

A CASE STUDY OF A FLEXTIME POLICY

**A CASE STUDY OF A FLEXTIME POLICY: REACTIONS AND
RESPONSES TO FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS AMONG
MCMASTER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY EMPLOYEES**

By

TERRY M. MACLELLAN, B.A. HONS.

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AUTHOR : Terry M. MacLellan, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR : Professor Pamela Sugiman

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a case study of the flextime policy at McMaster University, which has been in formal use since the spring of 1981. It is a qualitative study based on the examination of written documents and interviews with thirty-four respondents, thirty-one who are University library employees working according to the policy. The other three respondents are individuals who have in the past been, or are presently, involved in developing, implementing, and/or administering the policy. Because the majority of existing studies on flextime are based on quantitative research methods, it is a goal of this thesis is to take a qualitative approach, more specifically a grounded theory approach, and analyze issues related to flextime as they arise out of the data.

The researcher chose the University libraries as the setting in which to examine flextime work schedules for two central reasons. First, the majority of the employees are female and are employed in nonprofessional, white-collar positions. The relevance is that such employees are one of the two main groups of workers most likely to have access to flextime. Second, the setting includes individuals at various points in the life cycle who thus have different needs and expectations of the workplace. Therefore it may be possible to apply the findings from this setting to other workplaces and employees.

Numerous documents were explored and three individuals were interviewed in order to explore the history and logistics behind the flextime policy. The interviews

provided information pertaining to when, how, and why the policy was introduced, as well as valuable insight as to how it is presently administered. Thirty-one employees were interviewed in order to gain an understanding as to how flextime affects both their paid and their domestic work lives. For the majority of the employees, one of the main advantages of flextime is that attempting to combine paid work and domestic responsibilities is made somewhat easier and less stressful. Interestingly, although there are a number of factors which actually limit the extent to which employees can use their flextime privileges, many of them reported that flextime never-the-less gives them a feeling of added control. The researcher suggests however, that these feelings are related more to the additional control they experience over the scheduling of factors in their personal lives, as opposed to additional control over their paid work.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	The Problematic Nature of Work and the Spread of Flexitime
	I - Problems with the Social Organization of Work5
	(a) Scientific Management and Specialization6
	(b) Human Relations Theory 9
	(c) Bureaucratization and Bureaucratic Control10
	(d) The Feminization of Work 13
	II - The Humanization of Work and QWL 15
	(a) The Principles of Humanization 15
	(b) QWL -What Is It? 17
	(c) QWL : Critical Perspectives 19
	(d) The Spread of QWL 21
	III - Flexitime: A Component of QWL25
	(a) The Growing Popularity of Alternative Work Schedules 25
	(b) Flexitime and QWL 26
	(c) The Implementation of Flexitime 33
	IV - Summary 34
CHAPTER TWO	Library Background and Methodology 37
	I - The Setting 37
	II - Research Methods41
	(a) The Interviews42
	(b) The Interview Sample47
	III - Flexitime at McMaster University50
	(a) The Introduction of Flexitime50

	(b) The Implementation of Flexitime	54
	(c) The Pilot Study	55
	(d) Flexibility Within Limits	58
	(e) Results of the Pilot Study	60
	(f) The Functioning of Flexitime	62
CHAPTER THREE	Employee Reactions and Responses to Flexitime: Analysis and Interpretation	66
	I - Introduction	66
	II - Initial Reactions to Flexitime	66
	III - Flexitime and Domestic Responsibilities	69
	(a) The Sexual Division of Domestic Labour	71
	(b) Effects of Flexitime on Existing Institutional Inequalities	73
	(c) Child Care	75
	(d) Care of the Elderly	79
	(e) The Quality of Family Life	81
	(f) Proposed Workplace Solutions : Beyond Flexitime	83
	IV - Flexitime and Leisure	86
CHAPTER FOUR	Control and Quality of Work Life	92
	I - Control and Coping	92
	(a) The Nature of Work and Flexitime	102
	(b) Managerial Style	105
	(c) Flexitime and Downsizing	106
	II - Loss of Control for Management	108
	III- Does Flexitime Affect How Employees Feel About Their Work?	110
	IV - Overview	113
CONCLUSION		115
APPENDICES		124
REFERENCES		136

INTRODUCTION

Since the late nineteenth century paid work in society, because of the way it is socially organized, has become problematic for many individuals. Workers in a growing number of jobs are increasingly alienated from the work they perform, due in part to a loss of autonomy and control over the overall labour process. Because paid work affects every member of society either directly or indirectly, when the way in which it is organized becomes problematic, it is a problem with widespread and far-reaching consequences. It is therefore not surprising that paid work is a topic of growing interest to sociologists.

Two central motivating forces have led to the reorganization of paid work along the lines of "humanization principles" in general, and QWL initiatives in particular. One of these was the growing discontent and alienation of workers and resultant increasing tensions between labour and management. Such sentiments grew largely in response to changes that came about during the Industrial Revolution and continue even today. Worker discontent emerged largely in response to changes in the social organization of wage work. Increased specialization, bureaucratization, and the feminization of certain jobs made work in various sectors of the economy increasingly dull and repetitive and at the same time reduced the control that skilled craft workers and artisans once enjoyed. The second motivating force was the concurrent push by managers and owners for a

revised, more effective approach to manage labour and organize work, one which would increase productivity.

One common argument is that human relations principles in general, and QWL programs in particular, have been designed and implemented in an effort to make work more satisfying for employees. This is done by increasing worker's control over certain aspects of the labour process. However, more critical observers argue that the majority of QWL programs do not empower workers and are introduced simply to fulfill managerial goals (Krahn and Lowe 1988; Rinehart 1987; Rose 1989; Wells 1986). In this view, the one I take in this thesis, managers introduce such programs in order to achieve increased productivity, lowered rates of absenteeism, and/or improved employee morale, efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Flextime can be considered as one specific type of QWL program and represents the focus of this study. Although there is much literature pertaining to flextime work arrangements, most research has focused on flextime from employers' perspectives. Thus, the emphasis is on how flextime affects factors such as productivity, absenteeism, lateness and turnover, and the like. There is some research regarding employee reactions to flextime, however little of this extends beyond numerical analysis. There is insufficient information about how workers actually experience flextime. We know little about whether such schedules do in fact improve quality of work life and decrease feelings of discontent experienced by workers.

By interviewing thirty-one McMaster University library employees who work under flextime, I attempt in this study to determine how flextime work schedules affect workers' lives both at home and in their employment, from their own individual perspectives. I further explore whether flextime actually improves the quality of their work lives by giving them more control over their work. This study is based on qualitative research methods. Historical documents were examined in order to obtain relevant information pertaining to the development and implementation of flextime at McMaster. The central focus of the study however, is that of the open-ended interviews conducted with library employees. During these interviews workers were free to discuss the issues concerning flextime which they feel are most relevant in their own lives. Both the methodology and the background of flextime at McMaster are discussed in detail in chapter two. The following chapters, three and four, provide a discussion of the analysis and interpretation of the data. Perhaps the most significant findings and those which comprise a large component of chapter three pertain to the findings regarding the effects of flextime on domestic workloads, particularly in the context of the gendered division of labour existing in our society. The focus in this chapter is therefore on the impact of flextime in the private domain of the home.

The first chapter begins with a brief description of the social organization of work, including the development of humanization of work principles and QWL programs. Following this the two main alternative perspectives on QWL are explained. Finally, the relatively recent development of non-standard work arrangements,

specifically flextime, is addressed. The following dimensions of flextime are discussed: flextime as a component of QWL, its origins, the factors influencing the spread of flextime, and the industries in which it is most common.

CHAPTER ONE

The Problematic Nature of Work and the Spread of Flexitime

I - Problems With the Social Organization of Paid Work

The ways in which paid work has been organized throughout the twentieth century has been problematic and thus, the subject of considerable academic and popular debate. Since the beginning of this century many jobs have become increasingly specialized, routinized, and monotonous. When work is organized in such a way that workers become discontented and alienated, it represents a serious issue. Because paid work affects all members of an industrialized nation, whether directly or indirectly, and when the manner in which it is organized becomes problematic there are widespread implications for society. Marx (1939:22) himself stressed the centrality of work in the lives of individuals in society. He writes, in his classic statement,

For as soon as labour is distributed, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a cultural critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

Lee Braude (1975: viii) discusses the situation of work in present society. He argues that individuals expect their work to supply them with a means of livelihood at the same time as providing personal satisfaction and gratification. The problem however, is that they expect this even though many occupations are increasingly routinized and specialized, and therefore frequently dull. Given the centrality of work to the lives of most individuals, it is no surprise that over the past several decades sociologists have shown a keen interest in its changing nature and organization as well as in transformations in the relationships between workers and employers. Sociologists and other researchers have been particularly concerned about three specific and interrelated aspects of the organization of paid work. These include: 1) specialization, 2) bureaucratization, and 3) feminization. Each of these developments became increasingly problematic during the early to mid part of the twentieth century. As the situation of the majority of wage earners worsened during this period, relations between employees and employers became increasingly tense. This growing conflict which came to characterize management-employee relations was related also, in part, to shifts that occurred in managerial thinking and strategies of control.

(a) Scientific Management and Specialization

Work in industrial society has become increasingly specialized, in that workers' skills have become segmented and subdivided as the division of labour in many work settings has grown. The increased specialization of many jobs spread with the introduction of scientific management, a management theory based on the belief of workers as motivated primarily by economic incentives. At the turn of the twentieth century many managers upheld the principles of scientific management as developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor. Taylor was an American engineer, known for his work on piece rate schemes and time and motion studies (Watson, 1987). One basic assumption

behind the principles of scientific management is that the worker is essentially an economic animal, a “self-seeking asocial economic individual who ... prefers the management to do his task-related thinking for him (Watson, 1987: 36).”

Taylor argued that it is the natural instinct of workers to “take it easy”, which he labeled “soldiering”. When employers fail to design and reward work on an objective, scientific basis, Taylor proposed that workers will get together and conspire to hold production down in order to maximize their reward without tempting management to tighten the rate (Watson, 1987). Besides the main assumption of humans as rational, economic beings, there are a number of other premises on which this theory is based. They include that jobs should be designed to achieve the maximum technical division of labour via task fragmentation, the planning of work and the execution of work need to be separated, skill requirements should be minimized and materials handled by workers as little as possible, and finally, workers’ efforts can be stabilized and intensified through standardized procedures, time studies, monitoring systems and incentive payment systems.

Within this control strategy there is an obvious focus on work intensification, ways of motivating workers to produce more output over shorter periods of time. The issue of work intensification is not only an important factor within scientific management as a control strategy, but also within the human relations theory which will be discussed in the following section. The difference between the two forms of management control strategies is that in the latter managers attempt to increase worker productivity by using work schemes that make workers feel “important” and thereby supposedly more satisfied - which is believed to lead to increased productivity. This issue of intensifying the work process is one that arises in the present study of McMaster University. It will be

suggested in later chapters that flextime itself may be both a direct and an indirect means for management to intensify the work process without workers' awareness.

As a result of scientific management and the increased specialization it brought, in many industries and settings wage work has become increasingly subdivided. With the detailed division of labour, a worker who was at one time responsible for the labour process from beginning to end, came to be responsible for only one or a few of many small tasks. Many workers, instead of a single worker became responsible for the overall production process, thus obscuring the work of individual workers. The result was that as tasks became subdivided, specialized, and automated, workers lost control over the production process. According to Harry Braverman (1974:425),

The more science is incorporated into the labour process, the less the worker understands of the process; the more sophisticated an intellectual product the machine becomes, the less control and comprehension of the machine the worker has.

When skills are subdivided through specialization, work becomes routine and senseless, leading to the alienation of workers. In the words of Karl Marx (1906:708),

Within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labor are brought about at the cost of individual labor; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange him from the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power.

One central problem with scientific management, for employers, is that widespread attempts to rationalize the work process met with opposition from organized labour. Over time this approach became less effective for managing employees, as

managers realized that workers resented being treated only as economic beings with extrinsic needs (Watson, 1987). Friedman (1977) argues that scientific management became counter-productive in many cases because of its reliance on “a direct control strategy”. Workers began to oppose this direct control and pushed for a control strategy based on “responsible autonomy”. Employees demanded status, autonomy, and responsibility, each of which would make the relationship between employers and workers more diffuse. The general movement in North America towards responsible autonomy and participative management strategies which followed, was not however based solely on workers’ demands. It was based as much, if not more, on the growing necessity for employers to react to government regulations and changing cultural expectations. Thus a new managerial approach was developed, the human relations approach.

(b) Human Relations Theory

Although the human relations approach is often considered to have replaced the scientific management approach, it is important to remember that scientific management is in fact still used in some workplaces today, especially in those areas where technical change facilitates the deskilling of jobs (Watson, 1987). The human relations school of thought originated out of the famous Hawthorne experiments conducted in Chicago in Western Electric Company’s Hawthorne plant. The importance of the study was that it indicated the significance of social variables in workers’ behaviour, particularly the importance of informal social group needs. The studies’ researchers suggested that workers’ behaviours can be attributed to their sentiments as opposed to their reason, and that in order to “avoid the pathologies of industrial society” workers should be integrated into the workplace community (Watson, 1987: 44).

The human relations managerial approach came at a time when labour was becoming increasingly organized. Not surprisingly then, this approach was associated with integrating the work group in order to control it better, as well as with focusing on the significance of communications, and the careful “handling of people” (Watson, 1987). Neo-human relations theorists are concerned with creating conditions in which employees can achieve self-actualization, and thus on specific ways of redesigning jobs. Approaches to job redesign have been widely studied at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Studies performed here have led researchers to encourage the view of an organization as a socio-technical system. According to the socio-technical systems approach, employers design both the technical and social components of the overall organization simultaneously. Both components are developed jointly, so that they “fit” with one another.

The human relations theory has brought many developments with it. Some of these include job enrichment, job enlargement, autonomous work groups, and various participative management schemes. However, although this managerial approach has been a catalyst for many workplace innovations, these innovations remain marginal to the way work is organized in industrial capitalist society. They are often isolated modifications introduced by management to increase the efficiency and productivity of workers (Watson, 1987).

(c) Bureaucratization and Bureaucratic Control

The focus on scientific management and specialization, both of which were ways of increasing control over the work process for owners and managers, is related to bureaucratization, another problem with the organization of work in industrial capitalist

society. Max Weber introduced the term “bureaucracy”, which in his view was a phenomenon of the “modern world”. Bureaucratic organizations should, ideally, process work, people and things according to rational, objective rules (Beetham, 1987). There are four central characteristics of Weber's bureaucracy: 1) hierarchy, 2) continuity, 3) impersonality, and 4) expertise. In regard to the first principle, hierarchy, "each official has a clearly defined competence within a hierarchical division of labour, and is answerable for its performance to a superior" (Beetham, 1987:12). Continuity refers to the fact that each office in a bureaucratic organization represents a full-time salaried occupation and contains the possibility of regular advancement according to a defined career structure. Third, work in a bureaucracy is impersonal and performed according to predetermined, objective rules. According to this ideal type, no arbitrariness or favoritism exists within bureaucracies and all transactions are recorded in writing. Expertise implies that individuals are hired based on achieved merit, trained for a specific job, and control access to the knowledge surrounding that job (ibid.). Although in theory bureaucracies are supposed to represent a model of efficiency, critics argue that "the principles of bureaucratic organization are more ambiguous than Weber realized, producing significant 'dysfunctional' effects" (Beetham, 1987:16).

One outgrowth of bureaucracy is the development of “bureaucratic control”. As opposed to controlling workers through direct control, characteristic of secondary market jobs, or through technical control as is used in “subordinate primary market jobs”, employers began to rely on bureaucratic control. This pushed many organizations into

what is considered the “independent primary labour market”. According to Richard Edwards (1979: 21) bureaucratic control “rests on the principle of embedding control in the social structure or the social relations of the workplace”. Arbitrary rule by supervisors as in simple control, and control of the labour process through machines as in technical control, are replaced by institutionalized rules based on a hierarchy of power. Today bureaucratic control is used in some sectors more than others, and in many workplaces it is combined with elements of technical control (Edwards, 1979).

As jobs are pushed into the independent primary labour market, often there are corresponding increases in job security, promotion prospects, higher levels of education, occupational standards, and long term employment, all of which are characteristic of primary market jobs. These are some obvious advantages for employees. For employers, bureaucratic control has also proved beneficial. Not only has it been effective in many cases in forestalling unions, it has also given employers increased flexibility in introducing “productivity-enhancing internal market procedures” (Edwards, 1979: 183). Bureaucracy in general and bureaucratic control in particular for workers, despite some advantages, has ultimately meant a loss of control over the labour process and decision-making. Although workers may be given “superficial” autonomy under bureaucratic control, they lack any “true” autonomy. Edwards argues that any positive incentives offered to workers by bureaucratic control, such as higher pay, promotions, and improved benefits, tend to function as a system of bribes. They lead workers to pursue self-interests as individuals and stifle impulses to fight collectively as a united group. The

elaboration of job titles, rules, and procedures, are only “a better way to do business” from management’s point of view, while at the same time allowing them to avoid unionization and to reduce the perceived negative consequences of unionization.

(d) The Feminization of Work

Not only has work become increasingly specialized and bureaucratized, but there is a third problem with the organization of paid work which is closely related to these two developments. It is that some sectors of the workforce have become increasingly feminized since the late nineteenth century. This is especially problematic for women. According to Armstrong and Armstrong (1984) by the end of the nineteenth century in Canada the growth of industrial capitalism meant that factories were replacing household industries. The result was that work in society became segregated as the general labour process was split into two separate units, a domestic unit and an industrial unit. This split was based on sexual lines, women were responsible for the domestic unit while men were responsible for the industrial unit. Industrial capitalism therefore led to the separation of work and home, or of the public and private spheres.

The result of this separation was that as women began to enter the labour force, some by choice but most by necessity, they retained responsibility for domestic work and child-rearing. In essence then, when women, especially married women, enter the paid labour force they are often taking on second jobs. Thus the “double day” has been created. Because of their continued responsibility for household labour women are often unable to commit fully and continuously to their paid employment.

Due to this general feminization of the labour force, women are concentrated in less labour productive industries which are characterized by low pay, while men are more likely to work in the more productive industries where the pay is higher, benefits are better, and they are more likely to be unionized (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1984). Specific areas of the labour force which are feminized include clerical work, teaching, nursing, and sales work in the tertiary sector. The feminization of the labour force combined with their primary responsibility for housework and child care means that women face real inequalities in the labour market. They remain concentrated in low wage occupations in the secondary labour market, and therefore in jobs with little prestige and room for advancement. The nature of their work in the home and in the labour market reinforces and perpetuates the current sexual division of labour in society (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1984). Despite the fact that women have recently been moving into traditional “male” jobs, they remain segregated in certain jobs.

As an example, clerical work is one of the most feminized sectors of the labour market. The feminization of clerical jobs is closely related to the increased specialization and bureaucratization of the labour force in general associated with industrial capitalism. According to Graham Lowe (1980), with increased specialization and bureaucratization came an “administrative revolution”. This revolution, combined with the growth of white-collar occupations, fundamentally altered employment patterns in that more women began entering the labour market. Automation was simplifying the tasks of the general male bookkeeper and therefore reducing the skills required to

perform clerical work. Women were easily channeled into these low-skill, low-paying, and low-prestige jobs which men no longer wanted. The result was the feminization of clerical jobs in particular and a trend towards the proletarianization of white-collar work in general. Today clerical work is increasingly specialized, with minimal training, experience, or versatility required. The general feminization of the labour force combined with the existence of the double day for women has added to the discontent they experience in their paid work.

The large increase in the proportion of women in the paid labour force, especially those with young children, has been associated with some changes in the way work is organized, although these changes are limited to paid work as opposed to changes in the organization of unpaid work. One of the things that comes to mind when examining the managerial approaches of scientific management and human relations theory, is that the issue of a gendered division of labour is relatively absent. These approaches to managing workers are based on the model of the white, male workers who have wives at home full-time to take care of all domestic and child care tasks. The feminization of the labour force, the entrance of women into the paid labour force, has therefore required changes in managers' approaches to managing a more diverse work force. Although the majority of traditional quality of work life approaches, which are discussed in the following chapter, apply mainly to males in specific types of jobs, some of the more recent changes, such as the growth of alternative work schedules, is closely related to the growth of women and other types of workers in the labour force.

II - The Humanization of Work and Quality of Work Life

(a) The Principles of Humanization

The relationship between employers and employees during the early half of this century was characterized by conflict. Workers were increasingly discontented with the way work was organized and the ever-increasing control exerted by management over the labour process, and were unionizing to collectively oppose these conditions. At the same time as workers were demanding improved work conditions, managers were realizing that if workers were not given better working conditions productivity levels would decrease. The scientific management approach in itself was becoming less useful as a management strategy and managers agreed it was time to supplement it with a new management approach. The conflict between workers and managers, the simultaneous push for new ways of organizing work, and the need for firms to become more flexible therefore led to the search for new ways of managing employees and new ways of organizing work. The 1960's, 1970's and 1980's witnessed attempts to "humanize work" as well as the emergence of specific "quality of work life" initiatives.

