

Managing work and child care responsibilities in the retail sector:

Informal relationships and their limits*

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Abstract

The ability of low-income parents to find and maintain child care is critical for their success in the labor market. Yet, a variety of factors may complicate a parent's efforts to secure adequate care, not the least of which is the demand a job puts on the arrangement itself. The current study reports preliminary findings from an on-going qualitative interview study of parents working in the retail sector and their child care providers. Specifically, I examine the job characteristics and workplace environments of employees in one particular industrial sector – retail – and consider approaches to work-child care management described by a sample of hourly (non-management) employees with children aged 5 and under.

Three primary research questions are addressed. First, from the perspective of work-family management, I consider the job characteristics that shape the child care needs of parents working across a range of lower-level jobs in the retail sector. Second, I consider workplace practices that offer employees with young children opportunities to meet work-family challenges. Finally, I explore the child care strategies that parents develop to respond to employment needs.

Preliminary findings suggest that despite variation in structural job dimensions across lower-level jobs, the issue of scheduling is central to employees' ability to manage work and child care responsibilities across different positions, occupations, and settings. Formal and informal workplace practices can operate to either exacerbate or minimize the challenges posed by scheduling, and employees report a variety of practices that allow them to exercise some control and flexibility over unpredictable and varying schedules which typically include nonstandard hours and days, multiple shifts, and fluctuating hours. An examination of the child care strategies of parents suggests that jobs in the retail sector may require care arrangements that tolerate fluctuations in use, that are available around-the-clock, that can be used at short notice, and that include support services beyond those conventionally provided by center care. To meet these requirements, working parents appear to rely on a patchwork of care arrangements and support services that are disproportionately informal in nature. The preliminary nature of the work reported herein notwithstanding, I close with some considerations for policy discussions around child care and employment.

Demographic, labor market, and social policy trends over the last several decades challenge traditional approaches to managing work and family life, especially practices around the care of children during working hours. The majority of women with children now work outside the home, and 75% of children under five years of age are in non-parental care arrangements while their parents are working (Cappizano, Adams, & Sonenstein, 2000). Simultaneous to these trends have been structural changes in the labor market resulting in a growing part-time and contingent workforce and greater reliance on non-standard work schedules – especially in female-dominated sectors (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 2001; Boushey, 2001; Presser & Cox, 1997; Blank, 1997; Tilly, 1996). These trends are particularly significant given the movement to a work-based system of public cash assistance, which has increased the pressures on welfare recipients to find employment in this changing low-wage labor market (Shields & Behrman, 2002; Fuller, Kagan, Caspary, & Gauthier, 2002).

The ability of low-income parents to find and maintain child care is critical for their successful attachment to the labor market. Yet a variety of factors may complicate a parent's efforts to secure adequate care, not the least of which is the demand a job puts on the child care arrangement itself. Existing research examining the relationship between child care and employment has contributed to our understanding of the influence of child care market characteristics, such as cost and availability, on both the mode of care chosen by working parents and their decisions to enter the labor market in the first place (e.g., Connelly & Kimmel, 1999; Kimmel, 1998; Blau & Robins, 1988; Presser & Baldwin, 1980). Related research has attempted to understand the extent to which the jobs that

parents (especially mothers) accept reflect labor market considerations or, rather, efforts to accommodate caregiving responsibilities (Presser and Cox, 1997; Presser, 1989, 1988). More recently, researchers interested in child care as a work support for low-income parents are exploring the work incentives induced by child care subsidy programs (see Blau and Tekin, 2001; Blau, 2002).

The findings from these studies contribute in important ways to our understanding of the work-child care nexus, but they are not designed to answer a range of proximal-level questions about the practices and strategies of families, providers, and employers, or about how the organizational context of a job influences decisions around caretaking (for exception, see Heymann, 2000, Dodson, Manuel, & Bravo, 2002)¹. Moreover, what I am characterizing as the child care “packaging” strategies of parents – that is, the ways in which parents garner supports from multiple resources such as employers, providers, formal government programs, and informal support networks, has been little explored.

The Study of Work-Child Care Fit (SWCCF), a qualitative interview study of retail employees with young children and their child care providers, was designed with the goal of improving our understanding of the employment- and child care-related factors that facilitate a goodness-of-fit between paid work and child care, and identifying specific policy and practice levers that have the potential to ease the work-child care challenges facing low-income working parents and employers alike. SWCCF is currently in progress, and in this paper initial findings from the field are reported. I provide a preliminary examination of the jobs represented in the study and consider various approaches to work-child care management described by a portion of the sample of non-

management employees with children aged 5 and under. Specifically, I address three primary research questions in this paper.

- First, from the perspective of work-family management, what are the key job characteristics that shape the child care needs of parents working across a range of lower-level jobs in the retail sector?
- Second, are there leverage points in the workplace that offer employees with young children opportunities to meet work-family challenges?
- Third, what kinds of child care strategies do parents actually use to respond to their unique employment situations?

Labor Market Context

Labor market changes over the last three decades have altered conditions for workers in important ways. Technological advancements, competitive pressures of globalization, the declining role of unions and the corresponding loss of worker protections, increasing demand for “24/7 services”, and shifting employer practices are among the most cited explanations for the evolving nature of work (Levy 1998; Blank 1997; Tilly 1996; Danziger and Gottschalk 1995; Freeman 1994). Whereas labor economists do not all concur about the relevance of the various explanations, there is considerable agreement that demand-side economic changes have indeed occurred, with real implications for workers’ economic prospects. Surveying the evidence on changes across a variety of job characteristics, Tilly (1997) concludes that:

Jobs have unambiguously become worse over the past two or three decades. Wages have fallen, and fringe benefits and due process have become less widely available. Small advances in family-friendly schedule flexibility have been overwhelmed by unwelcome schedule constraints imposed by employers. More frequent job changes and a shift from intra-firm to interfirm mobility represent new opportunities for some, but translate into less favourable wage trajectories for the average worker. The spread of high-performance work practices, finally, may hold the seeds of long-term improvements in job quality, but has not yet demonstrated that potential.” (p.273).

