can lead to change, as evidenced by one Vice-President who opened up his organization to experimentation after a series of such meetings.

At the *group* level, through roundtables, individuals see that they are not alone. The resulting collective understandings about experiences and possibilities energize people and help them believe that change is possible. Thus, the collective mind set begins to change. It is here one begins to see that boundaries can really be challenged. These groups become advocates for change. No longer do we have individuals making separate arrangements but we have blocks of people pushing for change. Expectations have been raised.

At the *system* level, these ideas are translated into actual experiments and pilots. This step is also crucial to sustaining the change. There are always choices as to which pilots to undertake. Our experience suggests that the pilots need to be ones that promise, if they succeed, to bring significant benefits to the business and to employees. When they succeed there are demonstrable results that cause others in the organization to notice and at least be curious about what happened. In this way, the seeds of diffusion are spread. Work groups that undertake these pilots are always taking risks. Continually spending time with management and others engaged in the pilots, listening to their problems as they experiment and adjust, supporting them, giving them courage, are the kinds of relationship building and cultivation that make these pilots possible and

sustainable. The process does not end with a pilot, but rather continues as individuals, groups, and management engage in new cycles of the process.

Because employees' personal issues are so rarely connected to broader business goals there is a danger that once new work practices become routinized, benefits to the family and other parts of people's lives might recede in importance or lapse altogether. Since the success of the interventions depends on capturing the synergy between individual and business goals, this lapse would seriously undermine the potential for continuous learning and improvement. As work practice innovations become routinized, it is important to continue to keep the double agenda on the table and ensure that benefits continue to accrue to employees and their families as well as to the organization. If the beneficial effects of changes at work are not translated into benefits for personal and family life, the individual energy that is unleashed will dissipate.

If local changes are to be sustained and if the learnings from them are to be diffused, the work needs to be *legitimated* in the organization. Given the tendency to marginalize and individualize work-family issues, the overt support of senior management is essential to sustain and diffuse the change. That support reinforces "work-family" as a business issue and as systemic and owned by the organization. But none of this will help if benefits that accrue to the business are not shared with employees.

Legitimation can take a variety of forms. It can be structured into the project design. In one corporation an Executive Council of senior management was formed at the outset. Through its quarterly meetings, the group not only learned about what was happening elsewhere in the organization but also became itself a site for mutual learning. Having a sponsor or champion who is held in high esteem in the organization helps to legitimate the effort. In another corporation, less formal means of legitimation evolved. Meetings with the CEO, other senior officials, and representatives from different layers of management legitimated the efforts at various times. As pilots began, we met with senior management in the corporation and business units. Based on these meetings, they in turn gave support to the risk takers in the local sites. As the positive results of the interventions came in, we met with senior management and encouraged them to visit sites. Those experiences helped them to frame an organizational story about the pilots and results that could be broadcast widely to the organization.

While legitimating the process may help the organization take notice of the operational successes, it is also necessary to plan an *infrastructure* and to design a process to carry the learnings and methodology to other parts of the organization. In one organization, an operations-based steering committee worked hand in hand with the action research team during all phases of the project. This committee is now positioned to carry on the work in other parts of the corporation. Membership on such a committee and its functions need to be carefully considered. People who have links to various parts of the organization and who are sympathetic to the agenda of work-family and gender equity are the natural allies who could populate such a committee. However, there are a number of caveats. It may facilitate the long run potential of these changes if blockers as well as allies are on the committee because they represent forces of resistance in the organization that will need to be engaged. There is also the danger that such a

committee will come to "own" this agenda, will fail to keep the dual agenda on the table, or will itself become isolated from important potential collaborative partners.

Our experience suggests that there need to be multiple points of diffusion. We look for opportunities to present our work internally in the organizations as part of special events as well as operational reviews, in addition to looking for internal allies. These are people with significant line responsibility who are willing and able to engage us in a collaborative experiment. We also have discussions and meetings with people involved in organizational change and transformation in the corporation, with people involved in research and development on work and organization structures, with people who have been referred to us as interested in organization learning and continuous improvement, and with outside consultants.