There are four central principles underlying the concept of the humanization of work: 1) security, 2) equity, 3) individuation, and 4) workplace democracy (Herrick and Maccoby, 1975). First, workers need to be secure in that they are free from anxiety regarding their health and safety, money, and future employment. Second, work must be equitable. This means that there must be concern for fairness in work relations, both between workers and managers, and among workers themselves. The third principle refers to that of individuation. Workers should be given the maximum degree of autonomy possible in order to determine to some extent how their work is done. The final humanization of work principle, democracy, refers to the need for forms of participative-management and systems of worker control. Wherever suitable, workers

should be allowed to manage themselves with regards to some aspect of their work (ibid.).

(b) QWL - What is it?

The purpose of the following discussion on quality of work life is to provide a context within which to outline some of the changes in the organization of work in the past few decades. In particular it is to set the tone for qualifying flextime work schedules as a genuine component of QWL. This is because flextime, which forms the basis of this present study, will be examined as one change in the organization of work which is related to the broader issue of QWL and its inherent focus on worker empowerment.

Originating from the humanization of work approach, a variety of programs and initiatives grew in popularity during the 1970's and are still in effect today. The majority of these programs fall under the heading of "quality of work life" programs. Quality of work life (QWL) became a "buzzword" among managers, public policy makers, academics and consultants during the 1970's (Krahn and Lowe, 1988). QWL is broadly defined as an

... expression covering a vast variety of programs, techniques, theories, and management styles through which organizations and jobs are designed so as to grant workers more autonomy, responsibility and authority than is usually the case ... the general objective is to arrange organizations, management procedures, and jobs for the maximum utilization of individual talents and skills, in order to create more challenging and satisfying work and improve organizational effectiveness (Jenkins, 1983: 1-2).

Some sociologists argue that the concepts underlying QWL provide a new way of thinking that focuses on the flaws of bureaucratic firms in general and on scientific management in particular (van Beinum et al., 1983). Louis Davis (1983) argues that with both scientific management and bureaucracy there is a focus on the idea of "one

person per task". The results of this idea have been the incapacity of workers to cooperate, an inhibition to learning, organizational rigidity, and the inability of employees to adapt to change. Davis suggests a shift away from scientific management and bureaucratic work principles and their deficiencies, towards "self-maintaining organizational units", or autonomous work groups. This shift, he argues, is necessary so that workers may gain experience with widespread organizational problems and methods of problem-solving. For employers' benefit this will mean employees who have a increased knowledge of organizational issues which in turn will lead them to identify with the larger organization, not only their own jobs.

van Beinum, Kolodny, and Armstrong (1983: 147) write that "quality of working life provides an opportunity to understand a new paradigm of work, a system that elaborates how people, jobs and organizations can and should be put together." They are referring specifically to an argument put forth by Fred Emery (1983) that during history society has moved through different paradigms, or phases of industrialism, in relation to paid work. So far, each phase has been based on maximizing the proportion of the working day that each employee spends working. The currently emerging paradigm is breaking from the focus on the "sanctity of managerial prerogatives". As we move into a new phase of industrialism the principle of the "self-managing production group" is becoming more popular. Emery argues that as a result of semiautonomous work groups workers gain dignity in that they are able to make certain decisions and their work becomes more meaningful. In one view then, production goals and membership in self-managing groups have become the subject of negotiation, and the concept of "managerial prerogatives" has become secularized.

The general values and concepts underlying specific QWL initiatives were introduced and developed by social scientists at the Tavistock Institute and were based on

the socio-technical system's approach to job design (Krahn & Lowe, 1988). Specifically, QWL programs were developed out of experiments exploring self-managing groups, studies on work reform and employee well-being, and Herzberg's theory that work is satisfying "only if it meets employees' psychological growth needs" (ibid.). Theoretically, QWL claims are said to combine humanistic and economic objectives by providing challenging, involving, and rewarding work experiences for employees while at the same time, for the employer, more productive utilization of an organization's human resources (Krahn and Lowe, 1988).

Marcia Nauratil (1989) argues that the QWL movement has had two major thrusts. The first of these is job redesign. In this case, jobs are "enlarged" or "enriched". Repetitive jobs are broadened through task variety and by giving workers responsibility for larger units of production. The second thrust of the QWL movement is participative management. This refers to a degree of shared decision-making between labor and management. When jobs are designed according to participative management principles, employees obtain the right to give input over certain aspects of their jobs and are allowed some decision-making authority. Some common examples of specific QWL initiatives include; job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, autonomous work teams and quality control circles. Many supporters of QWL propose that trends towards these types of programs have resulted in heightened worker satisfaction (Krahn & Lowe, 1988). However, whether or not QWL initiatives actually achieve these goals and whether they are actually even introduced with these goals in mind may be considered questionable.

(c) QWL - Critical Perspectives

Not all of the literature on QWL supports the idea that such initiatives increase worker's control or improve work conditions. It is even questionable whether they are

always introduced with such intentions in mind. A more critical approach to studying QWL needs to be taken in order to determine if these programs in fact do anything at all to change the position and experiences of workers. According to Don Wells (1986: viii), the majority of QWL initiatives and promises are false because they do "nothing at all to challenge the hierarchy of work". Wells maintains that "QWL programs are designed to adjust workers to their own subordination - the basic power relations between management and labour is taken as a given." Through case studies he demonstrates that QWL has not necessarily led to improvements in workers' power and control over their work and that in many instances, management remains "in full control of QWL." Even when QWL programs are introduced into a workplace, "beyond a few concessions in the realm of decision making", overall authority remains with management (Krahn & Lowe, 1988). Although employees may be able to make suggestions regarding decisions affecting the workplace, management always retains the right to not only veto workers' ideas and suggestions, but also to take away QWL reforms if their own objectives are not being met (Rinehart, 1987).

Furthermore, critics claim that although QWL initiatives are

[o]stensibly oriented to making work a more satisfying experience ... underlying these reformist efforts [is] an attempt to restore corporate competitiveness and profitability: only by overcoming workers' resistance and union opposition would management expect to increase productivity (Rinehart, 1987: 6).

In many cases management has used QWL programs to weaken union bargaining power, circumvent collective agreements, and co-opt workers into solving problems of quality and productivity (Krahn & Lowe, 1988). Michael Rose (cited in Nauratil, 1989) reports that eighty percent of all QWL schemes in the United States contain as a hidden agenda,

the inoculation of workers against unionism. Rinehart (1987:183) similarly argues that the main objective of granting workers participation is to weaken the power of unions by "drawing them into a web of collaborative relationships and alliances that eventuate in actions consistent with the goals of upper management". For this reason, unions tend to be highly critical of QWL programs (Krahn & Lowe, 1988).

(d) The Spread of QWL

Underlying the concern with QWL in North America are a combination of demographic forces, economic forces, and legal forces (Barry Stein, 1983). Because society's changing demographic structure and its implications are discussed elsewhere in this chapter, only the economic and legal forces will be discussed in this section. Changes in national and international economic environments have been associated with shortages of critical resources, a growing interdependence of countries and industries, increasing concern over ecological issues and environmental issues, and high inflation. These economic changes have resulted in shifting and increasingly competitive environments. Employers and employees alike must be educated to cope with change, take advantage of new technology, and employers must learn to manage in new ways and train employees for increased responsibility. In effect then, growing economic competition has meant that organizations must take advantage of all sources of new ideas - including those surrounding QWL initiatives - to remain responsive to the marketplace (Stein, 1983).

In reference to the legal forces behind QWL, courts and legislatures have paid increasing attention to workplace issues over the past twenty years (Stein, 1983). There has been much interest in the legal rights and entitlements that affect the way employers can treat employees. New laws concerning employment equity, pay equity, health and safety, and human rights have brought new pressures and concerns for employers. Issues of fairness have become valid for all employees. The implication of these legal changes is that new demands have been placed on managers and the expectations of employees have been fueled, traditional approaches to managing workers are not as effective as they once were as employees are pushing for new policies and programs that benefit them.

The relatively recent trend of organizational downsizing and the need for organizational "flexibility" has resulted in many changes within modern firms. According to Anna Pollert (1988:281), "the term 'flexibility' has become indelibly fixed as the solution to recession, heightened competition and uncertainty." Managers are increasingly concerned with how to achieve flexibility in legislation, in economic policy, in production strategy, in control over labour, and in employment structure. Employers' desires to achieve 'functional flexibility' in the labour process has furthermore resulted in an increased focus on the multiskilling of workers, meaning that because there are fewer workers performing the same amount of work, individual workers must take on additional and often varied work tasks to cover for those who have been laid off or fired. The goal of 'numerical flexibility' has led to a proliferation of part-time work arrangements and temporary employment contracts. The result is that the new 'flexible

firm' has become a "micro dual labour market model" (ibid.). Many organizations now have both a core of stable, skilled employees on the one hand, and on the other, groups of outer, peripheral employees who are less skilled and easily replaced in the event of downsizing (Pollert, 1988:283).

Four major trends have shaped recent concerns about flexibility (Olmstead and Smith, 1989). The first is the trend towards the globalization of the world's economy. Olmstead and Smith argue that globalization has, first of all, required that we not only be aware of what is happening in other parts of the world, but also how our local markets are affected by the economic environments of other countries. Also, they suggest that because more corporations are doing business on a multinational scale, our tolerance for diversity has increased partly because there is now more of an interchange of ideas between cultures than in the past (ibid.). For example, they note that because of differences in social and cultural priorities many European and Scandinavian countries have introduced policies that allow a wider range of work-time alternatives. Specifically, these alternatives better accommodate working parents and senior workers as well as spread employment during periods of economic downturns. The second trend shaping the concern with flexibility is related to the fact that technological and economic change is evolving at such a fast pace that organizations must remain flexible if they are to "keep up". Organizations must develop the ability to adapt and cope with changing conditions. New products, services and technologies have led to the decline of some industries and the deletion of some skills. Therefore dislocations and career changes are becoming a

reality for an increasing number of workers, thereby making education, training, and retraining necessities. In effect, companies that do not adopt that latest technology and that do not employ individuals who are familiar with up-to-date technology will not be able to compete with companies that do.

Also, the need for organizations to remain flexible is affected by demographic changes in the labour force, in particular to the rise of women, minorities, and immigrants. It is predicted that these groups will account for eighty percent or more of the new additions to the labour force between now and the year 2000. Further, because of longer life spans of workers and the slowed pace of economic growth, the shrinking pool of younger workers combined with the retirement of older workers may mean that future generations of workers will be burdened with supporting too large a percentage of dependent former workers. Therefore, flexible and reduced work schedules may provide new ways of managing a diverse workforce by encouraging skilled, senior employees to extend their work lives, as well as accommodate workers with family obligations. Fourth, the need for organizational flexibility is affected by the current trend toward a better integration of work with other aspects of employees lives. As more companies search for ways to become increasingly efficient, employers are gaining an awareness of the fact that current systems often make workers less productive, not more productive. The need for employees to combine work and domestic obligations, work and educational responsibilities, and work and leisure is very stressful. When this stress is not addressed it can lead to increased absenteeism, downtime on the job, and high

turnover rates. Thus, employers are realizing the need for a flexible approach in the workplace to better integrate the many aspects of employees' lives (Olmstead and Smith, 1989).

III - Flextime: A Component of QWL

(a) The Growing Popularity of Alternative Work Schedules

Some of the recent developments in the organization of paid work concern the way in which it is scheduled. In particular, flextime and job-sharing arrangements are increasingly common, and in some cases considered genuine components of QWL. Non-standard work schedules have been growing in popularity since the 1970's, about the same time QWL programs were introduced in North America. The "standard" work schedule common during the early half of this century and even today in many workplaces, in which workers work five days a week for seven or eight hours per day, is problematic for many workers, especially those with numerous personal demands. During the past decade however, the scheduling of work has changed considerably with the advent of non-standard arrangements such as job-share, flextime and telecommuting.

Stanley Nollen (1980) examines a few of the most salient factors which account for the growth of non-standard work schedules. The composition of the labour force is rapidly changing, in particular with respect to the number of women, and therefore dual earner families, in the paid labour force. Standard work schedules are particularly problematic for employees with small children because they leave little time for family members, work begins too early and/or ends too late, and work schedules and child care

arrangements are made incompatible. Alternative work schedules are crucial in allowing workers to combine work and family responsibilities. As well, Nollen argues that alternative work schedules are growing in importance due to a widespread decline in productivity growth. Employers hope that new work-time arrangements will make workers more productive and efficient, on the assumption that flextime will make for happier workers and happier workers make more productive workers.

(b) Flextime and QWL

Alternative work schedules include a number of arrangements such as part-time work, temporary/casual work, telecommuting, job-sharing and flextime. According to Nollen (1980:8) alternative work schedules such as flextime represent, "a fundamental change in how workers relate to the workplace and in how employers relate to employees". This statement is somewhat unsubstantiated, and I argue that it is somewhat naive in that although it seems flextime may give workers increased control over when to be at work, it is not necessarily a change that fundamentally alters how workers and employers relate.

Barry Stein (1983) argues that flextime is considered a QWL program because it gives employees some control over when they start and finish their work and therefore more involvement in decisions concerning how work is allocated. Because flextime allows workers some input in determining the scheduling of their work, it can be considered one form of participative management. According to Holley et al. (1976) it has been used to solve problems of worker dissatisfaction and discontent by giving

employees more latitude and discretion over setting up their work schedules. In particular I argue that the flextime policy at McMaster University is a genuine component of QWL because it is considered by management to be a form of worker empowerment.

Even though employees who work under flextime do enjoy a certain level of freedom in choosing the times of their arrival and departure at work, they do not have any say in determining the number of hours worked overall (Ronen, 1984). This has prompted some writers to argue that flextime programs are often limited in the flexibility that they actually provide. In particular, some critics argue that flextime programs are "reactive" and ignore the real essence of worker discontent in that they do not focus on the deficiencies of work such as boring tasks and unhealthy work climates (Hamner cited in Holley et al., 1976). They claim that flextime does not focus on the major deficiencies of work under capitalist industry such as poor feedback, boring tasks and unhealthy work climates. Further, critics argue that flextime is limited because it does not alter current restrictive management policies such as those regarding vacations or sick leave allowances (Ronen, 1984).

Unions have been critical of QWL programs in general, mainly because they are often introduced by employers in an effort to undermine workers' bargaining power. Although they are by no means totally opposed to flextime in particular, they have been cautious of it. A number of union policies form the basis of this cautiousness. One such policy concerns the shorter work week (Plowman, 1977). Unions have bargained for a

shorter work week in order to expand the number of jobs available and to gain for workers as much leisure time as possible. Flextime is viewed by some unionists as a management compromise to a shorter work week in that it represents a rearranged work week gained at the expense of a permanent increase in hours. Secondly, organized labour has fought for overtime premiums in an attempt to discourage long work days and to increase the number of available jobs (Bohen and Viveros-Long 1981; Bohlander, 1977). Flextime programs may eliminate or lower the need for overtime and in some circumstances workers may lose these premiums because work no longer qualifies as overtime. According to Bohlander (1977) overtime pay is an important part of any union wage package and efforts to eliminate or decrease overtime without increases in workers' basic pay rates are likely to meet with opposition. Also, some unions oppose flextime because they believe that it may allow employees to arrange their hours to accommodate second jobs, something which they wish to avoid in order to maintain employment levels.

According to David Plowman (1977) unionists have questioned flextime because they view policies regarding core time leave skeptically. What this refers to is that prior to the introduction of flextime, workers' short term leaves of absence usually take place on employer's time. Under flextime however, such leaves must be accommodated during workers' own time. Also, union labour leaders have argued that with individual starting and quitting times each day, violations become difficult to determine (Bohlander, 1977). This means that with individual workers coming and going at different times every day it is difficult to determine when and if labour laws, such as those regarding

overtime, are being violated. Finally, organized labour has argued that flextime benefits employers more than it benefits workers. As a result of flextime programs many companies experience savings through increased productivity via more efficient use of capital assets. Unionists argue that employees should not be excluded from the economic benefits realized by organizations. They believe that workers should receive at least part of these gains through higher earnings, bonuses, profit sharing and/or improved benefits (ibid.). It should be noted that organized labour is most likely to support flextime programs if workers are collectively involved in its development and if collective bargaining provisions are protected.

Significantly, flextime policies almost always appear to be initiated by top management or personnel departments as opposed to by organized labour or individual employees (Nollen & Martin, 1978). This is consistent with the argument that managers usually have their own underlying goals in mind when introducing QWL. Although flextime programs offer the potential to solve many organizational problems by attracting productive workers, improving worker productivity and attitude, lowering personnel costs, improving "organizational culture", and offering partial solutions to work-family conflicts, research has indicated that flextime is often introduced to combat problems of widespread absenteeism or lateness (Ronen, 1984). Other specific motives that employers report for implementing flextime include a) to lower overtime pay, b) to improve recruitment problems and attract high quality applicants, c) to provide better service by extending daily hours, d) to enhance an organization's image, e) to maximize

the use of capital, f) to improve employee morale, or g) to relieve commuting problems (Bohlander, 1977).

Christopherson (1991) argues that although a common reason given by management for the introduction of alternative work schedules is a concern with the increase in women's total employment hours per day, often the real reason is employer's concern with "unanticipated lost time" which is a costly problem. Some employers have realized that work-time accommodations are one of the best ways, if not the optimal way, to make the relationship between production and social reproduction more efficient. They thus use non-standard work schedules, which in many studies have been shown to maintain flexibility and productivity. Often the introduction of flextime is directly associated with improvements in employee morale and productivity, as employees are able to work at the times which best suit them and their domestic responsibilities and therefore the times at which they are most productive.

Although flextime programs may be limited in scope, they do address employees' lives beyond the factory or office (Nollen, 1980). In comparison, most other types of QWL initiatives tend to ignore the fact that commitments and demands outside the workplace greatly affect one's quality of work life in particular, and quality of life in general. It is important to note however that it is still not known conclusively whether flextime does in fact improve the mesh between home life and employment (Nollen, 1980). The introduction of flextime tends to be praised by social advocators as a means of reducing the conflict caused by combining paid work and domestic obligations.

However, few studies have closely examined the effects of flextime on family life and those that have did not produce findings as positive as hoped (Christensen and Staines, 1990).

Nevertheless flextime does have the potential to be a family-oriented policy in so far as it can facilitate the reorganization of employment schedules so that workers can better meet household demands and still be productive in the workplace (Christopherson, 1991). The relationship between employment and family is a reciprocal one. Family demands and responsibilities shape and affect employees' waged work experiences just as employment demands affect family life. Feminist researchers have long argued that employees face work demands which often conflict with family life (see Armstrong and Armstrong, 1984; Duffy, Mandell and Pupo, 1989; Hochschild, 1989; Luxton et al., 1990). Inflexible employment schedules and excessive time commitments negatively affect workers' household responsibilities in particular, as well as the amount and quality of time they are able to spend with family members (Duffy et al., 1989). The problems that parents face in scheduling and coordinating employment and domestic obligations such as child care are continuous sources of stress, tension and anxiety. This problem is exacerbated for women, given the unequal sexual division of domestic labour and the private nature of family work in our society. Because flextime may allow the worker limited control over scheduling, it has the potential to reduce stress to a certain degree for workers, especially those who are married and have young children at home.

Some researchers argue that whether or not employees with flextime privileges will actually spend more time with their families and on meeting domestic obligations will depend on how flexible the program is (Nollen, 1980). When there is a high degree of flexibility and choice built into flextime programs, employees may gain more control over their employment schedules. This in turn may noticeably reduce the spill-over of work demands into family life and vice versa (Duffy et al., 1989). Furthermore, some writers argue that, "[r]ealistically flexitime is a fairly minor alteration of the work environment and not that potent in the face of ingrained family practices ... [u]nless both parents have liberal flexitime programs and are ready to alter family roles as well as work hours, the kids will still be the mother's responsibility and child care will still be needed (Nollen, 1980: 11)."