Such demand-side changes have most negatively affected the least-skilled and those in the lowest income brackets. Lower-level workers have seen steep wage declines, drops in employment rates, and have been most affected by deunionization and the relocation of firms from central cities to suburbs (Levy, 1998; Blank, 1997; Danziger and Gottschalk 1995). Moreover, low-skilled occupational sectors forecasting significant growth, especially those with high concentrations of female employees such as retail sales, food service, cashiers, household service, and health care aides, are not only concentrated in the lowest pay quartile, but are also typically part-time, require nonstandard (evening and weekend) hours and shifts, and carry a high risk of unemployment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002-2003; Burtless, 2000; Presser & Cox, 1997). Not surprisingly, welfare recipients, who are disproportionately female and lower-skilled (Burtless, 2000), also disproportionately work in these low-wage, nonstandard hour occupations (Boushey, 2001; Loprest, 1999; Lambert, 1999; Harris 1996).

Work-Family Context

Much of the concern about post-70s labor market trends has been centered on the declining economic prospects of lower-skilled workers (Levy, 1998; Blank, 1997; Danziger & Gottschalk, 1995; Carnevale & Rose, 2001; Pavetti & Acs, 2002; Burtless, 2000; Cancian & Mayer, 1998). But, in addition to their limited economic prospects, lower-level jobs pose particular challenges for the management of work and family responsibilities, especially the care of children (Lambert, 1999; Heymann, 2000). Of concern are not only low earnings and employers' infrequent use of "family benefits" such as child care and flex-time for their lower-level employees, but also employer practices, such as scheduling and informal workplace supports and their implications for

a range of outcomes such as work-family balance, role strain, marital interactions, and child well-being (e.g., Presser & Cox, 1997; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000; Emlen, 1997; Hopkins, 1997; Warren & Johnson, 1995; Parker, 1994; Crouter & Mehnke, 1994; Ferber & O'Farrell, 1991; Menaghan & Parcel, 1990; MacDermid, Williams, Marks, & Heilbrun, 1994). Somewhat surprisingly, while there is a great deal of research exploring the relationship between workplace factors and a range of psychological variables, there has been relatively less attention to outcomes related to actual family practices, especially the organization and management of child care during working hours. Below, I review some of the literature on scheduling and workplace supports in order to provide a rationale for why these workplace factors might be important to understanding working mothers' child care strategies.

What do the work schedules of lower-level workers look like? Research on work schedules has documented an increased prevalence of employment during nonstandard hours (evening, night, and rotating shifts) and nonstandard days (weekends), especially among low-income populations. Analyzing national Current Population Survey (CPS) data, Presser has documented in a series of studies that unmarried women, women with preschool children, women with more than one child, and part-time workers are disproportionately more likely than their counterparts to work evening, weekend, and variable hours (Presser & Cox, 1997; Presseer, 1986). Overall, about one-fourth of employed mothers with a high school education or less work some type of nonstandard schedule, and the percentage increases for service occupations such as cashiers, health aides, janitors/cleaners and food service workers, as well as for assemblers and machine operators (see Presser & Cox, 1997). Given the significant growth projections for lower-

skilled service sectors (BLS, 2002-3) coupled with the increased pressures on low-income mothers to enter the labor market, it is reasonable to expect the prevalence of nonstandard schedules to continue to increase.

Nonstandard schedules can allow parents to organize child care with limited involvement of non-parental caregivers, and as a result may be preferred by some parents. Indeed, between one-fourth and one-third of employed women with young children who work nonstandard shifts report that they work the schedule they do for child care-related reasons (Presser & Cox, 1997; Presser, 1991). Presser and Cox's (1997) analysis of a nationally representative sample of women aged 18-34 with a high-school education or less, finds that parents with children under five years of age and married parents with children under 14 disproportionately report working nonstandard shifts because of children. Two parent working couples, in particular, may voluntarily work different shifts as a child caring strategy – to create shared-parenting environments and to avoid or minimize non-parental care arrangements (Presser, 1986; Presser, 1988; Garey, 1995; 1999). Garey (1995) finds that in addition to the practical advantages of non-overlapping shifts, night shift work by married mothers can also be a strategy that “preserves the dominant cultural ideal of a ‘traditional’ family form in which the mother is at home during the day”(417). However, dual-earner couples who share child care duties often continue to need secondary arrangements when work hours overlap; and the extent to which the child care arrangements of dual-earner couples are minimized or exacerbated by the presence of nonstandard work schedules is unknown (Presser, 1988). Moreover, there is mounting evidence that nonstandard parental work schedules have

negative implications for children's well-being (e.g., Heymann & Earle, 2001; Dodson, et al., 2002).

Although some parents choose nonstandard shifts to accommodate child care responsibilities, Presser and Cox (1997) demonstrate that almost half of 18-34 year old mothers with a high school degree or less work nonstandard shifts for job-related rather than child care-related reasons. In particular, low-skilled unmarried parents with children under 14 report working a nonstandard shift because it is a requirement of the job (43.6%), because they cannot find another job (8.0%), or because the pay is better (5.2%). The fact that most mothers working nonstandard days and hours “view their employment during nonstandard hours primarily as an accommodation to labor market needs, and not as a personal preference” (p.29, Presser & Cox, 1997), suggests the importance of understanding the demands that involuntary work schedules place on parents' child care responsibilities, and the adequacy of the formal and informal child care systems that have responded to these workers' schedules (see also, Heymann, 2000). The current study, thus, considers the relevance of scheduling for understanding mothers' child care strategies.

In addition to scheduling, work-family scholars have also examined informal relationships at work and their relevance for work-family issues. Just as working parents can receive a myriad of supports from their social relationships outside of work – for example, the provision of child care from family, friends, and neighbors, transportation to and from work (Dodson, et al., 2002; Henly & Lyons, 2000), work-based relationships can also afford workers particular supports that reduce role strains and psychological stress, and that may facilitate work-family management (Warren & Johnson, 1995;

Greenberger, Goldberg, Hamill, O'Neil, & Payne, 1989; Fernandez, 1985; Galinsky & Stein, 1990). Supervisors, in particular, are “critical to humanizing organizations, responding to employees’ work and family dilemmas, and facilitating workers’ use of family support policies and programs” (p.1218, Hopkins, 1997). Kamerman & Kahn (1987) further suggest that supports that are informally obtained through supervisors may in some instances operate in lieu of formal family-responsive policies in some workplaces. Several studies have demonstrated the importance of supervisor support, especially sensitivity and flexibility of the supervisor around employees’ family responsibilities, to various measures of mothers’ and fathers’ well-being (Warren & Johnson, 1995; Hughes & Galinsky, 1988; Greenberger, et al., 1989; Kamerman & Kahn, 1987). Of particular relevance are Warren and Johnson’s (1995) findings that supervisor practices (e.g., flexibility) may be more relevant than supervisor attitudes (e.g., sensitivity) for reducing work-family role strain in a sample of working parents of preschoolers. Specifically, Warren and Johnson report that reductions in work-family role strain are significantly related to supervisor flexibility around such things as work scheduling, employee tardiness and early shift ending, telephone use, and days off. These findings speak to the importance of measuring actual employer practices as well as attitudes. By extension, the Warren and Johnson study also suggests that it might be fruitful to extend the analysis of *practices* to the dependent variable – that is, by examining not just the strain that workers experience but their particular efforts at managing and organizing child care as a function of various workplace practices.