In order to sustain the changes we try to help people appreciate that it is important to diffuse the process or method in order to achieve the concrete results. As people reflect on how the business needs were met through the different operational pilots, there is a tendency to want to pass on to other teams the results that yielded the productivity gains, rather than the method itself. Exporting only the innovation shortchanges the process and seriously undermines its chances for success and sustainability. It is by looking at work through a work-family lens and reflecting on the way that group members' personal experiences can be brought to bear on business problems that encourages innovative solutions to local business needs. The energy to implement these solutions and to persist in working out the inevitable problems that arise, comes from understanding how collective success can also translate into personal gain.

* * * * *

One final point. It is important to note that the re-linking of life and work is not something that can be accomplished simply by wishing it were so, or by pointing out the negative consequences of separation. It is something that touches the very core of our beliefs about society, success, and our own masculinity and femininity. The assumed separation of the domestic and non-domestic spheres of life is not only a question of difference, but of inequality. Present practices, structures, and policies -- at all levels of society -- favor the economic sphere more than the private. As a result, employment concerns are assumed to take precedence over other concerns; achievement in the employment sector is assumed to be the major source of self-esteem and the measure of personal success; and only employment skills are highly valued and compensated, and thus dominate government, educational, and organizational policy. So the goal of re-linking is not simple and it is not just about being "whole." It is about shifting to a more equitable society in which family and community are equally valued with paid work, and where men and women have equal opportunity to achieve in all domains.

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Notes

[1]A different kind of blurring occurred in corporations where wives of high level employees were sometimes interviewed, as part of their husbands' selection process, to ensure their adherence to corporate expectations of appropriate behavior. This kind of blurring was labeled the two-person career by Hanna Papanek in 1973.

[2]Anthropologists conceptualized the separation of the public and private sphere, the distinction between culture and nature, but they did not deal with the workplace and families until considerably later.

[3]A different 3-way model, linking work, family, and leisure, was postulated by the Rapoports at about the same time. Also, in 1980, Paul Evans and Fernando Bartolomé reported the results of a study of successful male managers which showed that they concentrated on work and family sequentially until late in their careers, when integration became possible.

[4]In 1963, Alice Rossi introduced the term androgyny into this debate -- indicating an emphasis on sameness. She later pointed to important differences, which have been explained structurally by Rosabeth Kanter and as dependent on essential differences in socialization by such theorists as Nancy Chodorow and Jean Baker Miller, and, from a different perspective, by Sandra Harding and Evelyn Fox Keller. Critical legal scholars such as Joan Williams and Nancy Dowd have been perhaps the most perceptive in discussing this distinction, and in linking work and family to gender equity.

[5]By 1989, more than 70% of women between the ages of 18 and 50 were in the labor force, including more than half of all mothers with children under the age of 1.

[6] Leading corporations are often more willing to grant flexibility for employees' community involvements than they are for those needs more directly associated with domestic affairs -- a result of the logic of separation and of a narrow view of what constitutes a corporate benefit.

[7] A term used by Eric von Hippel in his study of innovation.

[8] Joyce Fletcher's 1994 Doctoral Dissertation details this work and approach.

[9] Robin Johnson's 1994 Doctoral Dissertation gives the details on this site.

[10] Leslie Perlow's 1995 Doctoral Dissertation provides a discussion of time and the time experiment.

[11] This site is described in detail in the appendix.

[12] Though this is not unusual for consultants who deal with process, it was particularly difficult in this case because of the deep emotional responses that are elicited by crossing the boundary between work life and private life.

APPENDIX
A Descriptive Example*

The purpose of this appendix is to describe the method used in this project in the context of a specific site. In telling the story, we want to highlight how the work-family lens can be used to elucidate a business issue and how work on it can promote the dual agenda of benefiting the business and employees' work-family concerns. We want to describe in some detail what we did, how we tried to create structures that fostered these connections, in what way we encountered and dealt with resistances, and how we worked with the people in the site to carry out a variety of experimental changes in work practices. In sharing these insights, we want to capture what we think worked well and what problems were encountered.

The Site

The site[1] we describe is a sales and service district of the Xerox Corporation. At the time of the research, approximately 600 employees worked there in three functions. These employees sell, lease, install, upgrade, and service the company's equipment. The sales organization, with roughly equal numbers of men and women, is organized to serve different product lines and types of customers. The service technicians, mostly men, are responsible for servicing equipment in different geographical areas. Administrative workers, primarily female, process orders and schedule installations. The district is jointly managed by a senior management team, which includes managers from each of the three functions. One of the sales managers acts as senior manager of the team.