Some feminist researchers have examined issues of dependent care for children and the elderly, for which women bear the majority of responsibility, as a workplace concern and critique current government and employer policies such as flexitime. Many of them argue that women continue to be overburdened by the conflicting demands of work and family despite the spread of "family-oriented" policies and increasing number of "pro-family" social policies (Sancier and Mapp, 1992; Denton et al., 1990; Marlow, 1991; Martin et al., 1988; Baines et al., 1992). Sancier and Mapp (1992) in particular argue that women have not had the power and influence in government or in the workplace to shape practical solutions based on their needs and wants. They argue further that until women gain more control over their paid work and family lives and can

provide the impetus for defining dependent care options for children and the elderly, as opposed to having options defined for them by employers and government, their lives will be characterized by stress and confusion. These researchers emphasize that voluntary employer-sponsored programs such as referral services, employee consultations, flextime, assistance for child care or eldercare and other benefits receive strong support from media which gives the false impression that employers are “enthusiastically participating in an array of comprehensive programs designed to improve the lives of women workers” (ibid.). The fact is however, that very few employers provide these types of programs for women. Many of the developments taken by employers are labeled as modest at best. Instead of focusing on problem-solving at the micro level, within individual firms, the focus must be on developing widespread social policies which are supportive of employed women. Further, such policies need to move away from the outdated nuclear patriarchal model of the family which includes the assumption that employed women are somehow “deviant” (Marlow, 1991). Flextime therefore, although potentially beneficial for the small number of employed women who have access to it, may be seen as a trade-off for greatly needed social policies which would help large numbers of women and their families.

(c) The Implementation of Flextime

Flextime has been implemented in a variety of work settings. It has been most common in the finance and insurance industries, followed by transportation and communication industries, retail trade and service industries and least common in

manufacturing. This is because much of the work done in all of these industries, except for manufacturing, is performed by women in lower-level, white-collar jobs into which flextime is quite easily implemented (Christensen & Staines, 1990). Moreover, organizations that use flextime are more likely to be offices than factories and more likely to be service producers than goods producers (Nollen & Martin, 1978). Flextime is also suited to research and development professions as well as for employees who work on an independent basis and whose work does not require a great deal of interaction with others. Employees who are therefore most likely to have access to flextime schedules are either white-collar workers in clerical jobs, who tend to be women, or those employed in professional occupations and upper level management, who tend to be men (ibid.).

Flextime is difficult to implement in certain contexts. For example, where jobs are performed on different shifts, where they are part of an assembly line where continuous work coverage is required, in small organizations or departments with few employees, and in jobs where extensive internal communication is required, workers are less likely to have the option of flextime (Bohlander, 1977). Nollen (1980) relates that it is perhaps the most difficult to initiate flextime in production units which rely on assembly lines and on multiple shifts. This is because it is not possible to have workers coming and going at different times when the pace of work is controlled by machines which must be continuously staffed.

IV - Summary

During the early part of this century the way in which paid work was socially organized became a problem for workers and managers alike. Many jobs were increasingly dull, repetitive and less challenging than in the past, and workers lost autonomy and control over the labour process. At the same time, scientific management theory was less useful as workers resented being treated merely as economic beings. Managers were therefore pushing for a new approach to manage employees in an effort to increase declining productivity and efficiency. Human relations was therefore introduced, the premise of which is to treat workers as individuals and take into account informal group organizations within the workplace.

A move followed to attempt to "humanize" work. Thus various QWL programs were initiated which were based on the principles of humanizing work. There are two competing lines of argument surrounding QWL. One common argument, most often put forth by managers and QWL "experts" is that the main goals of QWL programs, and the reasons that they are introduced into organizations, are to combat the negative effects of the way work is organized by making paid work in general more satisfying to employees by giving them increased control over one aspect of their work. The second argument questions whether QWL is introduced by management for the sole purpose of improving work conditions for employees. This argument is based on the premise that most QWL programs are introduced by management for reasons of raising productivity. Further, even when they are introduced these programs do little to alter the balance of power. In most cases employees' work environments remain largely unchanged.

Alternative work arrangements such as flextime, introduced during the late 1960's and early 1970's, continue to gain popularity today. Flextime is considered a QWL initiative because it has the potential to give workers more control over the timing of their work, allowing them increased responsibility in arranging their own work schedules and thus possibly raising levels of autonomy. Flextime and other non-traditional work schedules were developed in response to both the demand by workers for less stressful ways to combine family and employment obligations, as well as the demand by managers for a way to achieve "organizational flexibility" and increase productivity. It has yet to be determined whether flextime as a QWL initiative in fact does improve worker satisfaction and working conditions. This study, through a qualitative, in-depth study of employee responses and reactions to flextime, attempts to determine how flextime, if at all, affects employees' work and home lives in one particular workplace setting. In the next chapter I will discuss the methodological research design as well as examine the background and implementation of flextime at a specific Canadian academic institution.

CHAPTER TWO

Library Background and Methodology

I - The Setting

This is a qualitative study which takes place at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, a mid-sized University in a working class Canadian city. The employees interviewed for the study are all employed at McMaster. In particular, they are employed in one of the four campus libraries, Mills Library, Thode Library, Innis Library, or Maps Library. The employees, who are not unionized, are from a variety of different departments within the libraries. Within the libraries at McMaster University there are approximately 150 employees. The ratio of female to male employees is approximately 80:20. Library departments are broken down into “work units”. A work unit refers to a group of employees who perform the same job and who belong to the same employee category. (For an outline of the numerous departments within the libraries, see Appendix A). The size of these work units range in number from as few as two or three employees to as many as twelve employees. The participants in the study are from a variety of different departments, or work units. However, the majority are in technical and clerical type jobs as opposed to professional positions. All of the employees work according to flexible work schedules. For obvious reasons the presence of a control group of

employees not on flextime would have greatly added to the data. Such a control group could have enabled comparisons to be made between groups of employees who have flextime privileges and those who do not. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, there were some limitations placed on my study. One of these limitations concerned the number of employees I was allowed to interview. Because the number of employees to be interviewed was chosen by my contact at Mills library, I was limited in terms of the number of employees I could include in the study. In addition, because the large majority of the employees who work in the libraries are on flextime, I do not believe it would have been possible, even if I were permitted, to find a similar sized control group of employees who are not on flextime. Therefore it would have strengthened the study, a control group was not used.

One way qualitative methods add to research is through the use of grounded theory, the approach on which this study relies (Patton, 1990:153). Grounded theory, as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967:1) involves "the discovery of theory from data". This means that research hypotheses and concepts are "worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:6). When taking a grounded theory approach the researcher does not begin with any predetermined hypothesis or expectations. Instead s/he allows concepts and theories to originate out of the data. The results and findings are therefore grounded in the empirical world (Patton, 1990: 67).

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990) grounded theorists believe that the "usual canons of "good science" should be retained" but must be redefined to fit qualitative

research and the “complexities of social phenomena”. Grounded theory seeks to uncover relevant conditions as well as to determine how actors react to changing conditions and the consequences of their actions (ibid.). The data from grounded theory studies come from a variety of sources. Corbin and Strauss (1990) note that data collection procedures involve interviews and observations, and other sources such as government documents, video tapes, letters, books, and newspapers.

There are a number of strengths and weaknesses associated with the grounded theory approach. Some of the main strengths arise from the fact that in grounded theory data collection and analysis are interrelated processes, meaning that analysis begins when the first bit of data is obtained. Corbin and Strauss (1990:5) state that “the carrying out of procedures of data collection and analysis systematically and sequentially enables the research process to capture all potentially relevant aspects of the topic as soon as they are perceived.” This research process is one source of effectiveness of the grounded theory approach. A second strength is that because each concept must earn its way into a theory by being demonstrated as relevant, this approach helps guard against researcher bias. Therefore, grounding concepts in the reality of data gives this method of theory-observation congruence since one can be sure the theory they develop will “fit” and work with the data. An additional related advantage of grounded theory is that because the theory is based on data it usually cannot be completely refuted by more data. Because it is closely linked to the data, the theory is destined to last despite modifications (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory is not without its criticisms. As with other qualitative research methods this approach is labeled by critics as unsystematic, impressionistic, exploratory, sloppy and unsophisticated in comparison with quantitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Some researchers see as a weakness the fact that there is not enough concern with verification and accuracy. Because there is less verification of such issues as sampling, coding, reliability, validity and hypothesis construction, some label this type of research as having less credibility (ibid.).

Due to the nature of the research question I chose a grounded theory approach for this study. The basis for this study is related to the fact that the majority of existing studies on flextime are based on quantitative research techniques and rely on survey techniques for findings. Too often these studies findings are centered around testing researchers' predetermined hypotheses. A central goal of this study, however, is to analyze issues as they relate to employee responses and reactions to flextime, as they arise out of the interviews, as opposed to beginning the study with a predetermined hypothesis about what I might find. I wanted the respondents to discuss the issues relating to flextime which *they perceived* as most important in their lives, not ask them to discuss the issues that I perceived are most important to them. My hypotheses were therefore revised a number of times throughout my research, as I was not focused on testing one specific hypothesis. A grounded theory approach therefore seemed most appropriate for accomplishing the goal of examining employees' responses and reactions to flextime.

Moreover, in addition to a grounded theory approach I chose to use a case study method in conducting this study. Although I acknowledge it is true that a major weakness of the case study approach is that the production of “generalizable” results are sometimes traded off for other strengths such as ethnographic richness, I argue that in this particular case it is possible to achieve generalizable results. I believe that the libraries at McMaster University are appropriate settings in which to obtain findings regarding flextime which are generalizable to employees working in a variety of other types of workplaces. This is partly because the majority of employees in the libraries and thus in the study are female, and in white-collar jobs. The relevance is that women employed in lower-level white-collar clerical jobs are one of two main groups of employees most likely to have flextime, the other group being males in upper management positions (Christensen and Staines, 1990). The participants in the study work in a variety of different clerical and technical positions and are at different stages of the life-cycle, some are single while others are married, and some have young children while others have older children or are childless. Therefore, because the employees in this setting are representative of a large proportion of employees who are most likely to have access to flextime, I believe that in this particular case study approach it is in fact possible to apply the findings to a wide range of workplaces, and employees and thus the weakness of a lack of generalizable results does not necessarily have to be traded off for ethnographic richness.

II - Research Methods

This study relies largely on the interview method. Through in depth interviews one can examine how people learn about and make sense of the world. It is possible to gain an awareness of their understandings and perceptions of things, as well how they "give meaning to their daily lives" (Berg, 1989). It is more difficult to accomplish this goal using quantitative techniques due to its focus on numbers and statistics, as opposed to substance.

In researching the implementation of flextime at McMaster I relied on the examination of written documents in addition to interviews. In anticipating a certain amount of recall error on the part of interviewees, I expected that some of the data regarding the development of the flextime policy, because it was developed fifteen years ago, could be inaccurate. I therefore combined the examination of written documents with interview data. This allowed me to cross-check the validity of each source.¹ Archival materials such as memos, minutes of meetings, as well as formal policy documents were carefully studied.

(a) The Interviews

In this study I used a general interview guide. An interview guide is based on "outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins" (Patton, 1990: 282). The guide serves as a basic checklist, ensuring that all the necessary topics are covered. It is not important that questions be covered in any specific order, and the exact wording of questions does not have to be determined in advance (ibid.). Instead, the "wording and sequence of questions is

adapted to specific respondents in the context of the actual interview" (Patton, 1990:282). The main advantage of this approach is that it provides the freedom to decide how to best use the limited time available in an interview situation. According to Grant Bogue (1981:102) "the interview guide permits the most natural flow of communication ... [i]t is a list of the topics that must be covered, topics being allowed to come up in any order or wording". This interview method is suited for this study since different interviewees are interested in discussing different issues, depending on their life and work circumstances. Because questions are not ordered, nor standardized, the interviewees are free to introduce any issues related to flextime that they wish to address.

For this study three separate interview guidelines were used. The first included questions concerning the development, implementation and logistics of flextime at McMaster. This was used in interviewing the individuals who were involved in developing and administering the policy. The second set of guiding questions was used in interviewing employees about their responses and reactions to flextime, and about how flextime influences their lives at, and outside of employment. The third schedule was used to interview two employees who are not on flextime. (A copy of the interview guides appears in Appendix B).

I was granted formal permission to conduct the research study at McMaster University in December of 1993 by the Office of the University Librarian. I first approached the Human Resources Administrator of Mills Library about the study in November, 1993. The Administrator suggested that I present a proposal to the Head

Librarian explaining the nature of my research study. Permission was granted upon review of this proposal by the Head Librarian. One condition placed on my study was that all contact with library staff, as well as any attempts to gather information on the Flextime Policy had to be through the Library Personnel Office. It was made clear to me that I was not permitted to approach any employee directly. On June 21st 1994, the Library Personnel Office sent a letter to the supervisors of potential interview participants informing them of the study. The potential participants were randomly chosen from a list of library employees. This letter was followed, on July 5th, by a letter from myself to potential interviewees explaining my study and asking them to participate. This letter ensured employees total confidentiality should they agree to take part in the study (see Appendix C).

The interviews with employees were set up by the Personnel Office of Mills Library. With one exception, all of the interviews with employees took place outside of the library setting. The exception took place in a conference room in Mills Library upon the request of the interviewee. I conducted the interviews away from the library to ensure that the employees would not have to worry about whether co-workers or supervisors might hear them discussing confidential information. Of the three interviews with the individuals who were involved in the development and administration of the policy, one was conducted in the Personnel Office at Mills Library, another was in the home of the interviewee, and the third took place in my office in Kenneth Taylor Hall. All of the interviews with library employees were conducted during their work

hours. The interviewees were presented with the option of being interviewed during their own time, outside of work hours, however none chose this option.

Besides not being able to contact employees directly, the Library Personnel Office placed two further limitations on my study. Because the interviews occurred during work time, interviews could take no more than one hour of each individual employee's time. Interviews therefore, on average, lasted from half an hour to an hour. Also, I was not permitted to give any library employees, other than those originally chosen from the list, an opportunity to participate in my study. The reason given for this was that library administrators had already agreed to allow approximately thirty paid hours to be used for my interviews and they felt that they could not afford to allow everyone who might like to participate the opportunity to do so. When I suggested that any additional employees could volunteer to be interviewed on their own time, the Human Resources Administrator claimed that this was not a possibility because it could lead to potential issues of equality among employees. The fact that some could be interviewed during work time while others had to do it during their own time could lead to potential problems.

Because employees were first approached about the study by Personnel it is possible some may have felt pressured to participate. In addition, although employees were repeatedly assured confidentiality, there may still have been the concern that management, because of its involvement, would somehow have access to the information that was provided through interviews. Some employees may therefore have felt hesitant

in talking freely with me during the interviews and therefore may have withheld valuable information.

Although this could have represented a major problem, it is my belief that a good rapport was established between myself and the majority of the participants. There was one particular employee who was upset about what he saw as my “collaboration with management”. He told me that because of it I could not be trusted. This individual was generally uncooperative and it was therefore my decision to omit him from the study. The other interviewees however, seemed to realize and accept the fact that I was not attempting this study on behalf of management, but because of my own academic interest in the topic of alternative work schedules. The interviewees were generally very forthcoming with personal information, which I do not think would have been the case if they felt they were simply participating in a study management had forced them to participate in. Most seemed legitimately interested in discussing flextime issues and in making their views clear. In conducting this study then, I chose to cooperate with management's limitations.

I do acknowledge that this could have potentially biased my findings due to employees withholding information. In fact, throughout the interviews there existed a clear lack of criticism of the McMaster flextime policy. This could be due to one of two reasons. First, it is possible that employees coloured their responses because they were afraid that negative feedback and comments could cause management to take away their flextime. Or, secondly, it could be true that the employees are really just so happy to

have been given some freedom at all, which for them was a relatively new phenomenon, that they feel they have no right to be critical of it. As with any research process there is always the potential that subjects responses will reflect what they perceive the researcher wants them to say. Therefore I do admit that the potential existed for my findings to be affected or even biased by the above-mentioned factors, it is my belief that , due to the successful rapport established with employees, this did not represent a serious problem or significantly skew the data.

(b) The Interview Sample

The subjects in the study come from a variety of different situations in regard to their personal backgrounds. At the beginning of each interview, subjects were asked to voluntarily fill out a brief questionnaire, the purpose of which was to obtain some basic demographic information for the study (see appendix D for a copy of this questionnaire).

Of the thirty-one participants in the study, seven were male and twenty-four were female. Ten of the participants were between the ages of forty-six and fifty-five years of age, making this the most common age group of respondents. There were no interviewees under the age of twenty-five and only one person in the twenty-six to thirty age category. All of the participants except for one are therefore over the age of thirty. It is important to acknowledge the fact that having only one respondent younger than thirty could have affected the data. Because all but one of the employees were at least in their thirties or older, they may have been less likely to be single, to be in the stages of planning a family, or to have small children. Had there been more employees in the

twenty to thirty age group, it is possible to speculate that there may have been more employees who would have discussed how flextime affected future expectations for child care and for combining paid and domestic work. This could have provided a point of comparison between such a group of individuals and those who are actually in the situation of combining paid work and child care and eldercare.

Twenty-five of the interviewees were married or in long term relationships while six were single. Nineteen of the participants had at least one child under the age of eighteen living at home. On the whole, the education level of the subjects was high. Twenty-four have completed a minimum of college or university, with eleven of them having a university graduate or post-graduate degree. Of the twenty-six employees who chose to answer the question about income, all have combined annual family incomes of at least twenty thousand dollars. Seventeen of the respondents have annual family incomes of between twenty and sixty-nine thousand dollars, while the other nine have annual family incomes of seventy thousand dollars or higher. Eleven of the employees have been employed at McMaster from six to eight years while none of the subjects have worked there for less than a year. Only one has been there for less than two years. Seven of the employees have worked at McMaster for more than eighteen years. (See appendix E for tables indicating the social characteristics of the thirty-one participants of the study in greater detail).

The thirty-one respondents in the study fell into one of two categories. The first category consisted of three individuals. Two were directly involved in the development

and implementation of the flextime policy, and one is currently involved in the administration of the policy in its present form. The second group of interviewees consisted of the employees themselves.

The sampling strategy employed in this study was that of a random sampling strategy. Some may question the decision to use this type of strategy as opposed to a stratified random sampling strategy. For example, some may suggest that it might have been better to have chosen interviewees according to variations in child care responsibilities or age of children, considering that child care is a major theme in the study. However, one of my goals in conducting this study was to speak to employees in a wide range of life situations. I believed that interviewing individuals who are married, single, divorced, childless, or parents of young and older children would provide a wider perspective about flextime and indicate which issues are most prevalent for different groups of workers, thus indicating specific avenues for future research. By including employees from different age groups, marital and parenting statuses, I argue that it makes it possible to compare different groups of workers and obtain ideas about further types of workplace programs which are beneficial to particular groups. Unfortunately however, despite my best intentions and expectations, I admit that the sample group did in fact end up being more homogeneous than I'd hoped for. As will be described later in this chapter the majority of respondents were middle-aged females, with few males present in the study and only respondent younger than the age of thirty. In retrospect it may have in

fact been better to have chosen a stratified random sampling strategy in order to purposefully choose a wider range of respondents.

A total of thirty-five names were chosen from a list of library employees as possible participants. Every fifth name from a list of employees was chosen as a possible participant. Two of the employees initially chosen do not work under flextime and therefore were not able to provide information about following a flextime schedule. In addition, one of the employees initially chosen did not wish to participate while another employee, as mentioned, was generally uncooperative during the interview and was therefore omitted from the study. Although I did not formally include the two employees who do not work under flextime as part of the study, in terms of demographics and analyzing the results, I did interview them because I was interested in hearing their ideas about not being able to follow flexible hours. Six of the employees interviewed are presently in supervisory positions, and one additional employee was in the past in a supervisory position. Three of the employees in the study are currently in job-share arrangements in combination with flextime.

III Flextime at McMaster University

(a) The Introduction of Flextime

The present Flextime Policy at McMaster University was approved by the President's Executive Committee in the spring of 1981. This approval allowed for the voluntary implementation of flextime by any University department or section, whose members wished to try this method of scheduling work hours. The policy, which led to

the potential for the widespread introduction of flextime throughout the University, was developed after two years of initial research. The research phase included developing and planning stages, and a lengthy pilot study to test the potential success of such an arrangement.

There is little consensus on when the idea of an official flexible working hours plan was first considered at the University. However, an examination of documents and memos written by the Personnel Services Department suggests that it was sometime in early 1979. According to a former Personnel employee who was directly involved in the implementation of flextime, the impetus for flexible working hours initially came from the University employees themselves. In particular it came from the McMaster University Staff Association, MUSA, an organization that represents mainly the clerical and technical workers. According to this respondent, the staff association itself was developed in response to rumors regarding the potential unionization of staff members.

The respondent states:

... as a result [of such rumors] the administration said,
"Look, why should we get into an adversarial situation
when the potential is there to sit down and discuss issues,
bring issues to the table, put programs together ...we'll
provide them with a vehicle to have representation."
Basic issues for that group in that point in time had to
do with everything from wages ... to benefits...

Although there were rumors, no serious attempt to unionize was made at this time. Whether or not this is because employees were satisfied with the opportunities with which an association would provide them, such as giving them a voice and the ability to address and discuss issues with management which concerned them, is not known.