In the current study, I examine how employer practices shape child care needs, and the child care strategies developed by a sample of low-income mothers in the retail sector

to respond to their workplace environment. In addition to contributing to a better understanding of how employer practices influence employees' child care practices, my examination of a low-income sample also contributes to a growing body of work-family research that is focused on the experiences of non-middle class populations. As Perry-Jenkins & Gillman (2000) note, "Much of what is known about how work conditions affect parents and children is based upon middle-class, two-parent families. Little information is available on how parents, with fewer financial resources and in less upwardly mobile occupations than their dual-career counterparts, experience the work-family interface" (p124).

Study Methods and Sample

The SWCCF is a qualitative interview study of hourly non-management retail employees and their primary child care providers. Although the total sample includes interview data from 51 employees, this paper reports preliminary findings from a subsample of employees and child care providers. All retail employees are mothers of children aged 5 or younger selected from 6 Chicago-based retail sites that participated in a linked study of firms, entitled the *Study of Organizational Stratification* (SOS). Rather than studying employees, the unit of analysis for SOS is the job itself, specifically lower-level jobs housed in firms across four industrial sectors – retail, hospitality, shipping/transportation, and financial services. For SWCCF, we recruited employees from all but one of the 7 retail sites studied in SOS².

A qualitative methodological approach has been chosen for several reasons. First, this study is driven by a set of conceptual research questions and working hypotheses; however, the paucity of research on work-child care fit limits our ability to develop

operational hypotheses at the level of specificity necessary for standard quantitative methods of inquiry (see Gilgun, 1992). Moreover, qualitative approaches are particularly suited to the types of research questions being explored. According to Emerson (1983), qualitative interviews are useful for understanding informal practices and strategies relevant to people's daily lives and for exploring the contextual considerations and subjective meanings that informants bring to their experiences. This is precisely the level of understanding sought in the current study.

The Employee Sample. The sampling strategy of SWCCF began with on-site workplace recruitment of interested non-management hourly employees via a self-administered screening tool that included the necessary information to determine study eligibility (mother of child 5 years of age or younger, female, English or Spanish proficiency, and employment in an hourly, non-management retail job), as well as more detailed demographic, job, and child care items to guide the selection of the employee sample. Recruitment took place at each of 6 workplaces throughout daytime, evening, and overnight shifts. From a sampling frame of 218, a target sample of 8-10 employees from each site was purposively selected to maximize heterogeneity across occupation, job characteristics and child care type. We included a few mothers in the sample who did not depend on non-parental care arrangements but instead reported sharing care with a spouse. In these instances, the mother is interviewed and no child care provider interview is conducted.

51 employees are included in the final sample. They work in five primary occupational categories within retail – manual (16), customer service/clerical (7), cashier (12), and sales (14) (with 2 in other miscellaneous occupations). Hourly wages range

from \$7 and \$14. Wages vary by occupation and firm as well as seniority of the employee. Although all jobs are above the minimum wage, the majority represented in the sample are part-time and/or subject to frequent hour reductions. Respondents typically used more than one child care arrangement; however the majority reported one primary provider. Primary arrangements included 16 centers/preschools, 11 family child care homes, and 24 informal “kith and kin” arrangements.

Data collection involved semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on three main topical areas: child care, work, and informal support. Child care information includes information about the types and range of arrangements used, monetary and nonmonetary payment schedules, the ways in which arrangements are orchestrated and managed, and the types of supports received from child care providers. Comparative information was also gathered about past, current, and ideal child care arrangements. Job information includes information about job history within and outside of firm, job characteristics (wages, benefits, hours), employer practices around scheduling and organizing work tasks, and workplace relationships and supports including supervisor and coworker supports and conflicts. Finally, informal support network information was gathered using Kahn & Antonucci’s (1984) Hierarchical Mapping Technique. Data were gathered about the relationship of each individual to the participant, the types of work-family supports both provided and received in four areas (informational, emotional, instrumental, and financial), the perceived reciprocity of exchanges, and sources of conflict in relationships. In most cases, the data were collected in two separate sessions, about 1.5 – 2 hours each. Interviews took place either in participants’ homes or at a convenient location other than the workplace. Interviews were tape-recorded and

transcribed, and employee participants were compensated \$35. In addition to the transcript, an extensive analysis memo was written by the interviewer/s after the completion of each interview.

The Child Care Provider Sample. Efforts were made to recruit the primary child care provider (of the youngest child) of each employee participant into the provider sample. For employees without a regular child care provider, those individuals most often responsible for the child while the parent works is considered the provider. 31 providers (about 60% of the employee sample) are included in the final provider sample. Reflecting the child care used by the employee sample, the provider sample includes family, friend, and neighbor caregivers (i.e., “kith and kin” care), licensed and unlicensed family child care providers, and center/preschool teachers. Providers vary by licensure status, although most non-center/non-school providers in the sample are unlicensed. Non-participation among providers occurred for the following reasons: refusal by employee to give provider’s contact information, refusal by the provider to participate, unsuccessful efforts of researcher to contact, schedule, or follow-through with a scheduled interview, or employee reported no non-parental caregivers.

Each provider participates in one structured phone questionnaire, approximately 15 minutes in length, that establishes basic characteristics of the care arrangements offered. This phone interview is followed by an in-person semi-structured, in-depth interview, about 2 hours in length, which focuses on the supports providers offer parents beyond the direct care of children, the parent-provider relationship, the provider’s professional orientation toward her work, and the providers involvement in the work lives of parents whose children are in her care. Interviews with providers are tape-recorded and

transcribed, and providers are compensated \$25. As with the employee interviews, the interviewers write an analysis memo upon completion of each provider interview.