The district has a company wide work-family benefits program. The program has, on paper, provision for flextime, compressed work week, and job sharing -- among other provisions. The program, however, was not widely used. Some managers were willing, off-the-record, to arrange short term accommodations for people who needed them, but these existed outside the formal systems. With few exceptions, the major users were women in the administrative function on flextime.

Gender equity was an issue that was rarely discussed openly at this site, but often debated informally. In addition to the work-family issues which were the focus of our work, such problems included the role of women (mothers) in the work force and the challenges women managers face. There also were problems arising from the differential impact on women and men of apparently neutral work policies such as close monitoring of attendance and hours, and requiring full-time and continuous presence (i.e. not taking a leave or a reduced schedule) to be eligible for the promotional track.

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* Susan Eaton and Maureen Harvey wrote this case, based on the work they did.

Looking at Work Through a Work-Family Lens

The project began with data collection. We conducted more than 60 interviews with men and women at all levels in all three functions. Sometimes these took place in an office, at other times, on the road with a service or sales person en route to a customer. To the surprise of respondents in these interviews, we focused not only on work-family issues, but more broadly on their work and how it affected their ability to do what needed to be done and still have time and energy for outside interests. Talking with employees and managers about this boundary was sometimes an emotional experience. People talked about the stress in their families and how that affected their work. One sales manager, who had the highest employee satisfaction ratings during the previous year, talked about how devastating his divorce had been and how he worried now that his ratings were below par. Some took the opportunity to tell us that the work-family problem was merely one of greed for an elevated life style.

These interviews, and indeed the entire data collection process, not only offered us opportunities to discuss these issues, but to push back on people's assumptions. We discussed other reasons, beside greed, why mothers might want to work. When a manager suggested that a man's divorce was not a work-family issue, we explored the basis of that reasoning as well.

From the interviews and other informal discussions, we discovered that few employees were able to work out flexible schedules in spite of available work-family policies. Employees and managers found it difficult to make individual arrangements within the context of existing systems. Employees worried about face time and the possible consequences of being seen by their managers as less committed. Managers saw these benefits as potential problems. If they permitted a few people to create a flexible schedule, many more might request it. Would they have to grant requests to everybody? What would happen when poor performers made a request? They also felt constrained by head count requirements, benefit policies, and rigid scheduling traditions, and feared that granting flexibility would inevitably result in reduced productivity. As we were learning about these concerns and the barriers they created to using the policies that were in place, we questioned the underlying assumptions and provided alternative scenarios for managers to think through some of these dilemmas.

These initial interviews were only part of the data collection. Given changes in the management of the district and the time that elapsed between our visits there, we were repeatedly challenged to show that work-family issues were a continuing concern for employees. We undertook a survey of employees, in part, to legitimate the issue in the eyes of the new senior management team. The survey confirmed our initial findings that work-family issues were a concern for men as well as women, managers as well as front-line employees, sales people as well as service or administrative workers. Many people felt stressed. The dual concerns of work and personal life competed for peoples' time and energy with negative consequences for both.

At the same time that we were talking to people about work and family, we were also learning about the significant business issues engaging the district. A recent survey of customers revealed that relations with customers were deteriorating and that improving these relationships could translate into higher revenues. In response to these findings, the district had recently

adopted a new strategy of selling systems solutions. This strategy required close partnering with customers in order jointly to diagnose their needs and concerns and then to create, again jointly, solutions to these issues. Further, the strategy had consequences for internal structures and processes. A high degree of collaboration and coordination among sales, service, and administration would be required.

When we looked at these issues through a work-family lens we found that this strategy of customer focus supported by internal coordination was being undercut by work practices within the district, practices that also made it difficult for employees to integrate work and family lives. Although the district was managed by a cross functional management team, we found that the separate functions were insulated and competitive with each other. Each function had its own reward, reporting, and measurement systems that tended to promote functional goals over those of the total district. The culture was a competitive and stressful one. Sales budgets were increased every year without input from the field. Endings (monthly, quarterly, and yearly) were highly stressful times. Service techs were increasingly called upon to provide 24 hour service with a two hour response time. Beepers meant that new calls came in while they were working on old ones; they were never really away from work.