Once the staff association was formally developed, giving the employees a degree of representation, there were a number of issues that employees wished to have addressed by management. One of these issues was the stress that employees experienced (especially women), in trying to combine paid work and family demands. According to the same respondent, some of the basic issues which the employees wanted to address through the association,

had to do with everything from wages ... to benefits programs ... a lot of women's related issues ... employment conditions that could particularly present problems for women ... they provided the impetus to saying, "one of the issues that the women at McMaster have to deal with are issues of having to mix the job with a family life and do it in the time frame that is required by McMaster as an employer"...

The initial impetus for flextime then, came from the staff association, namely the female members, who felt that the University could make it easier for them to combine employment with domestic responsibilities. This finding contradicts much of the research which suggests that the push for alternative working arrangements such as flextime usually originates with top level management or Personnel Departments (Nollen & Martin, 1978).

As outlined in chapter one, QWL in its broadest definition refers to programs and initiatives implemented in attempts to improve the quality of workers lives and increase worker satisfaction by empowering them with added control over some aspect of their work environment. Thus, because library management does view flextime as empowering to workers since it gives them added control over the timing of their work, I argue that in the setting at McMaster University flextime is considered a genuine component of QWL as it is discussed in chapter one. As will be discussed in a later chapter, both management and many employees see flextime as empowering to a certain

extent because it does add an element of control to the workplace. It was explicitly stated by one interviewee that flextime was developed for the employees, to give them more control over their work schedules.

Although I do not argue that flextime was necessarily part of a wider QWL movement at McMaster, and in particular within the libraries, there are a number of programs mentioned by interviewees which some consider as forms of employee empowerment in that they provide workers either with opportunities to voice their input or to exert control over some aspect of their jobs. For example, one manager explained how the development of a staff council within the library, initiated about ten years ago by the head librarian, has provided the employees with opportunities to voice their input on issues concerning them. Other employees mentioned the job share and job exchange programs as other initiatives which give them added control in the workplace. Thus, although it was not simply one component of a wider QWL movement within the library, flextime can be considered one aspect of QWL in itself as it does, in management's view, empower workers.

The situation at McMaster University supports the argument put forth by critics of QWL programs that often QWL techniques are "used to insulate companies from the prospect of unionization" (Rinehart, 1987: 191). In attempts to improve work environments management may look to relatively inexpensive methods or programs, such as a staff association, which have the potential to increase levels of worker satisfaction in order to avoid costly wage increases and benefits packages as well as to avoid labor-management tension (van Beinum et al., 1983). I suggest that fearing the possibility of the collective organization of its workers, the Administration at McMaster supported the development of the staff association in general and of flextime in particular, hoping that it would make employees more content by providing them with more control over their

work schedules. In fact, as one manager who was interviewed stated, "I think part of the reason why [the University] they've avoided ... unionization is because we are good to the employees and quite progressive and responsive to their problems."

Not only was the introduction of flextime one way for the University to avoid unionization by attempting to keep workers contented, it may also be considered a possible tradeoff for costly wage increases. A former management employee states,

Certainly that was in a time too - I mean a University's always in a state of shortage of funds - and you have to take a look at McMaster in that point in time and have a look at what stage they were at ... that would be another factor as well, to say, "Hey, we aren't an employer with a lot of money to put in wage and salary increases, how are we going to get the best measure for the dollars that we've got - are there other programs that we can implement which are either going to increase productivity or provide a benefit for the employees?"

The University viewed flextime, after it was suggested by MUSA, as a type of benefit for employees which could represent a tradeoff at a time when there was little money for wage increases, as well as a possible way to increase productivity, and therefore benefit itself as an employer. The staff association, realizing the situation the University was in, was willing to accept flextime, which they thought could improve the situations of many employees, in lieu of a more substantial wage increase.

(b) Implementation of Flextime

There were three major phases in developing and implementing the present flextime policy at McMaster. They included 1) discussion between management and MUSA, 2) data collection, and 3) a pilot study. Early discussions revolved around specifying what the employees meant by 'flextime', what they knew about it, what research they had done and if they had talked to people who had tried flextime. Before doing any

serious planning management wanted to make sure that they knew precisely what the employees were suggesting and expecting by "flextime".

Although the Staff Association did some research independently, the Personnel Department was responsible for most of the research. In addition to actively investigating the literature on flextime, Personnel employees involved in the flextime project were required to contact local area businesses or organizations which were rumored to have tried, or who were currently in flextime programs. This proved to be difficult because very few organizations were using flextime at the time. The main purpose of the research was to provide management with a summary of the potential benefits for both the employer and employee, of switching to flextime. When management was convinced that there could be advantages for both sides, (for example, lowered rates of absenteeism), plans for a pilot study began.

(c) The Pilot Study

Although the first two phases of discussion and research were crucial to the overall development of the flextime policy, the pilot study was most critical in determining whether flextime would become a permanent and widespread policy at McMaster. In October of 1979 a draft proposal with guidelines for a flextime arrangement was circulated to a select number of departments within the University. These departments included the Bookstore, the Library (specific sections only), the Economics and Chemistry Departments, the Office of the Dean, the Dean of Men, Operations and Maintenance, and the Personnel Department. There was a logical basis for choosing each of these departments as candidates for the pilot study. For example, the library was chosen because it contained a variety of work settings and jobs. It employs technical employees, clerical workers, administrators, and it is heavily staffed by women. The latter factor is important given that women are especially likely to experience high levels of stress in combining

employment and family demands. In addition, because the library is open for long hours, employees work on different shifts. By including the library in the pilot study, those involved in developing the policy would be able to see how flextime would succeed in a variety of work settings.

After Personnel decided which departments would be best suited to participate in the pilot study, the departmental chairs, supervisors or managers were approached and asked to take part in a four-month trial project, beginning in January, 1980 and concluding in April, 1980. It was expected that during these four months input from both managers and supervisors as well as from employees themselves could be used to evaluate the success of the project. The Personnel Department was responsible for putting together the specifics of the pilot study, in reference to the guidelines, and rules and regulations such as the length of core times, the variation of flextime which would be used, the number of hours allowed for banking and a number of other details. The draft proposal for the pilot study which was distributed to the Deans or Chairs of potential participating departments explained the purpose of the pilot project, potential advantages of flextime, guidelines for installing flextime, terms of reference, and logistics of flextime. As well, it provided additional instructions to supervisors on how to fill out flextime time sheets (see Appendix F for a copy of a time sheet used by McMaster employees). Although Personnel hoped that each of the departments approached would be willing to participate, it was up to each individual Dean or Chair to make the decision. According to one University employee who was directly involved in planning and developing the pilot study,

Basically it was a process that said, "All right, here's the typical departments that we'd like to try, now we've got to go and get the approval of the head of each of those areas"... the approval had to be given by the head of that particular area in order to give it a shot. It's like any other program that we introduced ... we had to put together a

pretty good presentation to say, "Here's what it is, here's what it means in terms of there's no on-going requirements, and it's positive for your department ... in terms of staff being happier at what they're doing ... better coverage and in terms of dealing with issues of parking through to getting time off because your child is sick..."

The Personnel Department was very aware that no one standard program would be able to fit the work requirements of all departments adequately. Therefore, responsibility for determining the degree of flexibility which would be most appropriate for each department was left up to department supervisors. Those in charge of departments and sections were given basic guidelines to follow. However, upon meeting these guidelines it was left to up to them and their employees to decide the specifics of how flextime would be implemented. Although employees in each department did have some input in determining how flextime could be arranged, ultimate responsibility and decision-making power rested with the Dean or Administrator of a particular Faculty or Administrative Unit. To ensure compliance with government legislation, University Policy, and administrative practice, all departmental flextime variations furthermore had to be reviewed by Personnel Services before being implemented.² Department heads had some latitude in making decisions concerning specific core times, and whether to establish fixed or variable lunch periods. Most of the important regulations regarding flextime were made by the Personnel Department however and could not be altered. These included regulations concerning length of the Accounting Period, the number of debit and credit hours allowed for banking, the method of time recording, as well as the hours of business which a department would be open.³

Although management expected that flextime would be a positive experience for both employees and employers, some of the department deans and/or administrators approached for the pilot study expressed apprehension. Opponents worried that it simply

would not work out in their department.⁴ For example, the head of Operations and Maintenance expressed grave doubts about the ability to implement flextime in his department, whereas the head of the Bookstore thought that flextime could possibly work well in the bookstore operation.⁵ According to one former Personnel employee: "... the apprehension was more on the part of the academic folks, more the academic departments - and they were the ones that had to approve". In particular the Chair of the Chemistry Department raised the issue that:

... if we don't have our staff here to deal with the students and deal with the other faculty members, all Hell is going to start popping. If they've got a flexband between 7:00 in the morning and 10:00 in the morning when they can come in, like, I don't want to have to deal with those issues of how I'm going to cover that time. A lot of it had to do with, "Wait a minute, I'm a chairman - I'm really an academic and I don't want to have to deal with all these issues ... if I don't know when they're going to arrive and I don't know when they're going to leave, how am I going to deal with all those issues?"⁶

Although I am speculating, it is possible that some Department Heads may have been apprehensive about the pilot study because they believed their jobs may be made more difficult in terms of supervising and "keeping track" of employees. Much of the literature on flextime in fact cites that first-line supervisors are often hesitant to adopt flextime policies for this reason (Ronen, 1984).

(d) Flexibility Within Limits

On December 20, 1979, Personnel Services sent a memo to all employees in departments which had agreed to participate in the pilot study. The purpose of the memo was to inform the employees of the study, its goals, duration and logistics. It was made clear to employees that they would be given flexibility under this new program, but it was flexibility *within certain limits*. The following statements which were contained in the

memo stressed this point, "[g]etting the job done must, obviously, still take priority over other considerations..." and,

... in order for flexible hours to be of benefit to us as individuals, while at the same time not disrupting our service and not causing undue delays in work flow, we must be prepared to 'give and take' ... Due to the cyclical, deadline oriented, service nature of the University, and due to the idiosyncrasies and interdependence of many of our departments and work functions, complete freedom for the individual within the flexible hours will not always be feasible, i.e. job requirements and service demands need to take precedence.

Similarly, even before the flextime policy was developed, a copy of the draft proposal for the initial pilot study given by Personnel to department managers contained the statement that, "[t]he basic concept of flexible working hours allows staff members to decide the hours they will work, within certain limits, without reducing the operational efficiency of the University". Although employees were led to believe that flextime was being considered primarily because it would allow them to select their hours of work according to personal preferences, at the same time they were told that job flow and task requirements were still the most important concern. As critics argue, rarely do QWL programs prioritize the improvement of employees' lives. In most cases, factors affecting efficiency, productivity and work demands, i.e. management goals, take precedence over individual employee needs.

In the case of McMaster University, organizational goals were at least as important as, if not more important than, individual employee needs and goals. This is indicated in a copy of the draft proposal for the flextime pilot study which was circulated by Personnel to department managers. One of the sections in the nine page proposal is entitled, Advantages of Flextime. Under this heading is included several advantages for organizations. Nowhere in the proposal is there any mention of the effects of flextime,

advantages or disadvantages, for employees. Some of the organizational advantages listed include; punctuality ceases to be a serious problem, productivity increases, the inconvenience of overtime is lessened, service to the public is improved, and time off work for personal business is no longer an issue since personal needs can be met during flexible hours. This finding suggests that the effects of flextime on employees' work and home lives were of only secondary importance to University management or that Personnel had to do "a selling job" on Department Chairs.

(e) Results of the Pilot Study

Due to the apprehension of some department supervisors, only three departments participated in the pilot study. One of these was the library. From these three departments a total of 119 University employees were put on flextime, 89 of these 119 were from the library. Between Mills Library and Thode Library, a total of five different departments were put on flextime: the General Administration, Circulation, Pre-Order Searching (Acquisitions), Cataloguing (Technical Services), and Archives and Research Collections. These specific departments were included because they represented a wide array of work settings. For example, the Circulation Department is a service-oriented department in which employees deal directly with the public. Therefore it must be continually staffed for seven days a week over the course of many hours. In comparison, Acquisitions is a smaller, behind-the-scenes department that must be staffed only five days of the week for a shorter number of hours. According to a Personnel source, the pilot study was a success judging from feedback received from both employees and supervisors. A comparison of hours lost through illness and absence with permission between the first four months of 1980 and the same period in 1979 showed that 89 participants lost 246 fewer "man hours" during flextime. They also concluded that the staff cooperated well, participated in arranging coverage for service departments, scheduling was not a problem, and

supervisors' jobs were not made more difficult. In addition, the pilot study was reportedly associated with an increase in morale and feelings of personal freedom on the part of employees.

The pilot project ended in April 1980, however it was not until a year later in May 1981, that an official system of flextime was approved by the President's Executive Committee. This approval allowed for the voluntary implementation of flextime by University departments or sections. Implementation, though, was dependent on workload and again employees were reminded that work flow and demand must continue to take priority over the priorities and needs of individual workers. Flextime is also voluntary. Any department within the University could try it. However, no department or section could be forced to adopt it. Unfortunately there are many departments within the University for which flextime is not feasible. These include departments in which there are only two or three employees, whose presence is required at all times. The Thode Reference Desk is one such section. It consists of four employees, a full-time librarian, a full-time clerical, a part-time librarian and an eight month employee. Employees in this department however do not seem concerned at not having the option of flextime. One interviewee who is not on flextime comments,

... we just don't have enough staff ... there's just so few of us that we just can't cope if everybody's not there without great inconvenience ... none of us feel deprived ... I mean it might be nice to have that kind of flexibility, but in my kind of job it's not possible so I just haven't given it much thought ... I'm quite happy with it the way it is.

Another employee who does not work on flextime states, "I don't remember ... being too upset because we could tell it just wouldn't work for us". Notwithstanding these comments, these employees acknowledge that if it were possible, they would like to try

flexitime. One admits, "I wouldn't mind having an afternoon a week, you know - that might be sort of nice." Another states, "flexitime is a nice perk ... it's not something that I would change jobs for, but I would take it if it were given to me". Even though in theory flexitime is available to any University department or section whose members wish to utilize it, in practice it cannot be implemented in some departments.

(f) The Functioning of Flexitime

A set of general guidelines has been established by Personnel, and each department using flexitime is given a copy of these guidelines to follow as well as a copy of certain regulations which must be abided by. Upon meeting these regulations, each section may determine its specific use of flexitime according to its individual work requirements and demands. For a department to adopt flexitime, the approval of senior departmental management, as well as the approval of the majority of employees within the department and the support of Personnel Services is required. Any department whose members are interested in implementing flexitime is first required to undergo a six-month trial period during which time the success of flexitime is addressed and any adaptations are made to fit the particular work situation. At the end of six months, employees and management consult with Personnel to jointly determine whether or not flexitime should be continued on a permanent basis. Ultimately however, each department chair or supervisor has the right to recommend that flexitime be suspended or canceled at any point in time and for any particular employee. In short, "what management has given it can also take away (Rinehart, 1987; 192)". Many companies that have introduced QWL reforms have returned to traditional modes of operating often because management's objectives were not being met. Management has its own underlying objectives and goals in mind when implementing QWL and these take priority over employees' goals and objectives (ibid.).

There are small variations in the implementation of flextime within sections of the library and these are largely due to differences in work setting and the nature of the work performed within various departments. However, given the standard guidelines and regulations, all departments do reveal some similarities. For example, although departments are permitted to set their own core and flexible times, all of the employees interviewed for this study have the same core times of 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. In some library sections lunch hours are fixed while in other sections employees may take up to two hours per day for lunch. Whether a department establishes fixed lunch hours or variable lunch hours depends on its size, as well as whether or not employees in the department follow a set schedule, which is most likely to be the case when they work in sections which are customer-service-oriented.

With regard to credit and debit hours, rules are set by the University and all employees working under flextime are in the same situation. According to the official McMaster Flextime Policy Statement:

The flexible hours cycle length is 4 weeks. Employees must complete a required number of hours during each flexible hours cycle but may complete the cycle with a "Credit" or "Debit" of plus or minus 10% of the normal working hours in a cycle. The number of hours which must be worked during each cycle length is the number of hours in a standard working day times 20, plus or minus 10%.

For full-time employees this means that because they work 140 hours during each four-week accounting period (i.e. 7 hours per day for 20 days), they may accumulate up to fourteen debit or credit hours. For employees who work half-time or part-time, the formula is the same.⁷ For example, those who are employed half-time, because they work seventy hours in one accounting period, are able to accumulate up to seven debit or credit hours every four weeks (i.e. 70 plus or minus 10% = 7). Likewise, for an employee who

works part-time, the amount of hours that they work in an accounting period will determine the number of debit/credit hours that they may carry forward.

It has been made clear to employees that flextime is a privilege, not a right, and therefore any employee who is found abusing flextime may lose all flextime privileges and be forced to revert back to a conventional, set schedule. According to management, "flextime is something that is seen as a privilege for the employee, it gives them the flexibility to balance work and home life, so if you abuse it you can lose it". There have been cases of individuals being taken off flextime. In one instance an employee was fraudulently reporting hours worked on their time sheet that were not in fact worked at all. In another mentioned case a supervisor tried to have an employee removed from flextime because the individual was consistently unable to manage her time. In dealing with an employee who is suspected or accused of abusing flextime privileges, the situation is initially identified by the employee's supervisor. Before any action is taken however, all disciplinary actions must be discussed with the supervisor's supervisor and with Personnel. According to a representative from personnel:

We try to maintain some consistency in how we administer the disciplinary process - ... if you're going to take away flextime from someone you want to make sure it's fair and it's not just the decision of one supervisor who happens to be very upset [and] on the spur of the moment says 'you're off'. There'd have to be a good reason before we'd take someone off.

Abuse of flextime privileges by fellow co-workers was commonly mentioned as a disadvantage by the employees. Employee perspectives and responses to flextime, including abuse of it, will be examined in much greater detail in the next two chapters.

ENDNOTES

¹ Different research techniques can reveal different aspects of the same symbolic reality (Berg, 1989). Although it is possible to conduct research by relying on only one of these methods, by combining two or more of them one can obtain a better, "more substantive picture of reality (Berg, 1989: 187). This practice is referred to as triangulation and is often used for the purpose of strengthening study designs. Researchers who rely on one method for collecting data may be vulnerable to errors linked with the particular method they choose. Using various combined methods however, allows for a degree of cross-data validity checks.

² One of the provisions for flexible hours at McMaster University is that all departmental variations comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Labour. Staff members who utilize flextime by accumulating debit and credit hours must do so voluntarily. By exercising this flexibility, staff members agree to an averaging of hours over the accounting period for the purposes of overtime pay as provided by the Employment Standards Act.

³ An accounting period is a set period during which staff members must complete a certain number of hours. At McMaster, during this accounting period, which is four weeks in length, the staff member is expected to work the standard number of hours (e.g. 35hrs/wk multiplied by 4 weeks or 140 hours).

⁴ This information was obtained from minutes taken during a meeting regarding the pilot project which took place on October 23, 1979 in Gilmour Hall. In attendance were three Personnel Service employees and the heads of the departments who were initially approached about participating in the pilot study.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ I acknowledge the fact that in this chapter, although the topic is employee responses to flextime, I tend to rely on quotes from management, in particular from the former Personnel employee. Note however, that this is only because this chapter deals explicitly with development, implementation, and administration of flextime which are issues that the employees have little or no knowledge of. Therefore, in order to obtain valid data which is as accurate as possible it was necessary to use a source who was directly involved in all aspects of the development of flextime at McMaster, from the planning process to the implementation procedures.

⁷ Some library employees work in job-share arrangements. These arrangements are set up in one of two ways. Employees work every day of the week for three and a half hours, or they work full days for two days one week, three the next, then two, then three, and so on. Employees in job-share arrangements are considered half-time employees and therefore are allowed to accumulate seven positive or negative hours per accounting period.

CHAPTER THREE

Employee Responses and Reactions to Flextime: Analysis and Interpretation

I - Introduction

In chapter one, I discussed changes in the organization of wage work over the past century and traced the emergence of flextime arrangements within the context of quality of work life initiatives. QWL initiatives were introduced partly as a result of the demand by workers for more satisfying work and partly due to the need for managers to re-organize work in order to increase productivity and efficiency. Chapter two described the flextime policy currently in place at McMaster University. Like many QWL programs flextime was reportedly introduced in order to give workers greater control over their work. However, examination of written documents indicate that work demands and departmental coverage, not employee needs, were of foremost importance. In this chapter I will examine the reactions and responses of McMaster University library employees to flextime.