Data Analysis

Findings reported herein are preliminary and reflect a first-round analysis of a subset of field and interview memos, transcripts, and recruitment screeners. Given the preliminary nature of the analysis, the examples are not selected as representative of a certain percentage of cases unless specifically noted, nor have findings been systematically compared across potentially relevant job-related categories (e.g., occupation, work setting) or person-centered categories (e.g., race/ethnicity, family structure, children's age).

Although the use of the data for this working paper is primarily illustrative, future reports will be based on a complete analysis of the data. Specifically, I am employing an analysis strategy that combines aspects of modified analytic induction (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Gilgun, 1992) and the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2000). Analytic induction approaches are well-suited to structured qualitative designs, such as the current one, in which a priori conceptual questions guide the data collection and analysis (Gilgun, 1992). The “fit” of the early hypotheses are tested with each case until all cases have been subject to the preliminary hypotheses, and efforts to account for inconsistencies are made, for example by modifying hypotheses and testing all data once again for their fit. The constant comparative method is designed for projects with multiple sources of data and is a technique for analyzing diversity in responses to similar themes across data sources (Charmaz, 2000).

Preliminary Findings

Job Characteristics: The Importance of Scheduling

The first research question is concerned with identifying the job characteristics that appear to shape the child care choices of retail employees across a range of different job types. From the outset, it is important to emphasize that the wages paid by most of these jobs and the overall earnings of participants represent important economic constraints that can limit child care options. Moreover, none of the total sample of participants (n=51) reported that their jobs included employer-sponsored child care benefits. Several participants did report having access to child care subsidies that reduced the economic burden of child care, thereby lessening somewhat the impact of low-wages and earnings on the child care options of these employees³.

Scheduling proves to be one of the most critical aspects of work for parents in the retail sector. The various schedules described by Callie, an African American mother in her early 20s who worked for more than two years as a sales associate in a large building supply store, serves as a useful example.⁴ Callie is a full time employee whose schedule had recently switched from one that included quite variable, unpredictable shifts to one with a regular 6:00am to 3:00pm shift, Tuesdays through Saturdays. Indeed, two regular days off, the same shift daily, and non-fluctuating hours was a quite unusual schedule for the sample as a whole. With her new 6:00am to 3:00pm schedule, Callie routinely dropped her 20 month old daughter at her child care provider's home (a licensed family child care arrangement) by 5:30am and picked her up around 3:30pm. Because Callie and the provider had become friends, she and her daughter often stayed at the provider's home throughout the afternoon, sometimes staying for dinner. The benefits of this

schedule were evident when Callie contrasted it to her previous schedule at the same store:

C: “Yeah, well, before they gave me the 6:00 to 3:00, I was working like 3:00 to 12:00, 10:00 to 7:00. So it varied. Any ah...one week, it was like I didn’t even get to see her [Callie’s daughter] like for the whole week cause I was like going right back to work. I was doing like a lot of overtime. So my mama, she’ll go over there [to the provider’s] and pick her up, and then bring her home. And she’ll have her until I get home. So...”

[Callie then goes into a short discussion of her reliance on her provider for extra child care hours when she is in need of running errands such as grocery shopping. Callie then returns to the difficulties of scheduling, as follows:]

IW: “What’s your typical day like when that, when your day ...varies from beginning to end?”

C: “Ooh! Hectic! Ah, say one night I might close three to twelve. So I’ll get home at about 12:30, 1:00. Brandy [daughter] already asleep in the bed. I might have to be at work at 8:00. [I: “uh huh.”] “So it’s like I’m getting up, right back up at 6:00. So I’m just getting myself ready. I pick her up, put her in the car seat, we off to the baby-sitter again!”

Callie’s previous work schedule required a significant coordination of efforts between herself, her child care provider, and several social network members. Callie’s mother not only helped out with transportation to and from the child care arrangement, but had paid the provider when Callie was unable to, and also provided care directly to Callie’s daughter from time to time. Callie also described one of her aunts and her daughter’s godfather (who is a coworker she met while working at the store) as providing occasional child care and other supports. Callie was not unusual in her use of a range of informal caregivers to supplement her family child care home. Indeed, SWCCF data suggest that work schedules are felt by a web of individuals, who can be critical to the maintenance of work in these lower-level jobs.

As the case of Callie illustrates, fluctuating hours, nonstandard days and hours, coverage across multiple shifts, and unpredictable shifts characterize the schedules of many of the participants. Although a subset of respondents report regular, predictable daytime schedules with hours that do not fluctuate from week to week, the norm in the retail environments studied was otherwise. Both full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) employees reported that the number of hours they worked fluctuated from week to week, and a minimum number of hours were seldom guaranteed, especially for PT workers. This fluctuation in hours corresponded, of course, to fluctuating earnings and to variable child care needs that were difficult to foresee.

In addition, the schedules of most participants included hours outside of traditional 8:30am to 5pm periods. In particular, evening and weekend hours were common and day shifts that either began earlier than 8:30 or ended after 5pm were typical, especially for daytime workers in distribution centers and in stores with nontraditional hours. For example, Callie's now regular 6:00am to 3:00pm shift in a large building supply store was comparable to the shift of an order filler at one of the distribution centers who worked Monday through Thursday from 5:00am to 3:30pm. Day shifts such as these, that start earlier (or end later) than traditional day shifts can pose particular complications because they overlap with early morning (or dinnertime) family routines and begin prior to (or end later than) many child care programs and schools.

Coverage across multiple shifts was also common in the SWCCF sample. Callie's previous scheduling experiences served to illustrate the ordinary experience of "shifting shifts" throughout the week. It was not atypical for a respondent to report that her prior week's schedule included more than one shift, perhaps a weekend day shift, an evening

closing shift, followed by a morning opening shift the next day. Deborah, an employee at another retail store, reported that the stress of working back-to-back shifts fell not just on her, but also on her family members and her children. She reported that coverage across multiple shifts was the primary reason she had recently quit her job as a cashier and accepted a job with a predictable, single daily shift in hotel housekeeping. She states that “it was just hard working at [store name] because sometimes on those mornings when I had to be getting up at 5, I would have had to close the night before.” Closing shifts did not match the hours of operation of the day care center that Deborah’s children attended. When she closed the store at night, Deborah’s mom would pick the children up from the center, feed them dinner, and then later in the evening her twin sister who lived next door to Deborah would take the children back to her apartment on the bus. Around midnight after closing the store, Deborah would pick the children up from her sister’s apartment and take them home. Deborah states, “By the time I laid down, I had to get right back up to get them ready for school and go to work. I was barely getting any sleep.” In addition, Deborah reported that her oldest child frequently complained about not seeing her enough.⁵

A related but different characteristic of schedules concerns their predictability. Employees at all but one of the 6 sites reported schedule lead times of one week or less. Although some employees in each of these sites could count on a similar schedule each week, others faced quite variable schedules posing challenges to arranging child care and planning around other family responsibilities. Just as Callie stressed the importance of securing a predictable 6 to 3 schedule at the retail store where she worked, Deborah contrasted the benefits of her current predictable schedule in hotel housekeeping with her

previous retail cashier job that had varied on a week-to-week basis. The one site where there was a longer lead time for scheduling determined schedules on a three-week cycle. This permitted employees to plan for child care and other family responsibilities more deliberately. Still, three week cycles required frequent changes to arrangements that could involve significant investments in time and energy and a patchwork of arrangements that were sometimes insecure.