Communication was also a problem. Information was tightly held and finger pointing and blame were common. Service technicians did not know when installations were a realistic possibility and they blamed sales representatives for inflating these estimates which then wreaked havoc with their own schedules. Sales representatives blamed the service technicians for poor customer relations that made their selling job more difficult and blamed the administrative staff for delays in their pay checks. Administrative staff blamed both sales and service for the delays in getting them the information they needed to schedule orders and deliveries.

These connections between business issues and work-family concerns were captured in our diagnosis, the "mirror" we held up. Cross functional collaboration, we reported, was not a reality at the district. This had negative consequences for the business and for employees. Operating in an increasingly competitive environment, existing work practices and organizational culture led to a lack of coordination and communication across functions, which meant that groups worked at cross purposes and the customer was suffering. The individualistic culture also meant that people were reluctant to help each other at work and in meeting other responsibilities. These same barriers to collaboration affected employees' abilities to integrate work and family. Not only did this culture mean that everybody's work took more time, but also that people felt unsupported. They were left on their own to attend to work-family concerns. Some, in fact, described situations where others seemed deliberately to make things difficult for people with families.

We held up the mirror first to the senior management team. They resonated to our findings about the business but were more skeptical about the connection to employees' work-family concerns. They were even more resistant to the specific proposal we made. We suggested that a cross functional team that sold, serviced, and supported one significant customer could be a pilot to develop collaboration across functions and the benefits for doing so. We called this proposal a "customer slice." The leadership team challenged us. They wondered why we were

proposing an experiment about work rather than helping them implement the work-family policies that were in place. We worked through our analysis with them to show that it was current work practices that made using the work-family benefits so difficult. They were still not ready to proceed with an experiment and they asked us to test the mirror and the customer slice idea with employees.

We brought the customer slice concept to employee roundtables. They were bewildered by the idea. "We are all separate groups who do our own work. There is no overlap." But as they talked about their work and work-family experiences, they discovered that they were not as separate as they thought. The groups shared their concerns about their own work and were pretty honest in pinpointing the shortcomings within and across functions. Sales reps said that there was no back up or coverage possible for their accounts when they were out on vacation or had family emergencies. Similarly service techs felt that they were always in a reactive mode which made it very difficult to take control of their work. Administrative employees felt scapegoated for breakdowns in the system which occurred because the other functions failed to provide them with the information they needed to process orders and work. To their surprise, roundtable members concluded that a cross functional team organized as a customer slice might make their work easier and they believed this would help them gain control over their lives more generally. The roundtable participants were genuinely excited by the possibilities.

Armed with these insights and the excitement they generated, we returned to senior management. They were still skeptical. That a pilot might help the business, they were willing to accept. That there would be benefits also to employees' work-family concerns was harder for them to see. Further, they did not like the idea of a customer slice. The district was not structured by customers and so such a group would be expensive, disruptive, and time consuming to put into place. We were concerned about this resistance, especially after we had met the conditions they had placed on us -- the survey, the roundtables. We tried to understand their reasoning, but at the same time we were unwilling to forfeit our agenda and confine our activities solely to policy and procedural adjustments. We pushed back on their objections. Finally, the senior manager turned to one of the team and said, "you really want to do this, don't you?" From this discussion, emerged the possibility of the Offset Group[2] as a pilot for the project. Although this group, a product group, was not exactly a customer slice, it did meet the requirements we thought were critical -- that sales, service, and administration work together with a common set of customers.

The Offset Group was originally a separate company that had never been fully integrated into the district. An important product and potentially a source of high revenues, the group had performed below expectation for several years and had poor customer service ratings. The proposal that we work with the Offset Group was thus low risk from management's perspective. The group was in trouble, maybe we could help. Skepticism about the work-family implications continued.

In consultation with the senior management team, a service manager was appointed as the internal project manager. He had a reputation for innovation with his own work group. We agreed to work with him to convene the group and keep senior management apprised of progress.

To meet other concerns about existing policies and procedures, we also planned to meet with individual members of the senior team to help them on specific issues.