II - Initial Reactions to Flextime

Slightly less than half the employees in this study were employed at McMaster when flextime was introduced. The initial reactions of this group of workers to flextime was mixed. Some remember being very enthusiastic right from the start, while others were more apprehensive about the new policy. One worker recalls being angry because the process of introducing flextime to different departments within the library was slow and uneven. She states,

We were one of the last groups and we felt, why?
It made us very angry, like aren't we just as responsible

as the other groups? ... We just sort of felt that was unfair ... We just sort of felt, was there a problem with us?

Some employees were hesitant about working flexible hours. According to one employee,

I was against it because I didn't like the idea of trying to figure out whether I should come in or not and what hours I should do and so forth. If you had 8:15 to 4:15 or 9:00 to 5:00 ... or whatever ... you knew what you were everyday - it was consistent ... at first I had a heck of a problem because I had consistently lost hours, [I] couldn't handle the freedom.

Another respondent explained that flextime raised concerns about how short-term absences would be affected,

Well, people were a little bit apprehensive at first - like what is this going to mean for doctors appointments and that, because before flextime the University would give you so much time to take a doctors appointment or whatever - ... you know, people are always nervous when something is new.

Yet another employee was somewhat apprehensive because she was not sure if flextime would benefit the employees or only the University. Some workers had suspicions that management had underlying interests in introducing flextime. They believed that it was not an employee-centered policy. The majority of the employees, however, had positive reactions to flextime after it was implemented. For example one employee commented about her initial response, "a favourable reaction, I think it's a favourable policy", while another stated "great pleasure, I thought it was great".

The initial reactions of supervisors towards flexible scheduling were also mixed. One supervisor explained that the idea of flexible hours was in fact not totally new. This is because the department in which he had been working already had a similar, though less formal, arrangement. This supervisor explained,

In a way we used to do the same thing, it was flextime but it was [unofficial] ... now it's official ... it has given everyone the right to do it formally. Before although everyone took advantage of it, it was sort of unofficial - I used to hide that book from my supervisor [a book in which employees hours were kept track of], I didn't want my supervisor to know we [were] maintaining a book like that in our department ... because ... I was allowing it and the other departments [were not].

Two other supervisors initially reacted negatively to flextime because they believed that it would make their jobs more difficult. One supervisor felt that it would be complicated to administer because different workers would want different variations of flextime. Another supervisor was positive from the beginning but admitted that higher management did in fact have some objections,

My reaction was very enthusiastic, I thought that it was great. The higher management had some objections because it was new and they didn't know how [it would] work out, especially with credit accumulation. We didn't know if these people were not going to abuse the privilege with the actual forms [time sheets]- we did not know if we could trust people that they would always put the exact times. Myself, my attitude was very positive and I thought that this was a very welcome change.

Of the supervisors who were not employed at the library when flextime was introduced, all stated that upon being hired at McMaster their initial reactions to the

flextime policy were positive. In fact one of them expected that employees at the University would follow a flexible schedule. She stated,

I guess I just assumed that that was the way it would be working at a University, that things would be really flexible - not as structured as working in a business environment, and I just sort of expected it ... I guess I just accepted it because to me it seemed the logical thing to do and the easiest way to manage people, so from my perspective it was great, there was no problem with it.

For most of the workers who started their employment with the library after the introduction of flextime, the concept was relatively new. Two employees admitted that they had no idea what flextime meant and had never heard of it before. One said, "I was told in the interview [about flextime] but for not having worked anywhere where they offered flextime I wasn't quite sure [what it meant]". The other employee similarly stated, "I remember in my interview I had to ask the personnel person what is flextime, cause it said on the sheet that described the job, and I thought 'wow', this is incredible". None of the employees in this category knew when they applied for a job at the University that they would be working under flextime. It was not therefore a factor which attracted them to employment at McMaster.

III - Flextime and Domestic Responsibilities

One of the most significant findings of this study concerns the effects of flextime on the ability of employees to combine paid work and unpaid domestic work. The overwhelming response of employees with family obligations is that flextime greatly lowers the stress associated with working a "double day", especially attempts to combine

paid work with child care. For this group of respondents, flextime clearly relieves stress and anxiety.

Many of the anxieties caused by the double day are relieved, or at least lessened, by a flexible schedule as compared to working a standard, fixed schedule. Of the employees who worked either at the library before flextime was implemented or at another full-time job elsewhere where they were required to work a fixed schedule, all reported that working under flextime was much better in comparison. Employees feel that under flextime life in general is less stressful. This is largely because it is easier to accommodate family responsibilities. One of the beneficial factors in this regard is that there is no longer the need to always be rushed in getting to work on time. For example, one does not become “stressed out” when one’s car will not start or when the baby-sitter is late arriving in the morning. Some respondents stated that the two types of work arrangements are so distinct, with flexible hours clearly preferable, that it is in fact not even possible to compare them. One woman said,

It didn’t [compare] ... the job before that I worked ...
I had to be there at a certain time and I couldn’t be
late. I had to take my lunch at a certain time- I
couldn’t do errands on lunch or anything like that
... it was pretty stressful ... now that I’m on flextime
I don’t think that I could go back to not being on flextime.

Another woman similarly responded, “[w]ell, there’s no comparison ... I don’t know how I would work if I had to go back to a regular schedule.” Flextime relieves the pressure of always having to worry about being on time. As one employee said, “[i]f you’re forty minutes late it’s no big deal”, while another confided “I used to have some punctuality

problems before ... but it's nice to know that [now] when you come to work you are never late". Employees feel that not having to worry if there is a traffic jam on the way to work or if they get caught up running errands relieves much of the pressure and therefore stress associated with following a more rigid, traditional schedule.

(a) The Sexual Division of Domestic Labour

The married women in this study all mentioned that they have primary responsibility for child care and household tasks within their families. One woman explained that her husband expects her to perform most domestic tasks simply because he is very traditional. She admitted that she does, however, wish the situation were different. Other women also noted that their generation was raised to believe that child care and housework are women's responsibility. But they, too, hope the situation is different for younger couples today. Apart from this cultural discourse, some women highlighted the fact that because they make less money than their husbands, their husbands' jobs will always come first. According to one woman,

That [housework and childcare] always seems to fall with me anyway, people of my generation just feel that the woman's job isn't quite as important - he's still the higher wage earner so ... I've been brought up that way too so it's hard to change.

Another woman made the following statement,

My husband, he's a real liberal and everything [but] I could be a lawyer [and] he'd still think that. I know I'll be the one to go on the school trips with the kids and I'm the one that's making the flexible arrangements, But you know why that is? The reason is .. that he makes more money - he makes a lot more money and men always do so you've

got to choose the guy's job over the girl's ...

Although the women in the study are responsible for the majority of domestic and child care tasks, only one explicitly said that she wished her husband was responsible for more. Two of the women, including the one quoted above, noted that they were "lucky" because their husbands were willing to "help out" with the children and the housework.

Only two of the males interviewed presently have small children at home. One of them commented that flextime is not a great benefit to him in this respect because his wife is a full-time homemaker and therefore assumes all child care and household duties. The other man's wife is employed full-time. He reported that he is fully involved in child care and therefore flextime is a benefit to him, especially because his wife's schedule is very inflexible.

Many women likewise commented on the fact that because their husbands' schedules are inflexible, it is often the case that it is just simply easier for them to take care of much of the domestic work and child care demands. One woman stated, for example,

Like I got a call a couple of weeks ago from my son's baby-sitter saying "well he can't come here after school because I'm sick". So I had to leave to go home and get him myself... My husband, where he works he can't just leave ... he can't just say "I gotta go" whereas I can, I have that type of job.

There is furthermore some indication that flextime arrangements for women may reinforce existing patterns. Some women may, for instance, be taking on additional responsibilities for child care and household tasks precisely because they have flexible

jobs. Because women can “flex off” when something needs to be done at home, they may be intensifying their double day. While the women themselves did not identify this as a personal “problem”, two female respondents were aware of this possibility in their own lives. One woman said, “[s]ometimes if there’s something to be done he’ll say - well can’t you take a couple of hours off and do that?.” Another similarly stated, “[i]f there’s something that has to be done he [her husband] knows I can do it when he can’t - he’s expected to be at his job at the time he’s scheduled to be there, for him to leave it’s an inconvenience”.

(b) Effects of Flexitime on Existing Institutional Inequalities

As the above cases illustrate, given the existing gendered division of labour, women’s overall workload may increase as a result of flexitime in employment. And while women may be able to “flex off” during the day in order to get domestic work done when their partners cannot, one should note that the time an employee takes off must eventually be made up. Given this, women are not simply trading one task for another. Rather, they are assuming more unpaid labour in addition to their paid work. Rainey and Wolf (1992) claim that as a result, some employees may “burnout” under flexitime. The implication of this finding is that, like Nollen (1980) suggests, until both men and women have equal access to liberal flexitime programs and until society is ready to alter family roles as well as work hours, domestic work and child care will continue to fall to women.

All of the female respondents who have families feel that although flextime has not changed the fact that they are responsible for the majority, if not all, the child care and housework, they do feel that flextime has made it easier and less stressful in trying to combine these obligations. A typical response was,

Let's face it, you're here all day long, you gotta go home and still cook the meal, clean up, and by eight o'clock or nine o'clock you're pretty well beat but at least this way you've got flexibility if you want to leave early and get some of that stuff done before ... you have that flexibility to change your own schedule not only at work but at home as well.

Although flextime may result in a greater workload for many women, women still see it as greatly beneficial. At least under flextime, they have more control over "when" they will perform various tasks.

As discussed in the first chapter, one of the underlying problems for employed women is that both employer-implemented and government programs are often still developed on the assumption of the "male-breadwinner model". In addition, many current "family-friendly" workplace policies are designed to meet the needs of middle-class professional women. In particular unpaid family leaves, which are often the only option presented to employees who need time off to care for children or the elderly, require sufficient reserves to support the family during the leave. Few, if any, working class families or single parent families can afford to take advantage of such "family-oriented" benefits. As Sancier and Mapp (1992) argue, attempts to aid working women and relieve the stress of the double day have been "partial" and "uneven" and in effect

maintain the economic status quo. In order to improve the situation of employed mothers in general, broad structural changes in the way work is organized must take place, increased government benefits need to be introduced, and women themselves need to be involved in deciding which types of changes should take place. Until then it seems that flextime by itself may be a way of rationalizing a traditional gendered division of labour and a poor substitute for more progressive and widespread social policy which will benefit all women, not just a “lucky few”.

(c) Child Care

All of the women with young children claimed that their children significantly affect their uses of flextime. Four women had worked under flextime before they had children and were thus able to compare their uses of flextime before they had children to their uses of flextime after children. According to them, women (and sometimes men) with childcare demands are always “in the hole” in terms of owing hours to the library. In the words of one respondent, “I didn’t use flextime all that much before I had children, I built up lots of flextime ... since the children it’s very difficult [to accumulate hours] ... all us girls are really using our flextime”. Another woman stated,

I’m one of those people that used to lose so many hours all the time [for being more than plus 14 hours] I just never thought I’d see this side of the balance ... I never used to understand this about families because I didn’t have one of my own - you never realize how many commitments you have that are other people’s commitments but are, as the mother figure, they automatically become yours.

The one man who has child care responsibilities likewise noted that because of his children, he usually carries a debit balance of five or six hours.

Even workers who do not have child care responsibilities claimed that they probably do not use their flextime as much as co-workers who have children. For example, one man remarked, "I think it's harder for a parent who has to be consistent with whatever they have to have with their children than it is for myself who is single and has no responsibilities". A childless woman similarly said, "there are some people who are habitually minus fourteen, but they have family situations". In sum, employees agreed that people with young children tend to make more use of flextime privileges than those without young children. Older women whose children are now grown stated that if flextime had been available when their children were young, combining paid work and child care would have been less stressful. According to one respondent in this situation, "[i]t was stressful when [my daughter] was young ... if I'd had flextime it would have probably taken ten years off my life", while a second woman commented "it would've made the whole difference in the world".

All of the female employees with young children reported that they most often use flextime when their children are ill. They stated that it is still almost always mothers that personnel of daycare centers and schools phone to pick up sick children. One woman even explained that despite the fact that her husband works out of their home, when a child is sick, she is the one that takes time off work. Her husband feels that she is "so much better" at caring for the children when they are ill. None of the women in the study

overtly complained about the fact that it is always them as opposed to their husbands who stays home when children are sick. In fact two of the women, one with grown children and one with no children, told me that they thought it should be the mother who stays home because it is “natural” for them to want to be their children when they are sick, and “natural” for children to prefer that their mothers care for them when they are sick.

The female respondents are particularly grateful for flextime in the situation of caring for sick children. This is because they are simply able to flex off for a day or an afternoon rather than having to lie and call in sick themselves, thereby using up their own sick days, or using up their vacation time if they have no sick days left. Women who have grown children but worked full-time when their children were young admitted that, given no other option, that is what they themselves used to do. They would lie to their employer by calling in sick when it was in fact their children who were ill. Women who presently have small children admitted that they are aware this is what they would be forced to do if it were not for flextime.

Custom therefore dictates that when children are ill, mothers rather than fathers will take time off work. The major problem with this is that as a result, women’s reputation for high absenteeism is reinforced. Even today, many organizations assume that women are not career-oriented and that they will leave their jobs to raise families, that they will be frequently absent to care for children, and that they will be unable to travel or accept transfers (Wilson, 1986). These traditional assumptions surrounding

women's waged work are hard to dispel, and therefore women remain in a disadvantaged position in the labour market.

Society provides very limited, and in many cases no, programs for children outside of school hours. The women made similar comments about this unfortunate reality, such as the one by this respondent,

Look at the number who have children who are involved in group activities after school. Well you have to leave at four thirty because they have to get there by five, somehow they have to eat in there, all these things start so soon as if the world stops work at three thirty when the kids stop school - they don't realize the normal end of a work day is five o'clock for most people.

Another employee stated,

A lot of the daycares will only look after the children of a certain age, but by law children aren't allowed to be on their own until they're eleven or twelve so there's nothing there from eight till [twelve], some schools have an after school program, but not a lot.

Although policies such as flextime may make it easier for parents to combine paid work and child care, it continues to be a stressful endeavor in part because public institutions continue to follow traditional, rigid schedules designed for families in which there is one parent at home full-time. As Martin et al. (1988) indicate in their article on work-family policies, one of the problems with variable work schedules is the typical workday is still longer, however arranged, than the typical school day. They (1988: 387) write "unless several child-carers' schedules can be dovetailed, the flextime program has little effect on this major family responsibility."

(d) Care of the Elderly

As a result of our aging population, many employed men and women are responsible not only for the care of children, but also for the care of elderly relatives. Thus, for many people domestic labour involves the care of the elderly. This is referred to in some literature as “daughterwork”, because of the fact that time budget studies indicate that the majority of this unpaid work is undertaken by daughters and daughter-in-laws (Luxton, 1990). Researchers (Armstrong, 1984; Luxton, 1990) suggest that because of cutbacks in social service funding and the general dismantling of the welfare state, there are very few respite care programs and day centers for the cognitively impaired elderly. Therefore, if the elderly are not being cared for by the state or by charitable organizations, they must be cared for at home by family members. Although more working Canadians are supporting and caring for elderly family members, our political, social, and economic institutions, including the workplace, have not yet adapted to this reality. According to Denton et al. (1990), despite the fact that employers are increasingly aware of the strains placed on employees who assume “eldercare” in addition to their paid work, they have been slow to respond with employee benefits and options.

The result of all this is that many women must “choose” to quit their jobs or substitute part-time employment for full-time employment. Women therefore bear a burden similar to the child care dilemma, adding an additional dimension to their already “double day”. Although attitudinal surveys suggest that many men may believe they

should share equally in the care of aged parents, they rarely do. This is in large part due to the fact that, as with child care, it is often not economically possible for men to quit their jobs. Because womens' salaries are usually two thirds or less than mens', it is they who must take on unwaged eldercare (Luxton, 1990).

Just as it facilitates child care, flextime also has the potential for making it easier for employees who must combine paid employment with eldercare, or even paid employment with eldercare and child care all at the same time. For two employees in the study, a single man and a married woman, flextime has in fact facilitated the care of aged parents. The male employee stated,

Recently I found another dimension where it [flextime] works very well ... my mother ... it gives me the time to take her to all the places you have to take old people like doctors and dentists - that they can't go themselves ... it's almost a parallel where young employees with young children ...

Considering the fact that our society will continue to age in the near future, it seems that a growing number of employees will be responsible for the unpaid work of caring for elderly relatives. Flexible working hour arrangements will therefore become even more necessary if individuals are to be able to successfully combine such responsibilities with their paid employment.

However, it is important to keep in mind that despite the fact that flextime may indeed be of help to individuals taking on the unpaid work of caring for elderly relatives, the crisis in eldercare cannot be addressed effectively without a "policy development process involving all sectors of society (Denton et al., 1990)." Research has indicated

that although employers may be offering benefits which support employees who are elder caregivers, these benefits were originally developed to meet other employee needs (Denton et al., 1990). Responses geared only to elder caregivers tend to be inexpensive programs such as seminars and other informational services. More expensive, although more beneficial services, such as day care options for elders are not offered. It may be argued in regard to flextime and eldercare, like child care, solutions must not be restricted to simply making it easier for employed caregivers to maintain dual roles as paid workers and unpaid family caregivers. Government and the private sector must each develop creative solutions which look beyond the “caregiver as employee” to acknowledge a “caregiver/receiver family unit” with multiple types and degrees of need (ibid.).

(e) The Quality of Family Life

The majority of employees with children furthermore believe that flextime has improved the “quality” of the time they spend with children and spouses. This is mainly because they feel better able to arrange their paid work to accommodate outside activities. For instance, they can leave work early or flex off for a day in order to do something with partners or children. One woman explains,

His [her husband] days off are during the week, not on Saturday and Sunday ... we can take it easy, see the kids off to school and then he drives me to work ... and sometimes we stop and get coffee and we're able to talk about what's going to happen that day and our plans for the evening in regards to the children and who's going to do what. I'm not rushing out the door ... or even on my husband's days off meet him at lunch and be able to talk without

[children] popping around while you're eating.

A similar comment was made by another employee,

... if my husband has a day off ... I'll flex that day if I don't have any vacation left ... I can just take a flex day to be with him to do something ... we want to go and see Miss Saigon for our anniversary, well it's midweek, I'll just flex that day.

One man stated that because of flextime he was able to attend his children's school field trips. Many employees listed specific examples in which they have been able to spend quality time with their children such as attending tennis matches, or soccer or hockey games during the day. Two women likewise reported that they are able to spend more time with their husbands because they can come in to work early and therefore leave early, thus permitting them to get the errands and housework done before their husbands get home.

Some women also mentioned that being able to flex off to spend time with their children removes some of the guilt they experience in not staying at home full-time.

According to one female employee,

I know that a lot of working mothers especially have guilt, guilt feelings, here I am dumping my child in daycare and I'm not spending enough time, and it does allow them to say "oh, well, I am going to attend a school play or a special morning session".

A second respondent said,

[I]f I decide I want to take the afternoon off and ... take her to Marineland or just decide I'm going to take the afternoon off - the daycare has field trips and often they want parents to go along with them, I can do that with no problem ... and if I want to go over and be at the daycare

for an hour or two at lunch I can do that and that's ... really nice to know.

The indication is that even today women continue to feel ambivalent about combining paid employment and motherhood, especially when their children are young. Such attitudes reflect cultural expectations which require women to assign priority to family and domestic responsibilities.

(f) Proposed Workplace Solutions: Beyond Flextime

As just mentioned, many women raised the issue of daycare and of family-oriented policies in the workplace. While they also spoke of a need for more daycare facilities and for organizations to adopt additional policies that accommodate parents with young children, they also admitted that they are thankful that McMaster is what they consider a "progressive" employer. At present, McMaster offers flextime, job-sharing, job-exchange programs, and an eight month work program. Job exchange is not a family-oriented policy but was mentioned by interviewees as beneficial. It is a program that allows employees to work in different departments or sections of the libraries. An employee may switch jobs for a specified period of time, either to gain experience in other jobs or in order to reduce the boredom that they may be experiencing in their present jobs. The eight month work program provides an opportunity for employees to work from September to April, eight months out of every year. Under this arrangement, employees have the option of working while their children are in school and of being at home for the summer months when children are on holidays. Like flextime itself, workers claim that these programs were not introduced simply to improve the quality of

an employee's working life. Rather, ultimately they benefit the University. One employee said about the eight month work program, "I think part of it has to do with [saving] money for the University". About the job exchange program another commented "[t]hey can't give financial increase right now so I think they have to start looking for other ways to increase employee's happiness". Regardless of this fact however, employees are generally grateful for these programs.