Levers of Opportunity in the Workplace for Meeting Work-Child Care Challenges

Given the complexity of scheduling for study participants, it is not surprising that respondents reported limited job flexibility, and that scheduling was often described as a process largely outside of the respondent's control. Still, preliminary results suggest a variety of ways in which participants attempted to exert control over their jobs and points of flexibility and control within the workplace that helped meet work-child care challenges.⁶

Claiming Availability. One formal mechanism by which some employees could exercise control is the workplace practice of allowing (especially PT) employees to specify preferred shifts and to refuse other shifts. Several respondents reported requesting days or shifts off to accommodate appointments and when practiced infrequently, such requests seem to be accommodated (if notice was given prior to the schedule having been determined). Other respondents reported requesting particular shifts and not others on a regular basis in order to accommodate a second job or a partner's job, or so that they could be home with their children during certain hours. There are several examples of evening and overnight employees who reported that evening and overnight shifts allow them to minimize the hours their children spent in non-parental care, and that evening

and night shifts were requested for this reason. Thus, claiming shift availability could give employees the flexibility to arrange work schedules around other jobs and/or around family roles and responsibilities.

Notwithstanding the opportunity that some employees had to claim availability, employers nevertheless also wanted flexibility and routinely underscored the importance of hiring employees with open availability. In one of our recruitment sites, a large sign was posted at each store entrance that read “Now Hiring Part-Time Associates, Flexibility in Hours Required”. The Human Resources employer interviewed at this site reported open availability as an important “job qualification” and evening and weekend work was required for part- and full-time employees. Thus, despite the potential benefits of policies that permitted employees to claim preferred hours and shifts, employees in these stores may still realize a premium if they claim wide availability and a penalty for too narrowly asserting shift preferences – showing itself in reduced hours and sometimes other reprimands.

Changing Positions. Our data also suggest that some employees actively sought certain positions in the firm that were believed to be more conducive to their family responsibilities. Some respondents reported actively pursuing a position change (e.g., moving from cashier to customer service, or cashier to sales) because either the schedules of the desired job or the organization of work tasks was deemed more suitable to managing family responsibilities. In general, cashier jobs were regarded negatively because they offered the least control over scheduling and over break time and phone usage. Indeed, control over when to take a break and when to use the phone were mentioned as important to many participants, who routinely checked on their children

during the work day. Although sales jobs seemed to require the widest bands of availability (respondents in sales were most likely to work a range of different shifts throughout the week), sales positions did provide a degree of autonomy not afforded employees in other positions. Sales associates sometimes had the authority to arrange break time amongst themselves, and many associates reported carrying cell phones on the floor, a practice that was discouraged by employers but seemed relatively easy to do nonetheless. Finally, several respondents turned down offers to advance into hourly supervisory positions because the long hours and limited flexibility were viewed as challenges to family responsibilities that were not sufficiently compensated by the minimal wage and status gains of these jobs (see Waxman & Lambert, 2003)⁷.

Informal workplace arrangements. Dynamics of the workplace environment can buffer the impact of nonstandard, unpredictable, and irregular formal scheduling practices as well. In particular, informal supports in the workplace appear to be critical determinants of workplace flexibility and control for the SWCCF sample. For example, good supervisory relationships acted as a buffer to harsh scheduling practices and other challenges imposed by jobs. Some participants described very trusting and respectful relationships with supervisors, friendships with supervisors, and supervisors who had an understanding of family roles and responsibilities, perhaps because they had “been through it before” as working parents. These kinds of relationships were credited with creating workplace atmospheres in which employees were able to secure preferred shifts, have tardiness excused, and so on. It was not uncommon, for example, for participants to talk about a supervisor who “cut employees slack” when they were late due to a child-related problem, or when they called off of work because of sick children and other

family emergencies. Other respondents reported that once a schedule was set, some supervisors made it relatively easy to swap shifts with coworkers, and some employees did so routinely in an effort to exert more control over their work schedules. In rare occasions, respondents reported that supervisors had customized their schedule's start and end times to accommodate a regular family or child-related obligation. Overall, the findings suggest that these kinds of informal practices may be quite important levers of flexibility that facilitate work-child care fit.

In addition to supports secured through supervisory relationships, participants reported that coworker relationships often eased work-child care conflicts. Coworkers engaged in shift-swapping, they completed unfinished work enabling parents to leave shifts on-time or early, and they sometimes covered up child-related disruptions at work when they did occur. Coworker support could also extend to the families of employees. For example, in one site, three employees had started a child care cooperative whereby they watched each others children during non-overlapping employment shifts.

Despite the apparent importance of workplace relationships in the sample, such relationship-mediated benefits were not guaranteed and reliance on social relationships for workplace benefits presented non-negligible risks and obligations to employees. For example, there is some evidence that relying on the discretion of supervisors over formal policy may have resulted in workplaces that tolerated unequal treatment of employees and contributed to negative coworker interactions. Indeed, the setting where informal practices seemed most at play was also rife with concerns about favoritism around scheduling and unethical promotion practices. This worksite also seemed to have the most examples of coworker ill will toward one another and toward the firm as a whole.

Another limit to supervisor-mediated supports is a function of the limited power of the supervisor in the firms studied in SWCCF. Supervisors were typically hourly employees with relatively low status in the organization, and respondents frequently reported having more than one supervisor for different domains of their work. These hourly supervisors sometimes acted generously toward respondents but their actions ultimately proved meaningless or, in at least one case, resulted in the respondent being reprimanded by higher-level management. Finally, when close relationships did develop with supervisors, some respondents reported that their behavior was scrutinized more closely and knowledge about “personal business” could be misused. In one such case, a respondent reported supervisory pressure to accept extra shifts because the supervisor had close knowledge of her schedule outside of work and her mother’s availability for child care.