The Offset Group and Other Associated Experimental Changes

The Offset organization included approximately 75 people. In collaboration with senior management, we decided to begin with a core group of managers and involve the entire organization later. The original Offset Group included three managers from service, two from sales, and one from administration, but over the nine month period of our involvement, members of the group brought in other people who were connected in some way to the same product. The accomplishments were considerable. Sales exceeded planned targets, customer satisfaction improved, and group members implemented innovations in work structures and planning. Further, a number reported feeling more supported, more in control of their work and work-family issues, and less stressed.

These successes had their roots in the early work with the Offset Group. We worked closely with the internal project manager to define roles and responsibilities and to find ways to support him and make his efforts visible. The first meeting with the group was critical. We had agreed that the internal project manager would run the meeting, but after introducing the agenda, he turned to us to define the purpose. As we had done with other groups, e.g. the roundtables, we repeated our diagnosis (the mirror) and explained the rationale behind our suggestion of the customer slice. Again we were met with similar responses. They expected assistance in implementing flexible work policies in their own functions. They felt they were separate functions and had no reason to have another meeting to talk to each other; they were already stretched doing their own work.

Though we did not define an agenda for them, we and the project manager pushed them to talk about their work to see if a purpose would emerge -- which it did. One of the service managers mentioned that he was about to lose four experienced service technicians at the end of the month in the first voluntary reduction in force. The sales managers were alarmed; not only were they unaware of this but they also saw it having a negative impact on their ability to sell and install equipment. This recognition of interdependence began to build their commitment to the idea that a cross functional group could benefit them. At the end of that meeting they planned to meet again in 3 weeks, and later scheduled monthly meetings which continued for almost nine months. We agreed to attend these meetings as a way to track progress in the pilot and to keep the dual agenda on the table.

At subsequent meetings, the group continued to find areas of business collaboration. They developed a strategy for their project and looked at the connections among the business functions during a time when the district was going through significant downsizing and restructuring. An early success was important. One of the service managers was able to save a major sale to a large customer who was frustrated because of poor performance resulting from overworked older equipment. Even though the service manager got no official credit for this sale, it helped service informally because sales managers began to share actual sales data (as opposed to projections).

By sharing these data, service could plan scheduled maintenance and have a qualified team ready to handle the actual installations. The group also engaged a variety of other problems -- e.g. improving the paper work flow or discussing how to accommodate higher installation demands under downsizing and limitations on overtime.

As the group became more cohesive, and because of our presence, discussions of work-family issues became more legitimate. In fact, on one occasion when a senior manager joined the group, he was asked to keep this as "our meeting" so that they could "talk about personal things here." And members did bring specific problems to the group. For example, we worked with sales managers to consider how part time work could be managed, and helped service managers benchmark alternative work schedules.

Benefits also accrued beyond the group itself. Members of the Offset Group and others in the district began to appreciate the close connection between business issues and work-family concerns. People felt that it was now safe to propose new approaches. The Service managers created an innovative scheduling system. To cope with reduced staffing and more 24-hour call contracts, the service groups developed an informal system where employees could trade weekend work for days off during the week.[3] Changes occurred in sales as well. One sales manager encouraged his people to propose new approaches. A task force of employees, with senior management endorsement, developed new meeting practices: starting times for all morning meetings were moved later and ending times for afternoon meetings were moved earlier to incorporate employees' work-family commitments. During this time, an innovative but controversial proposal for a job share that had previously been rejected was approved. Nine months after the beginning of the pilot, the district surveyed employees. Work-family emerged as one of the three key issues. This was important because it signaled that work-family issues were now legitimate topics for individuals to discuss at work.

Although defining our role as work-family experts might have made the group more comfortable, especially at the beginning, we saw our role more as supporting their effort, trying to insert the dual agenda whenever possible, and being there for the team in the ways they needed us. We attended almost every meeting, frequently interviewed members individually while we were on site, and did a formal survey at the end. Each time we visited the site we met with the project manager. We helped the group track its progress by analyzing and reporting back the many opportunities they had created for collaboration. The survey, which we fed back to the group and to the senior management team, showed that the group felt that it was working well together and had improved its abilities to serve customers. On the work-family side, some members reported feeling less stress. Service managers took the lessons and the "out of box" thinking from the group back to their own people and experimented with alternative schedules.