Three of the employees in the study, all female, work in job-share arrangements. One woman is married with grown children who no longer live at home. For her, job-share is working out well, however it does not have a major effect on her life. Although flextime is a definite plus for the other two women, job-sharing has made a much more fundamental difference in giving them a choice to successfully combine paid work and child care. One woman has been able to avoid putting her children in daycare,

I work two and a half evenings a week, four to midnight and I get no daycare at all - I have two children now and I take care of them during the day and my husband comes home at four thirty and he takes care of them [at night] ... my shift starts at 3:35 p.m. but my husband can't get home until about 4:15 so in fact I flex from 3:35 until 4:30 and then I take a half hour [break] ... it's the perfect job for me.

The other woman, who has three young children at home, feels equally lucky to have both flextime and job-share arrangements. In her words, "[i]t's a great, great mix ... flextime makes it a pleasure to come [to work] but the job sharing makes it a dream come true ... like, flextime and job-sharing together? I've got it made, I've completely got it made." It is necessary to realize however, that there are limitations to working in a

job-share arrangement. For example, one must cut into one's pension plan and often forego the opportunity to build up seniority. Also, for many people, especially single parents, job-share is not economically viable.

Based on the responses of two of the employees in job-share arrangements, although flextime is beneficial as a family-oriented policy, it is implicated that job-share makes a more fundamental difference for employees combining work and family. While flextime gives employees some control over when they work and thus allows for better accommodation of personal demands, employees are still required to work full-time hours. With job-share on the other hand, employees work only half the number of hours, thereby allowing substantially more time for child care and domestic responsibilities.

One thing employees were clear about is the need for more after school programs for older children outside of school hours, as well as for increased government subsidized licensed day care centers that stay open for longer periods of time. This includes operating in the evenings and on weekends for parents who must work shifts and for whose lives do not end at three-thirty every afternoon. More social supports which would permit a restructuring of the division of labour within the household are necessary. Comprehensive, universally accessible, high quality, and publicly supported daycare and after school programs, more extensive flextime programs, major extensions of maternity and paternity leave policies, as well as other well-developed family-oriented policies are required to achieve this goal. Until then parents', mainly womens', alternatives will be

limited by childrens' schedules, and the affordability of day care and after school programs. As one mother of young children, for example, stated,

I think companies have to be aware of it [flexitime] ... someone's got to tell them don't look at women and say "well I'm not going to hire her she's just going to get pregnant", they've got to look at it as how can we get women into the workforce, they should accept it ... and if you work things right you're going to get 150 % out of them. I know if I knew that my child was down the hall in a daycare center that I could go on my break and see them ... it would just make you a lot happier and if you're a lot happier you work a lot better ... I hope your study shows that if other jobs want women in the workforce and they want them to give a 150% they'd better do what McMaster does.

Having flexitime has made these women realize the need for other companies to accommodate parents, particularly mothers, into the work force.

IV - Flexitime and Leisure

Industrial capitalism has changed the way we live outside of work (Rinehart, 1987). The industrial revolution was largely responsible for the separation between work and non-work spheres, and thus the hardening of the boundaries between work and leisure. As work becomes increasingly alienated, workers look to their leisure time to make up for the pleasure, self-realization, and autonomy that their work denies them. Rinehart (1987:162) states,

The sheer amount of time spent at work means that leisure pursuits can only be truncated experiences geared to and constrained by the rhythms of work. Work is a precisely scheduled activity; it goes on interrupted. By contrast leisure must be enjoyed in small batches; it must be put aside until the end

of another round of productive activity.

Thus, the way work is structured in industrial capitalist society necessarily places constraints on the pursuit of any leisure activity (ibid.). However, as the structure of waged work is altered, such as with flextime, there may be possible consequences for worker's enjoyment and pursuit of leisure activities.

It is possible that flextime may permit workers to participate in hobbies or activities that are difficult or impossible to fit into a standard (inflexible) work schedule. Some of the employees, both single and married, admit that flextime has not affected their leisure in any way. However, the majority of respondents claim that flextime does affect their leisure. These employees stated that flexible working hours permits them to engage in such as activities as teaching aerobics, playing tennis, and golf. "I finish at four but I might take off at 3:00 and go meet [at the golf course] before the rush gets there at 4:30" stated one respondent. Another said, "lots of times I like to go jogging [at lunch] and [it] always [takes] time to get cleaned up, so it's always more than an hour [required]".

Other employees claimed that extended lunch hours enable them to meet friends without worrying about getting back to work within the hour. Many employees also said that flextime enables them to take University and College courses. They can flex off during the day for morning and afternoon classes, and flex off early at the end of the day to prepare for, and get to, evening classes. As well, some individuals have extended their vacation periods by adding flex time to vacation time. Some employees have been able

to add as many as four days to their vacation, depending on where it falls in the accounting period. For example, if an employee's vacation falls at the end or beginning of an accounting period and they have fourteen hours accumulated, they may take two full days. In addition, because they can go as many as fourteen hours minus, they can further add two days, thus giving them four full extra vacation days. The matter of combining flextime with vacation has aroused controversy between employees and supervisors. (It will be discussed in the next chapter).

By allowing employees to take extended lunch hours, (up to two hours for many) or to leave early in the day, respondents report that they are able to run errands such as banking and shopping. Thus flextime can indirectly affect their leisure time by freeing up more time in the evenings. In most cases, any hours lost by taking long lunches or leaving early are made up by coming in early once in a while or on some days taking only half hour lunches. The potential problem with this finding however, is that although employees may believe this saves them more time in the long run which they assume they are using for leisure, in many cases it is probably unlikely that this time actually gets used to pursue leisure activities. Some of the women for example, reported that by leaving early they can get banking done, groceries picked up, other errands run, and dinner ready before their spouses get home, thereby freeing up more time for them to spend with their families in the evening. It is likely in many cases however, that often the time that may be "freed up" in the evening will be spent catching up on domestic

tasks such as laundry or ironing, rather than simple leisure activities such as watching TV or reading a book.

In respect to this suggestion it is important to note some of the fundamental differences in the leisure time and activities of men and women. The first is that, on average, women have approximately five to six hours less leisure time per week than men (Christopherson, 1991). Second, it has been found that women do not separate the way they spend their time into categories of leisure and work the way men do (Wilson, 1986). Therefore, in pondering whether or not flextime affects their leisure time, it may have been more difficult for the female respondents to provide answers since they may not be as likely to categorize their lives into “work” time and “leisure” time.

One important underlying theme that arose in the study is that many of the employees view flextime as a policy designed for, and to be used only for, emergencies. Although the above paragraphs suggest that the majority of the employees use flextime on a regular basis to pursue leisure activities, more careful analysis of the data indicate that many of the employees in fact think of flextime as a policy designed for and to be used only for “emergencies”. This includes even those employees who reported that flextime has affected their leisure time and pursuits.

Interestingly, those subjects who reported that flextime does not affect their leisure, firmly believe that flextime should be used only for emergencies such as family crises or other “emergencies” such as medical appointments. One employee said that to use flextime for anything other than emergencies would be “abusing it”. Furthermore,

employees who explicitly stated that they use flextime to take advantage of leisure pursuits, indicated that their uses of flextime for personal pleasure comes only secondary to using it for emergencies. One woman stated, "I incorporate it [leisure] knowing that I can do that today because the kids are all right, the department's all right, the lunches are covered ... if we're ever short [staffed] I wouldn't do that, that's what I mean". Many of the employees said that they feel uncomfortable flexing off "for the heck of it" unless they have some hours built up should an emergency situation arise. Like this woman just quoted, most others admit that they can use flextime for any leisure activities only if departments are adequately staffed and the work is covered.

Although the majority of employees do believe that flextime is foremost for emergencies, and that leisure pursuits are only secondary, there are a few employees who disagree. These employees are willing to put their leisure first and do not tend to worry about whether they have enough hours built up in case of "emergencies". One employee, a single male, related that in the beginning he thought of flextime as something to be used only in emergencies, however after a period of time he realized that if one waits to use it in emergency situations, they may never get to take advantage of it. Five other employees, of varying sex, age, and marital status, made similar statements indicating that they think flextime should in fact be "enjoyed" and used primarily for leisure, or as one woman said for "pure pleasure". It would seem that it is this group of employees, along with parents who have childcare responsibilities, who are likely to make the most use of their flextime privileges. For those who see flexing off as something to be taken

advantage of only for emergencies, flextime would appear to be only a marginal benefit. The indication that some employees even consider the use of flextime for pleasure as “abusing” it, implies that in some cases flextime may be of very limited value. An employee who believes, or more importantly who is led by management to believe, that flextime should only be used in emergencies and only when their work allows, will obviously have very restricted use of flextime. In order for all employees to feel free to use flextime for pleasure, the message must be sent to them by personnel, management, and their immediate supervisors, that it is acceptable to do so. Until employees are encouraged to use flextime for whatever they wish, whether it be to tend to domestic responsibilities or for pure pleasure, it is unlikely that alterations in the restructuring of work schedules will lead to fundamental changes in the leisure pursuits or time of workers.

This chapter has dealt mainly with the study findings which pertain to issues of employees’ reactions to flextime, the effects of flextime on domestic chores and child care and leisure time. The following chapter will deal largely with the effects of flextime on employee and management control as well as with its effects on the quality of work life for employees.

CHAPTER FOUR

Control and Quality of Work Life

I - Control and Coping

One of the recurring themes to arise from the data concerns the issue of control. Many of the employees feel that flextime, because it gives them some latitude over the scheduling of their work, gives them an element of discretion. For some of the employees this feeling of control extends to their outside lives. Because they experience increased discretion over this particular aspect of their work lives, in some cases they are better able to control the scheduling of events in their personal lives. They feel that they have more say over when to work and therefore greater ease in accommodating personal obligations. In one employee's words, "[y]ou still get the work done but it's that flexibility of being able to do what I want at certain times - it makes me feel like I have control". Another stated, "I like the freedom that I can come and go any time I want to" while according to another, "you have too many things that you have no control over ... you have to be realistic, this is 1994, there's so many demands in the rest of the world out there". The workers feel that because they have some limited control over their work lives, some of the stress that they experience from day to day is relieved. They are no longer at the mercy of a supervisor when they want or need to leave. Instead, they are able to come and go, within limits, as they please.

As the above mentioned quote indicates, employees stressed the fact there are many circumstances in their lives outside of paid work which are beyond their control, but which affect how they perform in their jobs. Many of the employees suggested that with flextime they have an extra bit of control to at least arrange their paid work to accommodate other commitments such as appointments with doctors, dentists, and service repair persons, many of whom do not work evenings and weekends. As one participant explained,

Quite often you have to take vacation days, especially, I had a [relative] who was sick and there was a lot of times I had to take off the [vacation]time taking him to doctors appointments and things like that.

Another employee said,

I've worked for years under a straight nine to five day and I've had enough of that for a lifetime. It [flexitime] does change the quality of your life and improve [it] in that it allows you some kind of control and time off at a convenient time and time off that the world isn't so busy.

One finding which is related to workers' added discretion is that, for some, this discretion is equated with a feeling of trust. To a few of the employees, the belief that they are trusted by their employer is a reward in itself. As one woman said,

I feel trust ... it's such a feeling of trust that you are trustworthy enough to keep your own [timesheet] - that builds confidence, self-esteem. It's like, okay, so they trust me that I'm not going to rip [them] off for time ... it makes you feel better as a person.

Another employee stated, "[y]ou feel like you're trusted for one thing, you're trustworthy

that you can just come and go as you please ... it's so much nicer to be you're own timekeeper".

However, it is possible that this feeling of trust may in fact represent what can be labeled as a "false sense of trust". It is not clear whether managers actually do trust employees more simply because they allow flextime in their departments. It is not likely that employees are given flextime simply because management "trusts them" and it is not necessarily the case that even after they are given flextime management will begin to trust them. Some of the statements made by supervisors already mentioned elsewhere in this study support this hypothesis. In particular the statement in the preceding chapter which described one supervisor stating that one of the reasons management was initially hesitant of flextime had to do with whether or not they could trust employees. What is important to consider however, is that what matters most is the employees' perceptions of trust. Whether or not management actually considers them more trustworthy is perhaps less important than the fact that they *perceive* they are trusted.

A second theme related to the issue of employee control, is that some of the respondents stated that because they are given some control, the "guilt" that they associate with being away from their jobs is eliminated. One employee claimed, "I will admit that where I worked before if I didn't feel like going in and needed a mental health day I'd phone in and lie and say I was sick. I don't really like lying ... and I don't feel you ...really have to [anymore]". This is similar to the comment made by another worker, "I don't have to feel guilty about [taking time off] because I've already made up

the time". Yet another stated, "if something [comes] up suddenly you ... could take it without feeling guilty about being away from work".

With flextime workers do not have to lie about simply wanting some time off. Many admit having done this in the past and in previous jobs, by phoning in sick when they simply need some time off for personal, or mental health reasons. These employees claim that flextime removes the guilt associated with doing this since employees can now simply leave or flex off without having to provide any reason at all to superiors. An interesting point to consider in light of this finding, however, is that it is not clear whether it is simply feelings of "guilt" that flextime removes, or whether it is in fact the "fear of apprehension" about being found out, that is removed. Any feelings of relief employees may experience due to their added control over the scheduling of work, may be due more to the fact that they no longer have to worry that co-workers or management will discover that they have lied, than to the fact that they simply no longer have to feel "guilty".

In regard to the added discretion over work scheduling which flextime permits, supervisors are in a different situation than hourly employees. This is largely because of the definition and nature of their work, namely because they are considered professionals. There was general agreement among the supervisors that even prior to flextime they had flexibility, and therefore some control over when they worked. One respondent stated, for example, "I am a librarian and one of the things about librarians is that they have flexible hours anyway outside of flextime". Another supervisor said, "I

didn't think it [flexitime] would make any difference to me because I had the flexibility built in because I'm a librarian".

Therefore, among McMaster library employees, it is those who are employed in lower-level clerical and technical positions who are likely to benefit more from the flexitime policy. These workers, unlike managers and first-line supervisors, did not previously have flexibility, or control, of their work schedules. Therefore they were unable to leave work for an hour or two during the day, without explanation or permission. This is not to argue that employees in higher level positions do not gain additional control over their schedules with flexitime. Rather, it suggests that because the latter already have some flexibility in their jobs, flexitime may not be as beneficial to them or make as dramatic an impact in their lives in terms of control.

One negative finding which arose out of the data and which is worth noting is that for some employees, added discretion is associated with the ability to take advantage of, and even abuse, flexitime privileges. A substantial number of respondents, a few of them supervisors, feel that abuse of flexitime privileges by fellow employees is detrimental to them personally. This finding is surprising because none of the literature on flexitime mentions abuse as harmful to employees. In most cases, workers feel that when a co-worker abuses flexitime (for example, by not being honest on time sheets), they are being unfair to all workers. There was consensus among respondents that while abuse of flexitime privileges is not widespread, everyone knows of at least one employee who has abused it. According to one employee,

There are situations of abuse of the flexitime. Really

if the supervisors aren't strict on watching the time...
there are people who abuse the system, who take more
than what they're owed.

According to a different participant,

But what can you do? You can't keep track of
everything and tattle tale every time ... people
cheat - no matter what they'll cheat anyway ...
that's why there's no sense in complaining, if
people are cheating, no matter what they'll cheat.

The first of the above quotations is particularly surprising considering that the point of flextime is to allow employees to control their own time as opposed to having management control it for them. The fact that some employees believe that it remains necessary for management to closely monitor employees' comings and goings, in essence defeats the whole purpose of flextime. This particular statement may indicate one of two things. First, that the belief that management must be in control of setting worker's schedules, and in monitoring their adherence to fixed schedules, is so ingrained in the minds of some individuals that it is difficult for them to accept any control they may be given. Or, secondly, that it is difficult for them to accept any control *that others are given*.

This finding will perhaps make the link between flextime and QWL more clear to the reader and legitimize flextime as a qualifiable QWL initiative in this setting. The fact that employees are so aware of the comings and goings of others, particularly of those who are "cheating", indicates the type of "collective supervision" common to QWL programs. One of the characteristics of QWL programs is that there is a decrease

in orthodox supervision by supervisors as there is a shift towards the collective supervision of employees by peers, i.e. co-workers. The indication that employees now concern themselves with monitoring each other in fact represents that they have “internalized” traditional managerial norms. It may even be the case that the majority of employees, who do not “cheat”, feel such a need to be honest not because they fear management finding out, but because they do not want to disappoint their co-workers - as it is common knowledge that peer pressure can be one of the most powerful types of control. Thus, as with other types of QWL programs, in this case there is a shift to collective supervision among employees, yet “management” is indirectly able to remain in control since managerial norms have been internalized by employees. Further, with the presence of co-workers continually monitoring each other the question arises as to whether or not there really has, in this setting, been a move from direct control strategies to human relations management strategies, as discussed in chapter one.

In some ways the discretion that has been given to employees over their work schedule by flextime has been a trade-off for other work related benefits. For example, some employees stated that before flextime the University allowed medical appointments to be taken on paid time. However, under flextime, appointments must be scheduled during employees own time. The majority of the workers, though, do not consider this to be a disadvantage because they feel that the added control over their time that the present system gives them is worth the trade-off for any paid short-term absences. Only a few of the employees felt that the loss of paid short term absences was a substantial loss.

One employee stated that the present flextime policy is not flexible enough, that it does not give employees enough control over their time. In particular, this employee would like to see no core times, and perhaps be permitted to carry more than a debit or credit of fourteen hours. However, the other employees and all but one of the supervisors stated that ten percent debit or credit hours accumulation is sufficient. The supervisor who is the exception feels, on the other hand, that fourteen hours is too much time because when employees are given too much control over their own time many of them tend not to be able to manage it “wisely” and get themselves “too far in the hole”. In fact, this supervisor would like to see the number of hours employees are allowed to bank lowered to ten hours. More employees and supervisors would have to be interviewed in order to generalize this finding. In the study no other supervisors said they think fourteen hours is too lenient, and no other employees feel that fourteen hours is insufficient.

According to two supervisors, because it allows employees to monitor and control their own schedules, flextime has the potential to, and in some cases has, made employees inflexible and overly time conscious. According to one of them,

Far from making people more flexible it has made them inflexible, like they only take half an hour for lunch. I thought flextime would be where people would sit down to lunch and read a book and find out in a half hour it's a really good book so they'll read it for another half hour or whatever, no. I hear them in the staff lounge “well half an hour's up, I've got to get back to work”. They don't have to go back to work. They've never realized that's what we thought would happen, that they could stroll around the grounds on a nice summer or spring day ... it makes them ... far more rigid, to the point of becoming neurotic. We've got a couple of people I can think of who have become

neurotic over their life, they've got to have plus fourteen [hours] ... it's a religion and unfortunately it makes them more rigid, it really does, and it's made some of them become quite neurotic and that's a shame.

The other supervisor made a similar statement:

[a]nd the other thing is, I have noticed for some people who've worked for me that it's made them inflexible in that they have determined that if they come in early and take a half hour lunch, they can leave at 3:30 every day so they've set up a schedule for themselves and their baby-sitters or their childcare arrangements that gives them no flexibility whatsoever, which is something I didn't catch on to at the time and feel I can't do much about it now but ... they've missed the spirit of it and they have no flextime ... it's not exactly a problem but it's a factor.

In relation to this perception, of all the respondents, only five stated that they like to, or are able to, vary their schedules regularly by coming in at different times each day and by varying lunch times and leaving times. All others admitted that although they make use of flextime, they generally tend to follow a set schedule. This is clear from their comments. According to one man, "I do find myself working the same hours", "[i]t's a matter of habit, I'm always here very early in the morning", while another stated "usually it's eight to four for me unless I have to stay till five". A third woman made the statement, "[y]ou do see a pattern in people ... when I look around certain people are always [in] at such and such a time ... everybody sort of fits into a slot".

Almost all of the individuals who follow a regular pattern referred to some outside uncontrollable factors which force them to do so. For example, some workers explained that they are dropped off and picked up by another person and therefore do not

have a choice as to when they arrive and leave. Similarly, other employees must drive their children to daycare or school at specific times every day. As one woman said,

My son ... can be at school no earlier than 8:30 a.m.
so I can't come in during the school year ... before
9:00 because I have to drop him off at 8:30 then
drop the other two pre-schoolers off somewhere
else and then come in.

For those people who are relatively free to regularly alter their employment times, it might simply be a matter of habit that they follow the same schedule every day. Therefore what the above mentioned supervisors view as employees' inflexibility is likely in part the result of factors in their daily lives over which they have no control, and which restrict the times that they must thereby work each day. Simply because employees are given the option to work under flextime does not mean that they are automatically free to vary their work times as they please. Often in fact, there are extraneous considerations that override such choice. Obligations outside of employees' paid work are one type of factor affecting workers' use of flextime.

The finding that almost all workers feel that flextime gives them more control over their schedules becomes especially interesting when we consider the factors that actually *limit* employees' uses of flextime. In addition to work flow and coverage (discussed earlier), a number of other variables reduce employees' abilities to take advantage of flextime. These factors lessen the control that workers actually have. In short, while many employees perceive that they have control over their use of flextime, in fact they have little or no control at all.