Thus, small levers of control and flexibility in the workplace may be important to employees facing otherwise unpredictable, irregular schedules. But there are disadvantages to these practices as well, which lead me to question their significance as a counterweight to the instabilities created by formal job characteristics. Overall, however, it is sources outside of the workplace that support parents in their efforts to manage their work and family lives. It is to these sources that I now turn.

The Child Care Strategies of Retail Employees

An examination of the child care strategies of parents suggests that jobs in the retail sector may require care arrangements that are available around-the-clock, that tolerate fluctuations in use, that can be mobilized at short notice, and that include support services beyond those conventionally provided by center care (in particular, transportation and sick child care). To meet these requirements, many working parents engaged in child care

“packaging” strategies that involve a patchwork of care arrangements and support services that were disproportionately informal in nature. Even full-time center and family day care users, described informal network members engaging in a range of activities that allowed respondents to maintain their jobs in the retail sector.

Open Availability. By requiring employees to have open availability, employers were also putting requirements on providers to be similarly flexible in their scheduling. As the earlier examples of Callie and Deborah illustrated, child care arrangements across a large window of time were often necessary to accommodate employees working multiple shifts throughout the week or whose shifts started or ended early or late in the day. Parents found flexibility in child care arrangements either by using a variety of different providers to cover different shifts (some parents reported using up to 4 different kinds of regular child care arrangements throughout a typical work week). In only a few cases, flexibility requirements were filled by single caregivers who cared for children at all hours of the day and evening. Such 24 hour flexibility appeared to be more common with grandmother care arrangements; however, several grandmothers in the sample had work and family obligations of their own that precluded such wide availability (see also Presser, 1989).

Fluctuating schedules. Respondents report a variety of child care responses to fluctuating work hours. Whereas some parents chose to keep children home when work hours were reduced, others spoke of educational as well as custodial reasons for using the care, and felt it was important that their children continue to attend child care programs even when jobs did not require it.⁸ Formal center and family child care arrangements typically cost the same whether or not employees in the SWCCF sample used the allotted

hours, although some family child care providers did adjust payments for days when children were not in attendance.

Compared to informal kith and kin arrangements, formal care arrangements appeared less able to accommodate increases in demand for care. That is, when employees' schedules required them to work more hours than usual, centers in particular seldom offered expanded hours (especially in the evening) and typically charged late fees to parents who retrieved children after the agreed upon hours of care. The use of relative care, on the other hand, did seem to fluctuate more systematically with expanded work hours, perhaps because it was the only option left available to parents when hours increased. Indeed, during especially busy seasons of the year, some respondents reported bringing their children to a relative provider's house to stay for several days at a time. In this way, child care arrangements become living arrangements for children so that parents could accommodate their work schedules.

Responsiveness to Unpredictable Schedules. Parents reported needing providers who had the ability to work at the last minute, given work schedules that varied from week-to-week with little advance notice. This appeared to be one of the most difficult aspects of finding care and sometimes resulted in failure to find coverage at all. For example, Sherise reported that although she frequently worked Saturdays and Sundays, she was not told of her specific schedule until the Thursday prior to the upcoming weekend. This gave her two or three days to find care, and she relied on a range of providers, sometimes unsuccessfully. When asked who took care of her son on weekends, Sherise stated:

S: My cousin, she, she, she's here either her or my sister, someday, some um like every other weekend my mother's out, and she'll take care she'll watch him for . . .

IW: So it sort of varies from weekend to weekend, is that what you're saying?

S: Yeah, yeah.

IW: Has that ever been a problem for you with the weekend work, do you ever not have someone to take care of him?

S: Yeah, sometimes cause you know people they want to go and do stuff themselves and usually they don't want to watch him for me, so at times I have to call off [of work] because I have no one to watch him for me.

Provider Support Services. Providers sometimes offered a range of support services to parents, including transportation, sick care, and flexible fee schedules. In addition to these aspects of child care arrangements that responded directly to parents' work schedules and job demands, providers sometimes supported parents in other, less tangible ways. These supports could include emotional and personal support around work such as advising about job complications, problems with supervisors and coworkers, or just lending an ear to listen to parents' job complaints and experiences. Some providers reported giving parents advice about appropriate demeanor and dress for work and several providers talked about lending an ear and providing space for parents to unwind at the end of a workday.

Overall, informal providers, especially relative caregivers, appear to be best able to respond to the child care requirements of SWCCF employees. Relative caregivers frequently cared for children at odd hours including early mornings, evenings, overnights, and weekends, provided transportation services to children, and were also used by employees to patch together other more formal week-day arrangements with centers and family child care programs. Relative caregivers were also able to provide the kinds of family care and daily rituals and routines – eating breakfast, getting ready for bed – that

more formal providers did not offer. Some employees also reported preferring that relatives offer this kind of intimate care when they were unable to carry out these routines themselves.

Family child care providers – providers caring for groups of non-relative children in the provider’s home – appeared to set more limits on the kinds of extended and flexible hours they were willing to offer parents. While some providers certainly reported opening their doors to children early in the morning for a parent’s early shift or keeping children from time to time in the evening, most of these providers talked about their struggle to maintain some kind of boundary between their child care business and their personal, family life. This resulted in strict policies around pick up time, late fees, etc. Moreover, the state sets legal limits on the number of hours a child can be in the care of a child care provider who does not have custody of the child. Despite these rules and contracts that family child care providers implemented, most providers reported developing close relationships with some families in their care and offering these families extended hours, flexible fee payments, and even transportation at times. Indeed, the family child care provider used by Callie, the respondent described at the outset of the paper, had become a close, intimate friend of Callie’s, and Callie described her as a surrogate mother to her daughter.

Center-based teachers appear to be least positioned to respond to the work demands and schedules of employees in the SWCCF sample. Teachers were often constrained in the kinds of help they could extend to families by center policies. Center hours, for example, were set by the director or owner of the center and were not left to the discretion of individual teachers. Many centers offered early morning drop off, but none

of the centers in our sample offered evening pick up past 6 pm. Teachers described policies that required them to take children to the police station if their parents were more than one half hour late for pick up. Most centers did not offer transportation of any kind and individual teachers cited liability issues when explaining why they did not give a parent or child a ride home. Moreover, centers often had strict sick child policies which required parents to keep their children home when ill.