Nonetheless, keeping the dual agenda on the table turned out to be more difficult than we had anticipated. First, we decided that it would help jump start the team if they could find business successes to organize around. While this proved useful, it also meant that the connection between work concerns and work-family issues was not clearly apparent. Although we did introduce work-family considerations into the meetings, they were not as closely tied to the business issues as we would have liked. Second, we could have used the process that had been

successful in the earlier phases of the work to keep the dual agenda more firmly in mind. That is, we could have interviewed members, diagnosed their connections between work and family, and used this mirror to examine work with as much attention to family benefits as to business concerns. Limited in the time we had, and anxious to get the group going, we did not explore this option as fully as, in retrospect, we could have.

Throughout the process, we maintained close ties to senior management. Each time we visited the site, we met with top managers to keep them informed about progress and to continue the process of advocating the dual agenda. We also helped them on specific work-family issues. The senior sales manager asked us to meet with sales people to learn about work-family issues that needed to be addressed. These meetings led to the formation of a sales task force that looked at the barriers to work-family integration in the sales organization. We met with the senior service manager around such specific problems as scheduling flextime in the face of customer need. Some of the managers in the district were involved in truly innovative experiments of their own. We made these successes visible by reporting them across functional and hierarchical boundaries. Over time, we also developed a close working relation with the human resource manager. She kept us informed, and helped us interpret the major changes that were occurring in the district.

Late in the process we learned that the district had previously tried a cross functional approach on this same product group which had failed. Senior managers were curious why the Offset Group was a success when previous efforts had failed. There are a number of reasons we could suggest: a talented project manager, our operational support of the team, their identification early on of problems that could be worked on, several quick successes -- all of these surely contributed to the success of the Offset Group. We believe, however, that there is another more important reason. The members of the group, and indeed others who were aware of what was happening, came to believe that the group would not only make a real difference to their work but that these differences would translate into specific changes to make their lives at work *and* at home more manageable and more under their control. This relation to their own personal lives, we believe, is what engaged their creativity and energized them to make the group work.

When we returned to the District a year later, much had changed. Downsizing, restructuring, and the move to "virtual" offices had altered the business environment dramatically. Not surprisingly, many of the innovative links forged in the Offset Group were no longer evident. As is often the case in times of uncertainty and instability -- ironically, times when creativity and innovation are most needed -- people had reverted to old patterns and ways of thinking. Rather than continuing to think of using the link between work and family as a source of energy and creativity in meeting the new challenges, the focus moved once again to separating the two and giving precedence to work. So, for example, the idea of cross-functional teams had survived and formed the basis of a unit-wide reorganization along these lines, *but the link back to the family* was no longer being artiuclated as part of the strategic agenda or recognized as critical to the continued success of the innovation.

Our experience here helped us articulate one of the key learnings from this project: a synergistic approach to work and family challenges so many deeply held assumptions about

organizational success that it is unlikely that one or two interventions, no matter how successful, can change them. These old assumptions and cultural beliefs are likely to surface over and over again, undermining the transformative potential in this new approach. Rather than cause for dismay, we believe this is encouraging evidence of the power of these ideas and points to a strategy of small wins. Indeed, many of the team members from the Offset Group who are now dispersed in different areas of the company have told us that they took valuable lessons from their involvement in the project and are using them to organize work in different ways in their new work sites.

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The goal of this detailed example is to make more concrete both the value of rethinking work practices by means of a work-family lens and the problems of making and sustaining change. Though the story relates only to one particular site, we hope it nonetheless conveys, in a more vivid way, the lessons from this project.

Appendix Notes

[1]During the period of the research, there was considerable turnover and turmoil in this site. These changes included three shifts in management, consolidation of the service districts, downsizing, and other restructuring. Not only did this complicate the actual work of the project, but it had a demoralizing effect on employees and group members. Indeed, visiting the district to do the work was sometimes difficult because employees felt overwhelmed by what was happening and discouraged about the possibility of linking personal needs to work practice change during such a period of instability.

[2]This is a fictitious name.

[3] When such a system was formally proposed, it was rejected at the corporate level because it would require revising existing computer programs for record keeping.