(a) The Nature of Work and Flextime

As has been implied in the preceding chapters *the nature of the work* performed in a library department or section, will affect an employee's use of flextime. People who work in departments where jobs are carried out behind the scenes, (that is, the work is not tied directly to serving the public), report that they have more flexibility, and therefore control, than those who work in customer service areas. As one woman stated, "[o]ur department is very flexible in regards to flextime ... it's not serving the public so we don't have to worry about that rigidity". A second respondent commented, "we're the behind the scenes guys, we have a lot more flexibility than, say, the public service people". Further comments included " I know of some of the departments within the library, from stories that I've heard from other people, they don't have the same type of flexibility we do because we're not public service so we've gotten to be a little spoiled" as well as, "it is suited [to] some more than others in that [it's] ... more beneficial for the people behind the scenes who [don't] have to man a desk and ... have to be there". These differences hold even though the two types of departments follow the same flextime policy and guidelines, with the same core times and flexbands.

Clearly, employees who work in public service areas have less flexibility than other workers. This is because in public service departments workers are required to follow desk schedules. These are schedules that are made up weekly or monthly assigning employees to shifts for which they must be present to work on "the desk". Whenever they are not required to be on the desk, they must do "back work" and are free

to come and go as they choose within the flexbands. In some departments employees are scheduled on the desk for a certain length of time each day while in others, employees are scheduled only a few times a week. The flexibility of these workers is therefore limited in that they cannot “flex off” when they are scheduled to work on the desk, regardless of whether it is during a flexband. Although these desk schedules are necessary to ensure that there is least one or two people present at all times to serve customers, they defeat the theoretical purpose of flextime - to allow employees to come and go as they please outside of core times.

Work in public service departments and more specifically, the dependence of these departments on schedules, is the one work-related factor that most significantly effects an employee’s use of flextime. A schedule in itself is very limiting. Half of the employees in the study mentioned that there is a schedule in the department in which they work. According to one respondent, “[w]e’re scheduled at particular times ... if you wish to flex off at a specific time, you can’t if you’re on the desk and you can’t if it’s your weekend [to work] so it does restrict the generality of the flex rules”. A second similarly stated, “we follow a schedule which is flexible but basically we have to be there for whenever we are scheduled to be” and yet a third said, “it all depends on what the desk schedule is, the desk schedule ... is number one, you have to be there during the hours that you are scheduled”.

Not only does working in a customer service area affect flextime through the presence of a schedule, but it can also limit the number of hours that employees are able

to bank. As one employee mentioned, “it depends on the schedule ... I know there are people that work straight days ... and they always [have] plus fourteen hours but because of the way our schedule works there are some weeks where we only work 21 hours so you’re down already for the time”. Another said, “it just seems that the flextime sheets don’t always work out with the rotating shift schedule”. For the interviewees who are required to follow a schedule, however, this does not seem to be a problem, as long as they know in advance when they are scheduled to be on the desk. For example, “[i]n our group ... we have to have it set a day where you have to stay to 4:30 to answer the phone because we [are] considered a service point ... that [works] out fine ... you just [know] what day you [have] to stay”, and “you are scheduled on the desk for a certain amount of time and you know that well in advance so when you aren’t you have back work to do ... that would be the time ... your flex comes in handy”.

As mentioned, employees are aware that because of the nature of their jobs, some groups of workers are allowed more flexibility than others. Although it has not caused overt conflict, this difference has at times resulted in an underlying tension between groups of workers. It was never referred to explicitly as conflict between employees but as jealousy, resentment and dissension. According to a supervisor,

I think there’s a perception that a variation in the rules would be unfair, where it’s really just the unfairness of life, and I think it’s a mistake to try and have everything apply equally to everybody in a kind of false democratic way - but there’s always someone in the library who’s comparing other people’s sets of flextime rules [to their own].

(b) Managerial Style

Another work related factor affecting flextime pertains to differences in management styles and supervisors' interpretations of the flextime guidelines. Employees who have strict supervisors tend to feel less comfortable using flextime than those with more lenient supervisors. According to one employee, "[f]lextime, as far as being a negative, it depends on the supervisor, our current supervisor likes to know where everybody is at one time ... but it's really hard to do a style like that with flextime". In work settings where the management style is paternalistic and where managers tightly control employees, flextime may be less successful than in environments where managers are lenient and open. As one interviewee stated, employees are likely to be hesitant to use flextime when they have a supervisor that begrudges them every time they use it. Another worker admitted that although she does not use flextime that often and in fact commonly loses one or two hours every accounting period (for being over fourteen hours plus), her supervisor has commented that perhaps she is using it too much. Again, in cases where supervisors are overly controlling, workers are afraid to use flextime. The resulting situation is one in which management simply pays "lip service" to the idea of flexible work hours.

When asked about their supervisors' interpretations of flextime, the majority of employees agreed that there is inconsistency. One person commented that, "[e]ach department in the library system is different as to what they allow for some reason ... it all comes down to how the supervisor defines flextime and how you're allowed to use

it". Often, this inconsistency pertains to whether or not employees are allowed to use accumulated flextime to add on to vacation time. Most employees noted that in their departments people commonly use flextime to extend vacation time. Some, however, said that their supervisors will not allow flextime for this purpose. According to one supervisor, the reason that some supervisors have a problem with this is that when employees plan their vacations they will often schedule them with as many as four flex days already built into them. The problem is that employees cannot possibly be sure that in four months from that time when it is time for their vacation, that they will in fact have plus fourteen hours accumulated. In sum, supervisors who narrowly interpret flextime in effect restrict employees use of such privileges.

(c) Flextime and Downsizing

A final work-related factor affecting flextime use concerns recent economic cutbacks made by the University administration. Eight employees said that because of recent cutbacks, the number of staff has been significantly reduced. Library personnel stated, "we [the libraries] are open less hours now due to budget cutbacks, but that cutback in hours has not affected flextime ... I suppose if you keep reducing staff to fewer people, I suppose that will have an impact but we're far away from that at the moment". Many of the staff however maintain a different opinion. As one man commented, "we've had to lower our staff numbers so the workload has increased and therefore I've now come in many times that I would not have in the past". Another respondent commented, "I'm sure you've heard this from other departments on campus ... we've got less staff

than we've ever had so we've got to pick up the end somewhere but I try not to lose too much time now" while still another said, "the staff cuts mean that there's less opportunities to use the flextime, in the summer at least, we have layoffs in the summer ... so we're very short staffed".

In relation to this finding, one supervisor claimed that the biggest problem with flextime is trying to get employees to actually use it. Employees in this supervisor's department often feel that because there is so much work to be done they "cannot afford" to flex off. In fact, they often come close to losing hours because they have more than plus fourteen hours accumulated. Budget cutback have therefore affected the operation of flextime simply because there are fewer people to perform the same amount of work. For some employees this means not being able to flex off as much as in the past.

One issue that comes to mind in light of the above-mentioned employees' comments is a possible, although hypothetical, relationship between flextime and work intensification. It seems that the potential is present for flextime to result in work intensification in both a direct and an indirect manner. One of the advantages of flextime which is commonly cited in the literature is that it allows workers, by following their own circadian biorythms, to work at times which they are most productive. For example, "morning people" can come in extra early in the morning when they are at their best while others who may work better later in the day can work throughout the evening. By introducing flextime it is therefore possible for management to eliminate much of the "downtime", i.e. periods during the day at which workers are most unproductive. In this way it is possible that flextime may lead directly to "work intensification" since more

work may be getting done in shorter periods of time. It is interesting to note also, that although this connection was never directly made by any participant in the study, a personnel source did state that one main advantage of flextime is that “it helps [workers] to work at [their] best times.”

Perhaps more in line with the data is the indication that flextime indirectly, through budget cuts and organizational downsizing, may lead to work intensification. As a number of staff mentioned, they find themselves pressured to accomplish greater amounts of work in shorter periods of time due to lowered staffing levels. The role that flextime plays in this relationship is that it is possible to hypothesize that organizational downsizing and cutbacks (which lead to an intensification of the work process for remaining employees) are in fact made easier for management to introduce because of the presence of flextime. Again, because management can expect more productivity from employees since they are able to work at their “best times”, it is easier for them to get employees to pick up the slack which results with cuts and downsizing. These suggestions of work intensification are only hypotheses as more data would be required to state an actual relationship between flextime and a potential intensification of the labour process.

II - Loss of Control for Management

Not only is the issue of flextime and control salient for employees, but also for management. Therefore, one of the discussions surrounding flextime concerns whether managers, especially first-line supervisors, necessarily lose “control” over workers. More specifically, control over the ability to determine and monitor workers’ schedules.

Although many of the employees stated that one advantage of flextime is that it gives added discretion over when to work, few addressed the issue of whether or not they perceive that flextime means a loss of control for management. Three employees implied that they believe supervisors do in fact lose some of their “traditional authority”. This is because, as one employee put it, supervisors no longer have the right to be “down your throat” for leaving early or for taking off for two hours in the middle of the day. Nor do they have the right any longer to question employees about the reasons for their absences as they often did before flextime. According to one employee, “I’ve heard a lot of the managers don’t like it [flexitime], they love their power right? My supervisor ... doesn’t like it because [s/he] doesn’t have the power to say “no you can’t go”, or something like that ... [s/he] isn’t so superior.” Another respondent believes the reason more companies do not offer flextime is because often management is afraid of giving up some of its authority. This employee believes, however, that management must realize that by losing a little control they “gain back production and happier employees.”

Only three supervisors addressed the issue of management control. Two of these supervisors associate flexitime with a loss of control. One supervisor stated,

[t]he thing that interests me as a supervisor ... I don’t have this control ... I don’t know what’s happening until 10:00 in the morning ... I think that’s a kind of loss in a kind of paternal permission thing [not to be able to give employees permission to leave early or take an extra five minute break].

The other supervisor similarly commented,

I think flexitime takes away the discretion of the supervisor at times. Like for example, on Friday

afternoon everybody wants off, and if the supervisor has no recourse, for example if two people are gone - two people from this department and two people from that department, there are only a limited number of people who are there and there is no one to call.

The third supervisor, however, believes quite strongly that flextime has not affected her control over workers. In fact, this supervisor believes, like the above mentioned employee, that one problem in getting other workplaces to adopt flextime is that many managers and administrators think an organization must “be run like a tight ship” when really it does not have to be run like a tight ship at all. Therefore, differences in opinions exist among the supervisors in regard to the issue of management control. It would be interesting for further research to examine the sources of these differences, more specifically whether or not they are related to differences in age, gender, and/or management styles.

III - Does Flextime Affect How Employees Feel About Their Work?

Perhaps the most critical indicator of whether or not flextime improves employee’s quality of work lives comes through determining how, if at all, flextime changes the way employees feel about and experience their work. In order for employees to be able to determine whether or not flextime has this effect, they must be able to compare working without flextime to working with flextime. In order to obtain the most valid results, all variables except the flexible hours should remain constant, meaning that employees should be comparing the same job with and without flextime. Therefore, of all the respondents, sixteen could address the issue of whether or not flextime in itself improves their quality of work life.

Nine of these sixteen employees (excluding supervisors), stated that flextime has not affected how they feel about their work. All, however, did note that flextime makes their lives in general less stressful in at least one way. It is not necessarily the nature of the work performed by the employees that is made less stressful. Rather, activities in every day life such as not being as rushed in trying to get to work on time, in being able to leave when one is experiencing stress at work, and in trying to combine family demands with work, are made less stressful. Although the workers themselves admitted that this is a big plus for them, they must still go to work everyday, perform the same job under the same supervisor, and experience the usual demands and deadlines associated with their jobs. They have been given some say over when they work, but not control over the work itself. They cannot control what work is performed, how, or how much is performed. One employee reported that she still experiences the same work related pressures and deadlines under flextime as before flextime.

The employees who said that flextime does affect how they feel about their work related this view to their lives outside work. They referred to, for example, the lowered stress involved in arranging personal obligations. Flextime as a QWL program then, improves individuals' work lives not directly by changing some aspect of the nature of their jobs, but indirectly by lowering the stresses that employees experience in trying to accommodate unpaid work demands. As with most other QWL initiatives, the nature of the work itself remains fundamentally the same. Employees do, however, report being happier with their employment as a result. It is possible that the positive feelings they

experience because of having more control in their outside lives, are transferred to their work, thus partly accounting for the improved morale reported in the literature among employees given flextime.

One related indicator of the impact of flextime on employees' lives is whether or not they feel that flextime would make them reluctant to voluntarily leave their job for another which did not offer flextime. Three employees stated that flextime would not be a factor in leaving for another job that did not offer it. All three of these respondents have few domestic or child care responsibilities. They did note however, that they would miss flextime if they were to leave. Of the remainder of employees, one group felt that flextime would be a factor they would consider if leaving for another job. However it would not keep them from taking another job. The second group of employees on the other hand stated that at this point in their lives they could not consider employment which did not offer flextime. For all but one of these employees the reason is related to child care issues and general family obligations. The exception noted she could not leave simply because she is not a person who likes schedules, and could not therefore work in an environment in which she had to follow a set schedule and where her comings and goings were constantly monitored by a supervisor.

Although flextime in itself is an important bonus for almost all the employees, for some it is more than just a "perk". As demonstrated earlier, flextime is most significant for employees who have family responsibilities. For this group, flextime is not simply an added bonus but is a necessity that allows them to successfully take on

paid work. Although flextime as a QWL life initiative does improve the work life of many of the interviewees in that it makes their lives less stressful overall, it is suggested that flextime may be a minor factor in holding them to their jobs in comparison with larger employment issues such as pay or job security.

IV - Overview

This chapter has dealt with issues of flextime and control. Many of the employees in the study report that flextime gives them more discretion over when they will work. This added discretion extends outside of their work lives, explaining why many of them experience feelings of added control over their lives in general. Although the discretion they have been given is limited, they greatly appreciate it because it relieves stress in trying to combine personal obligations with work demands. It does not appear that simply because employees gain some discretion, supervisors automatically lose some. Only two supervisors explicitly stated that they feel they have lost some of their "traditional authority", even if it is only in a "paternalistic" sense. A third supervisor, however, does not believe that flextime has resulted in a loss of management's control in any way.

Despite the fact that employees perceive they have gained control, there are a number of factors which actually *limit* the control they can exert over their own schedules. These include factors outside of paid work which limit workers' schedules, such as other family members' schedules. Further, there are three specific work-based factors which have the same effect. The nature of the work performed by employees is

one of these factors, namely whether they work in customer service departments, or behind-the-scenes departments. In addition, managerial style and the general downsizing which has occurred within the University have limited employees' uses of flextime.

Of the respondents who were able to state whether or not flextime has affected how they feel about their work, most reported that in fact it has not changed how they feel about their work. Those who reported that it does, stated that this is because flextime has made their lives in general less stressful, in not having to always rush, and by giving them the right to leave without explanation when they are feeling "stressed out". However, like other QWL programs, the nature of the work performed remains fundamentally unchanged.

CONCLUSION

For most of the twentieth century the social organization of paid work has been problematic for the majority of workers in industrial capitalist society, and at times for managers and owners as well. Work is central to the lives of most people, and thus it is of great significance. It has been of interest to sociologists and other social scientists, in particular. Sociologists have examined many different facets of work. This study addresses three specific particular interrelated characteristics of paid employment. These are increasing specialization, bureaucratization, and feminization.

I began this study with a discussion of some of the problematic aspects of work in an effort to sketch out the background for the movement towards the humanization of work and flextime. Adoption of the scientific management approach resulted in a number of related trends: the growth of jobs based on an intensified division of labour, increasingly fragmented tasks, the separation of planning and execution of work, and deskilling. The growing bureaucratization (and bureaucratic control) with a focus on efficiency and impersonal rules furthermore, gave many jobs primary labour market characteristics. For some workers, this meant jobs with increased security, advancement opportunities, and high occupational standards, but it is important to recognize that workers gained only “superficial autonomy” at the price of “true autonomy.” Their loss of actual control and decision-making authority declined further. According to Edwards (1979), the above-mentioned positive incentives offered by bureaucratic control functions as a system of bribes in that it leads workers to pursue self-interests as individuals and stifles impulses for collective unity.

In addition, the feminization of some jobs has added to the problems many workers experience. Specifically, the feminization of certain sectors of the labour force has become problematic for women. Because much of the work that women do has become “feminized”, many women in the the paid labour market are employed in jobs with low wages, little prestige or room for advancement. This concentration into “pink-collar” jobs combined with the double day experienced by many employed females means that women face real inequalities both at home and in the labour market. Thus, the nature of women’s paid and unpaid work reinforces and perpetuates the current sexual division of labour in society, making the social organization of work problematic for the majority of women.

During the mid twentieth century, as work becoming less satisfying, some workers began to collectively push for alternate ways of organizing paid employment. Managers, in part reacting to government labour legislation, and in part recognizing the declining effectiveness of the scientific management approach alone, also began to seek new ways of managing workers. Although human relations theory did not, and even today has not completely replaced scientific management theory, it became popular during the mid twentieth century. This school of thought, which grew out of the Hawthorne experiments in Chicago, introduced the significance of social variables on work behaviour. The human relations management approach combined with the principles underlying the humanization of work movement, consequently led to the growth of the QWL movement. Various job redesign techniques and participative management strategies subsequently emerged from this general movement. Despite the fact that many QWL experts argue that the concepts underlying QWL provide a new way of thinking, one that addresses the flaws of scientific management and bureaucratization, in this thesis I argue that a more critical perspective towards QWL is in order. QWL

programs rarely, if ever, alter the experiences and position of *workers*, as the hierarchy of work remains fundamentally unchanged.

This study focuses on one specific form of QWL initiative - flextime. Flextime and other non-standard work arrangements became increasingly popular in North America during the 1970's and 1980's, due largely to demographic, social, and economic changes in society. I argue that flextime is one of many QWL initiatives in so far as it gives workers greater discretion over one aspect of their work, that is, when to arrive at work and when to leave. However, while some critics argue that flextime programs are reactive, and ignore the essence of worker discontent, compared to most other QWL initiatives, flextime does address workers' lives beyond the workplace. Flextime does have the *potential* to be a successful family-oriented policy by easing the stress employees experience in combining paid work and domestic work. It can do this by facilitating the reorganization of employment schedules. In addressing the gap which exists in the literature on employees' responses and feelings towards flextime, this study seeks to determine how the flextime policy at one particular work setting affects employees' lives at home and at work.

The setting for this study was McMaster University, a mid-sized university in Hamilton, Ontario. My focus is on employees from the four campus libraries, more specifically the library employees, most of whom work according to flextime. The flextime policy at McMaster University was approved in the spring of 1981. The initial idea for such a policy came from the employees themselves via MUSA, the staff association. Many of the employees were under the impression, and were led by management to believe, that the policy was primarily for their benefit, namely to make it easier for them to combine paid work with domestic and child care demands. However, an analysis of written documents, suggests that employees' needs were not of primary

concern. Instead, emphasis remained on the primacy of job flow and work coverage, indicating that the work and organizational goals must always take priority over individual workers needs.

When flextime was introduced it generated mixed reactions among the library staff. Some were excited and pleased. One admits being apprehensive, wondering who the policy would benefit more - the University or employees. As well, some were curious about its possible effects on their short-term paid personal leaves. Some supervisors on the other hand worried that their jobs would be made more difficult in trying to administer this new policy. The employees and supervisors who joined McMaster since the implementation of flextime are positive about the policy. None indicated any apprehension. As compared to working non-flexible hours, all employees feel that working under flextime is much better and some even feel that working with flextime is so superior that the two situations cannot even be compared. Flextime is likely to make a more substantial difference to clerical employees and technical staff than to managers and supervisors. This is largely because even without flextime supervisors already experience a certain degree of flexibility due to the nature of their jobs.

One of the key findings of this study pertains to flextime and domestic responsibilities. For those workers who have numerous family demands, especially the care of young children, flextime can significantly ease the amount of stress associated with combining paid and unpaid work. This is especially true for women who assume the greater responsibility for domestic labour. Also, for employees with numerous domestic demands flextime is especially important when their partners work full-time in jobs that are highly inflexible. Women who work under flextime may be at risk of taking on even more responsibility for domestic tasks simply because they, unlike their partners, can flex off. Until more organizations in society offer widespread, liberal

flextime policies and other family-oriented policies to male and female employees in all levels of jobs, it seems likely that women will continue to bear responsibility for the bulk of domestic and child care demands. It is suggested that flextime in itself may be a way of rationalizing the traditional gendered division of labour and a substitute for widespread progressive social policy. Instead of concentrating on change at the micro level, the level of the individual firm, changes need to take place at the macro level. This way, the majority of women will be able to benefit from policies and programs, as opposed to a few lucky women, who are most often middle class professionals.