Complications with Work-Child Care Strategies

Informal caregivers may be best able to accommodate the job characteristics discussed above; however, several complications were reported with heavy reliance on informal care arrangements. First, informal caregivers offered child care as a support to parents but it was typical for informal caregivers to hold second jobs and to have family responsibilities of their own (see also, Presser, 1989; Henly & Lyons, 2000). Second jobs constrained providers' ability to offer flexible hours to parents, and providers holding second jobs appeared to set more limits on the kinds of supports they offer.

Second, informal caregivers who had particularly wide availability and offered care "around the clock" sometimes suffered from caregiver burden and stress. This was especially noticeable in our sample for caregivers who were elderly and experiencing health problems. Caregiver burden was also evident with some informal caregivers who were offering care in addition to holding other jobs. For example, one of the employees, Karen, relied heavily on her mother to care for her 18 month old daughter while she worked days at a department store. Karen's mother spent much of the time with her granddaughter watching television and napping because she worked five nights a week, from 5:00pm to 1:00am, at a group home for HIV-infected adults. She was noticeably

tired and worn, and was supporting her daughter's efforts to find a center care arrangement. Karen's mother reported that while she would still be responsible for transporting her granddaughter to the center and providing weekend care, she would no longer have the almost daily responsibility of caring for the toddler throughout the day if center care was located.⁹

Third, preliminary findings suggest that reliance on close family and friends for extensive caregiving could have negative implications on the relationship itself. Parents sometimes reported being concerned about "burning bridges" with family members or not being able to count on family members to be reliable or care for children in the manner they would like. For example, Delores, who worked late on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings, arranged for a different relative to pick up the child from her center arrangement each of these evenings and then watch her child until she returned home from work. Delores reported not feeling comfortable asking any one of these relatives to provide care for all three nights, and that the care was quite unreliable. Delores frequently had to remind relatives it was their night to pick up and care for her child, and even then the relative did not always follow through, resulting in her being late for work or calling off her shift completely. Thus, despite the apparent greater availability of kith and kin care (as compared to formal options), this care was not necessarily reliable; nor did it appear to always be in the best interests of employed mothers to enlist the support of informal kith and kin providers.

Moreover, informal providers and family child care providers sometimes reported difficulties setting limits on their caregiving and expressed concerns about being taken advantage of by parents, especially around reimbursement for child care services.

Providers frequently talked about their willingness to accept late payments from parents, while at the same time reporting that such flexibility could exacerbate their own precarious economic situations and result ultimately in the provision of free care. Jonna, a licensed family child care provider, for example, reported that she allowed parents to get behind on child care payments, but that "...it hasn't necessarily been the um..., the best thing for me". She continues,

"... because I have a commitment to the child, even to my detriment, I'll try to work out money related things... And I have had some negative things happen with money. I had 2 sisters and their mom and I allowed her to get 2 months behind and then, she didn't show up anymore. She took them out and never called, owing me about \$400...And I know that she was going through a really tough time and I tried to be supportive and helpful, but at some point you're gonna have to do what you said and what the commitment is. Uh, and instead of that, she, and a lot of young parents will do that. And you really have to be careful."¹⁰

Conclusion

This paper reports preliminary findings regarding the job characteristics and child care strategies of a sample of retail employees with young children. In this initial working paper, my goal has been to first describe the aspects of respondents' jobs that seem most critical to understanding the fit of these jobs with family responsibilities (especially around the care of children) and second to explore both workplace-related and child care-related responses to these job characteristics. Preliminary findings suggest that despite variation in structural job dimensions across lower-level jobs, the issue of scheduling is central to employees' ability to manage work and child care responsibilities across different positions, occupations, and settings. Formal and informal workplace practices can operate to either exacerbate or minimize the challenges posed by scheduling, and employees reported a variety of workplace practices that allowed them to exercise some control and flexibility over unpredictable and varying schedules which

typically included nonstandard hours and days, multiple shifts, and fluctuating hours. Still, many employers reported little control over their work schedules. Indeed, the findings about scheduling practices seem quite consistent with some of those reported in Garey's (1999) case study of hospital workers. Especially for involuntary part-time workers, Gary argues that employers exploit the economic insecurities of low-skilled involuntary part-time workers. She writes, "Time is what they [involuntary part-time workers] have to sell, and the hospital takes advantage of their need not only by controlling their actual hours of labor but also by claiming access to all potential hours of labor." Indeed, an analysis of the child care arrangements of respondents in our study suggests that the responsibilities of absorbing scheduling challenges falls largely on employees, their child care providers and informal networks of family support, and much less on employers themselves.

To meet job requirements, working mothers in SWCCF appear to engage in child care "packaging" strategies, by assembling a patchwork of care arrangements and support services to accommodate work demands. Although family child care and center/preschool arrangements are represented in our sample, informal networks of support – especially close relatives of the employees – are critical to the work-child care management strategies of parents whether or not formal child care programs are utilized. Indeed, the informal networks of respondents are engaged in providing child care proper, in transporting children to and from arrangements, and in serving surrogate parenting roles. Overall, the management strategies that parents develop are complicated and contingent on the follow through of multiple actors who are themselves frequently facing

economic difficulties and multiple role demands (see also Dodson, Manuel, & Bravo, 2002; Henly & Lyons, 2000; and Edin & Lein, 1997 for related arguments).

The findings reported herein are preliminary and not based on a full analysis of transcripts and field memos. Thus, all findings should be interpreted with particular caution until they can be confirmed through additional analyses of the complete set of interview data. Whereas the results presented herein were largely descriptive, these findings and future analyses are being used to conceptualize and propose hypotheses regarding: 1) the processes by which job characteristics influence child care packaging strategies and the relevance of occupation, firm, and setting for the work-child care relationship; 2) why and how family structure and social support systems (within and outside of work) operate to support as well as hinder work-child care fit; 3) how the type and level of support offered by providers is influenced by provider-level factors such as provider professionalism, provider motivations, her/his socio-cultural background, and the organizational context in which care is delivered; and 4) the impact of parents' work schedules on the lives of children.

By study design, participating employees were recruited at a moment of employment. Thus, this sample is probably better able to manage multiple role demands than the general population of low-income mothers who cycle in and out of these jobs. This is likely to be true for at least two reasons. First, the sample undoubtedly oversamples more stable workers, simply because we recruited in firms and were therefore more likely to come in contact with longer-term employees. Second, even the less stable workers identified by the recruitment process are being observed at a time in their lives when their management strategies may be more successful (and therefore are enabling them to be at

work). These same workers may have reported quite different and less functional strategies had we interviewed them at a different point in their work trajectory. Given this bias toward better functioning employees, the participants' difficulties managing work and child care responsibilities are that much more striking. Indeed, the tentative findings reported herein are consistent with the general conclusion of a recent study of low-wage parents, employers, and caregivers and teachers, that finds there is "an entrenched mismatch between the imperatives of raising families and keeping jobs in low-income America" (Dodson, Manuel, & Bravo, p1, 2002).

Policy Implications

The preponderance of informal kith and kin care represented in our sample is completely in keeping with national studies that indicate low-income parents, especially parents working nonstandard hours, rely disproportionately on unlicensed relative and nonrelative caregivers (Brown-Lyons, Robertson, & Layzer, 2001; Presser & Cox, 1997). But despite the predominance of informal care and its formal recognition through government financing mechanisms (e.g., subsidies to informal providers), research is limited on the needs of caregivers and the quality of care the informal sector delivers. Our preliminary findings point to areas of concern that might be addressed by investments both in the formal and informal child care sectors.

On the informal side, policy initiatives such as informal provider training and support groups, small grants for quality improvements, improved subsidy rate reimbursements, and collaborations across the formal and informal sectors have been proposed as possible strategies to strengthen supports to informal providers and improve the quality of informal care (Bromer & Henly, 2002; Lesser, 2000). Especially given the extensive use

of multiple child care arrangements which frequently crossed both formal and informal settings in our study, efforts to improve collaboration across sectors and to facilitate transitions between arrangements seem particularly crucial.

On the formal sector side, it is critical that family child care programs, centers, and pre-schools acknowledge the job characteristics that shape the child care needs of low-income working parents (both within and outside of retail) and consider the feasibility of designing services in ways that better meet those needs. Some family child care programs do offer transportation services, extensive hours, last-minute care, and will also accommodate fluctuations in children's attendance. But many do not, and even fewer centers and pre-schools offer such services. Any efforts to make such accommodations to the formal child care sector might also consider the possible unintended effects of such changes on a program's functioning, however. Indeed, what is most convenient for employers (and their employees) does not necessarily translate into the most developmentally appropriate settings for children. Whether such accommodations would increase psychological and economic stressors on providers or interrupt the consistency and structure of the classroom or programs is unknown. Moreover, whether parents would accept formal sector involvement in more expansive aspects of caregiving (e.g., overnight, early morning, and late evening care, or back-up care) is open to both debate and empirical study. Although we may not be able to offer institutionalized solutions for every hour of every day that any one parent needs care, we may be able to build a child care system that responds more effectively to working parents needs and that would, in particular, allow for more seamless transitions across arrangements of different types.

In addition to considering interventions on the child care side, the findings suggest that a focus on the jobs themselves – and how they can better accommodate working parents – is in order. The retail sector is experiencing significant growth, and retailers depend heavily on lower-level employees with caregiving responsibilities to fill entry-level positions (Boushey, 2001; Presser & Cox, 1997). The findings suggest that employers might be encouraged to institute practices that offer hourly employees more control and flexibility around their schedules and their work days and that legitimate the family-related responsibilities of employees. Given the significant amount of supervisory discretion suggested by our findings, it would seem wise from a work-family perspective to institutionalize these practices and extend them as benefits to a larger share of employees regardless of job status (see also Dodson, et al., 2002). Although the adoption of such practices may require employers to absorb some additional employee-related costs, our study suggests that the lion's share of the burden is currently felt by employees, providers, and informal support networks.

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Endnotes

¹ For two recent examples of qualitative studies on managing paid work and parenting that are not focused exclusively on low-wage workers see Uttal (2002) and Garey (1999). Central to Uttal's work is an examination of how parents make and change child care arrangements and the role of parent-provider relationships as a means by which parents judge quality and satisfaction with arrangements. Uttal's interest is much less in understanding particular parental employment conditions that shape their child care strategies. Garey's primary interest is in developing an integrated model of women's identity that considers the meanings women attach to employment and parenting in an inclusive rather than domain-specific manner. She quite carefully considers the role of specific parental job characteristics in shaping parenting and work identities and in influencing the actual family strategies women employ.

² One SOS site, a distribution center, was ultimately excluded from SWCCF because the recruitment resulted in very few eligible study participants. Thus, of 7 retail sites participating in the SOS study, 6 are included in SWCCF.

³ Discussions about child care subsidy payments were often quite confusing and suggested that recipients of subsidies often did not fully understand the system. In some cases, parents reported that providers attempted to overcharge parents in out-of-pocket expenses once the public portion of the child care payment was determined. In other cases, respondents who appeared to researchers to be eligible for subsidies either didn't know about their availability or assumed they were ineligible because they used relative care.

⁴ Researcher reference: Callie is RID 65A1.

⁵ Researcher reference: Deborah is RID#117A1

⁶ Traditional work-family discussions of flexibility concern policies such as family and medical leave, flex-time, and telecommuting. These policies are of little relevance to lower-level workers, however, because such benefits are seldom available to them. Thus, we use the term flexibility to mean aspects of a job that make the content of the work day and the scheduling of work less rigid and more controllable, from the perspective of the employee.

⁷ Another form of leverage in the workplace is suggested by the behavior of individual employees who are able to position themselves both as an advocate to coworkers and as an indispensable employee for management. For example, a very well-regarded long-term employee had experienced several different hourly positions in the company, both with supervisory and non-supervisory status, and settled most recently on a non-supervisory sales and cashier job because the schedule was most amenable with her family demands. She described herself as a "trouble-maker" because she stood up for her fellow hourly non-management employees when she felt they were being treated unfairly. She threatened to "call corporate" in a few such situations which resulted in supervisors reversing termination decisions. At the same time, she was able to command significant respect of the management, and continued to receive her supervisory wage after demoting herself to a non-supervisory position simply by threatening to quit if her wage was readjusted. We suspect that hourly employees seldom held such leverage in a firm, and that the status afforded this particular employee was in fact quite rare.

⁸ It is interesting to note that several parents seemed not to view their formal child care arrangements as "work supports", but rather as important developmental resources for their children.

⁹ Researcher reference: Karen is RID#162.

¹⁰ Researcher reference: Jonna is RID#77.