Women in the study indicated that the presence of young children in the home greatly affects their use of flextime. Because of child care obligations, many find themselves on the negative side of the flextime balance. A common use of flextime for women is for taking care of sick children. It does not help that societal institutions in general still perpetuate the belief that children are primarily mothers' responsibilities. Even when employed full-time, in most cases mothers, as opposed to fathers, are contacted by schools and daycare centers when children fall ill or need to be picked up and taken home. Women respondents were adamant about the need for more organizations to adopt family-centered policies and for more daycare and after-school programs. In their view, institutions have not yet dealt the problems faced by dual-earner families and employed women in particular. It is for the employed women with children in the study for whom flextime appears to have the most benefit in terms of reducing levels of stress.

In terms of the effects of flextime on leisure, some employees feel that flextime does have an effect on their leisure pursuits. These employees cited specific examples of ways in which it has given them more control over leisure activities such as being able to flex off during the day to meet friends for long lunches and use recreational facilities at

non-peak hours. Many employees however, view flextime as something to be used primarily for emergencies, not for leisure or pleasure. If employees view or are pressured to view flextime as a policy to be used only in emergency situations, their use of flextime is likely to be very limited. The employees who view flextime as something to be used for primarily for pleasure, and who do in fact use it for such purposes, are likely to get the most use and perhaps enjoyment of flextime.

The issue of control is another dominant theme in the study. Many workers feel that flextime gives them at least *a feeling* of control, an added element of discretion in scheduling their work. This feeling of control extends to their lives outside work, in that they are better able to coordinate events and appointments in their personal and family lives. The major benefit of this for workers is that some of the day-to-day stress they experience in trying to combine work and domestic demands is reduced. Some workers noted that being given the extra bit of control makes them feel trustworthy, an added benefit of flextime. Furthermore, the workers believe that they no longer have to feel “guilty” when they are away from work. Their time is more their own and for the most part, they are trusted to use it to their convenience.

It is noteworthy that although many employees feel that flextime gives them added control, a number of factors limit their actual use of flextime. One of these factors is other family members’ schedules. Employees are allowed to come in any time before ten in the morning, however many stated that they cannot take advantage of this freedom because their schedules are restricted by things such as relying on their spouses for transportation and having to drop children off at daycare centers and schools at certain times. The nature of the work performed by employees also often limits their uses of flextime. Those who work in public service-oriented departments must follow desk schedules and are therefore limited as to when they can come and go. Also the

management styles of supervisors and their interpretations of the flextime policy limit workers' uses of flextime privileges. Employees who work for supervisors with strict styles of managing and limited interpretations of flextime may feel less free to use flextime. Finally, because of the trend towards downsizing, employees reported that their uses of flextime have become more restricted. There are fewer people doing the same amount of work which means that existing employees are in many instances required to be more available to work at any time. Thus, there are a number of factors restricting the extent to which employees can actually take advantage their flextime privileges.

Loss of control for management as a result of flextime is another issue which this study addresses. Only a few employees, however, stated that they believe supervisors have actually lost some control over workers. As well, only two of the supervisors themselves reported that they have lost some of their control, namely in a paternalistic manner.

As an indication of whether or not flextime as a QWL program actually affects how employees feel about their jobs, many of the employees stated that flextime has not affected how they feel about their work per se. However, some employees report feeling happier and more "satisfied" with their work because of flextime. When asked to explain why, these employees gave reasons which suggest that it is not their work itself which they are happier with, but the fact that personal demands are easier to accommodate. Flextime does not alter the nature of the work employees perform, they still have the same pressures at work, perform the same work, in the same way, and meet the same deadlines. Although positive feelings caused by flextime may be transferred to their jobs, the work is still the same. Flextime as a QWL life initiative then differs from other quality of work life initiatives in that it does not alter the nature of employees work,

but their lives outside of paid work through lowering stress in coordinating paid and unpaid work.

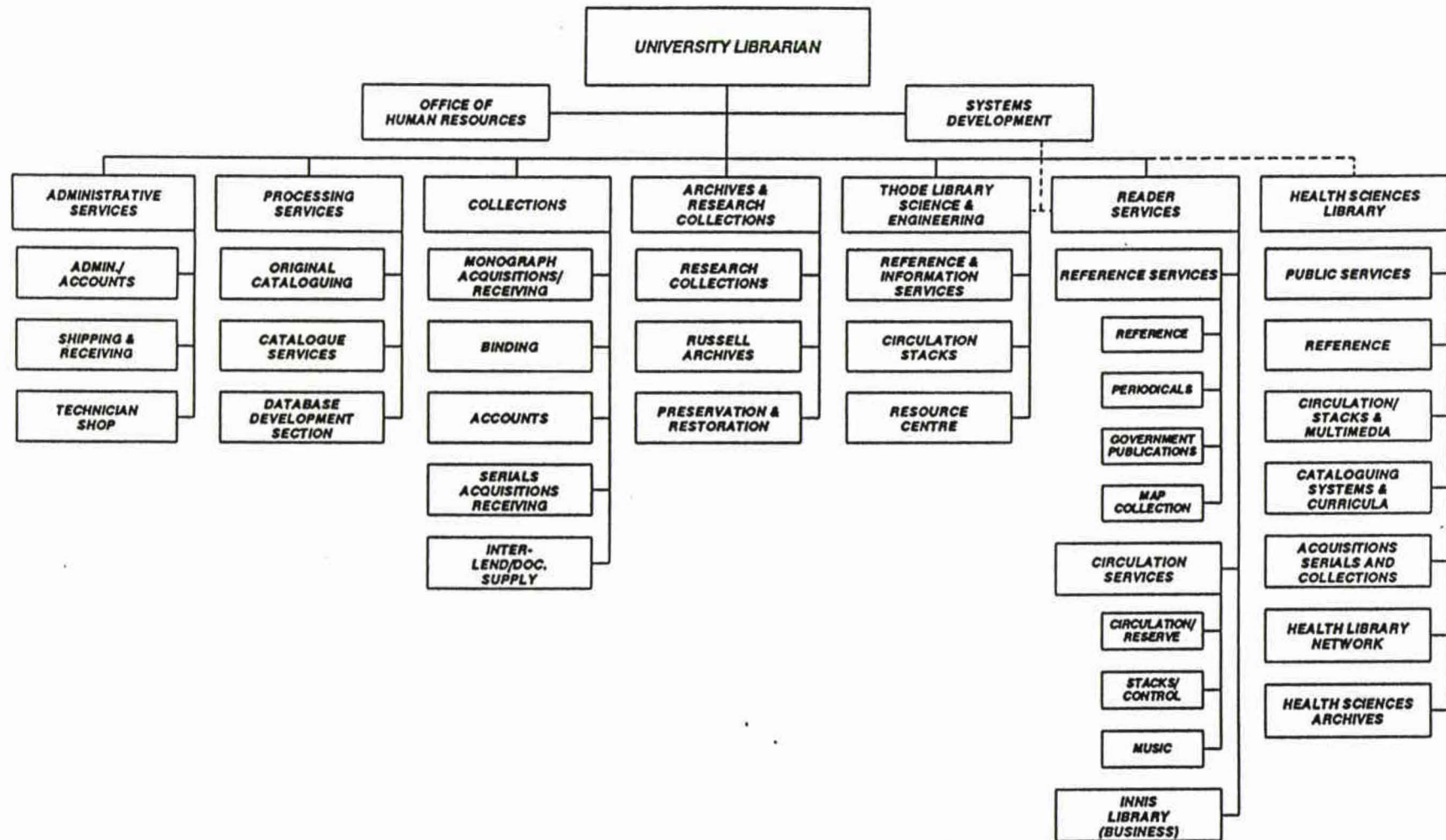
This research is a case study of one particular flextime policy. Further studies in comparing flexible working schedules in different work settings could provide additional insight. Such research would increase our understanding as to which types of organizations are more likely to implement flextime and why, and how different levels of flexibility built into flextime programs affect workers' experiences.

It is important to recognize that with flextime women may be at greater risk of having to take on additional responsibilities for child care and domestic tasks, thus adding more stress to their already double day. More insight could be gained on this issue by studying a much larger number of males than were included in this sample. As well, interviewing the partners of employees who work under flextime could lead to interesting findings in that it would make it possible to note any discrepancies between the views of workers and their spouses as to how flextime affects the division of domestic chores. Furthermore, studying couples in which both partners have flexible working hours could indicate whether or not men and women are more likely to share domestic and child care tasks equally than in couples where neither or only one has flextime. Also, it would be interesting for a longitudinal study which would follow employees for a period of time to determine precisely how their uses of flextime change at different points throughout their lives. Such a study could monitor and record workers' uses of flextime at times when they are single, married, childless, have young and older children, or at any other various points in the life cycle.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings of this study is that flextime as a QWL program, by itself, does little if anything at all to alter the ways in which employees experience their paid work. It does however, have the potential to ease the level of stress

experienced by employees, especially those trying to combine paid work and child care. Therefore it is important for organizations to note that perhaps flextime would be of greater benefit to employees if combined with other QWL programs, namely those which attempt to change *the nature of the work* in some way.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SYSTEM



APPENDIX B

GUIDING QUESTIONS
RE.: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXTIME AT MCMASTER

1. When was the idea of a flextime program first introduced at McMaster University? By who?
2. What year was a formal Flextime Policy actually instituted?
3. What were some of the major steps involved in the development flextime?
4. Who/what groups were involved in developing the policy?
5. Where/with whom did the idea of flextime originate? From management, employees, personnel, other?
6. What were the goals that the University hoped to achieve by introducing flexible scheduling?
7. Did the initial idea of flextime raise concerns for any specific group(s) of individuals (i.e. employees, supervisors, top level management)
8. Was there any opposition to the idea of flextime? From who? Why?
9. How has flextime been implemented within the Libraries specifically?
10. Is there one standard flextime schedule for all units/sections within the Library or are there variations within the units?
11. Are all employees given the opportunity to work according to flextime? Are there any groups of employees for which flextime is not possible?, If so why not?, Has flextime ever been attempted by these employees/sections?, If so what were the results?
12. In the history of flextime has there been any instances of employees refusing the option to work under flextime?, If so did they provide a reason?
13. Have there been any instances of employees abusing flextime? If so how was the individual(s) dealt with?, What are the prescribed rules, if any, for such a situation?

14. Have there been any other types of problems or difficulties which have occurred as the result of flextime?, What are they and how were they resolved?
15. In your opinion what are the major advantages of flextime for: (A) management, (B) the University, and (C) employees?
16. In your opinion what are the major disadvantages for these same groups?
17. Has flextime been an issue of loss of control over the work process for management?, If so how has this been dealt with?
18. How do you think flextime has affected (if at all): (A) lateness, (B) absenteeism, (C) sick leaves, (D) employee moral
19. In your opinion, how has the flextime program at McMaster worked out so far? What does the future hold for the flextime policy at McMaster (i.e. any changes, revisions, etc.)?
20. Are there any issues you would like to discuss that we have not yet covered?

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR QUALITATIVE
INTERVIEWS WITH MCMASTER UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES

1. Were you employed at McMaster University when the flextime policy was introduced?
2. If so, what was your reaction to this policy?
3. If you were not already employed at McMaster when flextime was introduced, was the policy a factor which attracted you to employment at the University?
4. Have you previously been employed at a job at which you worked a standard, fixed seven or eight hour day? If so, how does it compare to working under flextime?
5. How do you think the flextime program is working out for employees generally?
6. How is flextime working out for you personally?
7. Do you think that flextime makes any difference in regards to how you feel about your work? If yes, what kind of difference?
8. Do you feel that you are experiencing greater job satisfaction as a result of flextime?, In what ways?
9. Has it made your job less stressful in any ways?
10. Do you feel that flextime gives you greater discretion over your leisure time?
11. Does flextime make any difference as far as your family responsibilities are concerned?
12. Has flextime made it any easier for you to combine personal/family obligations and work demands?
13. Does flextime allow you a greater degree of choice over whether to combine work and childcare?
14. Has following a flextime schedule affected the household chores you are responsible for?
15. Has flextime affected the level of stress you experience in combining your work and personal life?

16. Has working under flextime affected the level of work-related stress you experience in general? How, why?
17. How has flextime affected, if at all, the amount and quality of time you are able to spend; (A) with your family and friends, and (B) on personal leisure time?
18. If applicable, have child care arrangements been affected by flextime? If yes, in what way(s)?
19. Has flextime affected your travel time to and from work?
20. Do you see any disadvantages of working under flextime for: (A) management, and (B) employees? What are they?
21. In your opinion, what are the major advantages of working under flextime for: (A) management, and (B) employees?
22. Would the flextime policy at McMaster affect your decision, if the opportunity arose, to accept employment at an organization outside McMaster that did not offer flextime?
23. Are there any issues that you would like to raise about flextime that we have not yet covered?

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES NOT ON FLEXTIME

1. In which department are you employed?
2. What is the reason that your section is not on flextime?
3. Who made the decision that flextime would not be possible?
4. Has flextime been at all attempted in the past in your section? If so, what were the results?
5. If not, do you think it would be an option to attempt it?
6. Where you employed at McMaster when the official Flextime Policy was introduced?
7. Did you think that you would have an opportunity to work under flextime?
8. What was your initial reaction when you realized that you would not be working under flextime?
9. Have you ever worked a section of the Library in which you were able to work under flextime? If yes, how was that experience?
10. Has there been tension between those that do have flextime and those that do not?
11. Do you think you would prefer to work under flextime? Why?, If not, why?
12. What do you think the major advantages of flextime would be?
13. Do you think it would make a difference in regards to how you feel about your work? Do you think it would affect how satisfied you are?
14. Has combining child care/ family demands and work demands been difficult for you at any point in the past or in the present?
15. If yes, do you think flextime would make it easier?
16. What do you see as disadvantages to working under flextime?
17. If you had the opportunity to transfer to a job within the University which did allow flextime, would the flextime affect your decision to consider it?

APPENDIX C

McMaster University Library Staff
Mills Memorial Library
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario
L8S 4L6

July 5th, 1995

Dear Library Employee:

As the library administration will be informing you, I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology here at McMaster University and am presently in the process of completing a Master's thesis exploring alternative forms of work scheduling. My primary goal in this study is to gain an understanding of employee responses to flextime. Much research has been done on the topic of flextime but unfortunately the majority of it pertains mainly to the benefits and effects of flextime for organizations. There remains a lack of research relating to how flextime programs affect individuals within organizations and how employees themselves respond to flextime schedules. My interest lies on exploring the ways that work under flextime has affected your life, both within and outside the workplace, as well as what your responses and reactions have been to the flextime programs at Mills.

The names of potential study participants have been chosen on a random sample basis. Yours was one of thirty names that was randomly obtained from a list of all library employees. However, simply because you were chosen does not mean that you are in any way obliged to take part in the study. If you do not wish to participate please inform Mrs. Coit, of the Library Personnel Office, upon being contacted. Should you chose to be involved in the study you will be assured complete and total confidentiality. Under no circumstances will you be identified and no names will at any time be used. Any data or direct quotes appearing in my thesis will be untraceable to any particular individual.

If you decide to take part in the study, what will be required of you is an interview which may be conducted during library time. In the interview, which will take no longer than one hour, you will be asked a number of open-ended questions pertaining to how your life, both at home and at work, has been affected by flextime. If you would prefer to be interviewed outside of library hours, on your own time, please inform Mrs. Coit and a time that is convenient for you will be arranged. The interviews will be conducted in Kenneth Taylor Hall, Room 621. If you have any concerns or questions regarding this study, you may contact me directly through the Sociology Department or you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Pam Sugiman at (905) 525-9140 ext. 23609. Thank-you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Terry MacLellan

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

(1) Are you male female

(2) To which age group do you belong?

- 25 or younger
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 35
- 36 - 40
- 41 - 45
- 46 - 55
- 55 +

(3) What is your marital status?

- single
- married
- separated
- divorced
- widowed
- in long term relationship

(4) a. Are there any adults (18 years or older) besides yourself that live in your home?

- yes no

b. If yes, how many? _____

c. Please specify what is your relationship to them?

(5) a. Are there any children (under 18) living in your home?

- yes no

b. If yes, how many? _____

c. What are their ages? _____

(6) Please indicate the highest level of education that you have completed

- high school
- college
- university (undergraduate)
- university (graduate degree)
- post graduate degree
- other _____

(7) If married or currently in a long term relationship, what is your partner's employment status?

- unemployed
- employed full-time
- employed part-time
- self-employed
- full-time homemaker
- other _____

(8) Please indicate your combined yearly family income (i.e. if married you and your spouse)

- 19,000 or under
- 20,000 - 29,000
- 30,000 - 39,000
- 40,000 - 49,000
- 50,000 - 59,000
- 60,000 - 69,000
- 70,000 or higher

(9) How long have you been employed for McMaster University?

(10) How long have you worked in a flextime arrangement?

(11) In which section of the library are you employed in?

APPENDIX E - SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

	Number (total 31)	%	Women	Men
<u>SEX</u>				
female	24	77	24	
male	7	23		7
<u>AGE</u>				
25 or under	0	0	--	--
26 - 30	1	3	1	--
31 - 35	5	16	5	--
36 - 40	6	19	5	1
41 - 45	5	16	3	2
46 - 55	10	32	8	2
56 +	4	13	2	2
<u>MARITAL STATUS</u>				
Single	5	16	2	3
Married/Long Term Relationship	25	81	21	4
Separated/Divorced	1	3	1	--
<u>EDUCATION (highest level completed)</u>				
High School	7	23	7	--
College/Technical School	9	29	6	3
University (undergraduate)	4	13	3	1
University (graduate)	8	26	6	2
Post Graduate Degree	3	10	2	1
<u>*INCOME</u>				
19,000 or less	--	--	--	--
20,000-29,000	3	10	1	2
30,000-39,000	3	10	2	1
40,000-49,000	4	13	4	--
50,000-59,000	6	19	5	1
60,000-69,000	1	3	1	--
70,000 or over	9	29	7	2
Refused to answer	5	16	4	1

*In the twenty-five cases of those who are married, income levels represent combined incomes of partners.

	Number (total 31)	%	Women	Men
<u>NUMBER OF YEARS EMPLOYED AT MCMASTER</u>				
less than 1 year	--	--	--	--
1 - 2	1	3	1	--
3 - 5	3	10	3	--
6 - 8	11	35	8	3
9 - 11	3	10	3	
12 - 14	1	3	1	
15 - 18	5	16	4	1
more than 18	7	23	4	3

*NUMBER OF CHILDREN AT HOME

no children or children over 18	19	61	14	5
1	6	19	6	0
2	5	16	3	2
3	1	3	1	0
more than 3	0	0	0	0

*These numbers are based on the 12 interviewees who had at least one child younger than 18 still living at home. The other 19 interviewees had either no children living at home or children who were living at home but who were 18 or older and therefore considered adults.

Department

ADDITIONAL HOURS TIME RECORD

WEEK STARTING	Day / Month / Year			Day / Month / Year			Day / Month / Year			Day / Month / Year				
	START	FINISH	Total hours and minutes actually worked	START	FINISH	Total hours and minutes actually worked	START	FINISH	Total hours and minutes actually worked	START	FINISH	Total hours and minutes actually worked		
All entries to be rounded to nearest 5 minutes														
			Hr. Min.			Hr. Min.			Hr. Min.			Hr. Min.		
Monday	AM													
	PM													
Tuesday	AM													
	PM													
Wednesday	AM													
	PM													
Thursday	AM													
	PM													
Friday	AM													
	PM													
Saturday	AM													
	PM													
Sunday	AM													
	PM													
Week 1 Total				Week 2 Total				Week 3 Total				Week 4 Total		
			Hr. Min.				Hr. Min.				Hr. Min.			

Balance Forward From Last Period (Indicate + or -)		
Total Hours Actually Worked (excluding pre-authorized overtime)	+	
*University Specified Holidays (H)	+	
*Vacation (V)	+	
*Sickness (S)	+	
*Approved Absences (A) (Jury duty, bereavement, etc.)	+	
University Business (off-campus) (B)	+	
Compensating Time Off (C) (from Box II)	+	
TOTAL		
Standard Four Week Requirement	-	
Balance Forward to Next Period (indicate + or -)		
*Use standard daily hours of work		
Balance Forward may not exceed the limits of (+) or (-) 10% of the standard four week requirement. A one-time pay deduction must be processed for time exceeding -10%. Time in excess of +10% is forfeited.		
ADDITIONAL HOURS SUMMARY		
	+/-	HOURS
Balance Forward From Last Period	+	
Overtime Hours Current Period	+	
Substitute Time Hours Current Period	+	
Compensating Hours Paid (submit one-time payment form)	-	
Compensating Time Off (add to Box I)	-	
Balance Forward		

APPENDIX F

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