MAKING SENSE OF PART-TIME PROFESSIONAL WORK ARRANGEMENTS

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is about part-time professional work arrangements – how they are created and sustained within particular organizational contexts. I argue that, while this category of workers is growing, it still poses a challenge to professionals attempting to enact part-time professional work in particular organizational contexts. Drawing on research in the areas of organizational culture, socialization, and interaction rituals, I locate this challenge in the social interactions through which part-time professionals and those they work with attempt to navigate the job- and role-related implications of moving to a part-time professional work schedule.

Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with part-time professionals, and in some cases their managers and coworkers, in each of four organizational contexts, I developed a list of seven conceptual categories which describe the work which goes into creating and sustaining part-time professional work arrangements. These categories are: laying the groundwork [for the move to part-time], creating the part-time position, and establishing expectations (all associated with the move to part-time work); and managing work, managing boundaries, managing social networks, and managing [the social] discourse [of part-time professional work].

I found that professionals and those they work with are far more likely to focus on the job-related implications than they are the role-related implications of part-time professional work. I argue that by offering alternative work arrangements for professionals, organizations invite role innovation; by playing with the basic feature of the professional role (ever-availability), they invite a new, contemporary definition of what it means to be a professional. However, these organizations fail to provide explicit guidelines for what this new definition might mean in terms of actual behaviours and relationships. The enactment of the actual terms of the arrangement is left up to the part-time professionals and those with whom they work. In other words, organizational support is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of a part-time professional role. In contributing to our understanding of part-time professionals, this observation has two significant consequences. First, it suggests that professionals, their managers and coworkers are working without a prepared script and under locally idiosyncratic conditions. Second, it suggests that recognizing and processing these local arrangements at the organizational level will pose a challenge: that part-time work arrangements are, and have the potential to remain, ad hoc and locally idiosyncratic, suggests that future would-be part-time professionals may still be required to write their own scripts.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetus for the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Contribution</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Dissertation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two Part-Time Professional Work in Context:</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time Professionals</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Institutional Context: The Social Construction of Time</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Professional Employees</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organizational Context: Addressing Culture</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Local Work Context: Interaction Rituals</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three Research Methodology</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Context: The Four Organizations</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on the Data Gathering Process</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying the Groundwork</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating the Position</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Expectations</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Work</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Their Own Work</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Others to Manage Their Own Work</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing How Others Work</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Boundaries</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

Keeping 'Home' Out of 'Work' 104  
Bringing Home Into Work 105  
Bringing Work Into Home 107  
Keeping Work Out of Home 121  
Managing Networks 123  
Managing Discourse 129

## Chapter Six Discussion 136  
Authoring Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements 138  
A Theoretical Lens for Viewing Part-Time Professional Work 138  
Adjusting the Lens:  
  Socialization in Light of Ambiguous Role Expectations 141  
Making Sense of the Data 143  
Linking Data to Theory:  
  Part-Time Professionals as Reluctant Innovators 150  
Creating Cover Stories 155  
Linking Data to Theory:  
  Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements as Sensemaking 157  
Linking Data to Theory:  
  The Boundary as a Site for Contested Control 159  
A New Role For Part-Time Professionals? 161

## Chapter Seven Conclusion 167  
Limitations of the Study 170  
Theoretical Implications and Future Research Ideas 171  
Implications for Practice 174

## References 179
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1: Subject Group pp. 45-47

Table 3-2: Research Methodology p. 52

Table 4-1: Coding Categories – Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements p. 61

Table 5-1: Coding Categories – Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements p. 87
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This dissertation is about part-time professional work arrangements – how they are created and sustained within particular organizational contexts. Through in-depth interviews with part-time professionals and those they work with in each of four organizations, I explore the specific social practices associated with creating and maintaining these work arrangements, to arrive at a better understanding of the ways in which part-time professionals breach traditional norms surrounding the 'proper' meaning and use of time, and to begin to explore the ways in which they work to repair that breach.

My thesis is that part-time professionals represent a cultural challenge to the organization or group of which they are a part. Our shared concept of professionalism is so closely linked to the notion that professionals be ever-available for work (e.g., Seron and Ferris 1998; Starkey 1991) that the introduction of part-time professional work arrangements represents a significant challenge to traditional professional role expectations. This is true at both the institutional level – our shared understanding of what being a professional means – and at the more local organizational level, where professional work cultures are likely to be structured through meetings, rituals, and work schedules which assume a full- (or over-) time schedule. The challenge is one of literally making room for the part-time professional, a process I explore in the accounts of how part-time professionals and those they work with create and manage part-time professional work arrangements.
Chapter I: Introduction

Impetus for the Study

This study was motivated by the recognition that the workforce is changing, and with it the shape of today's organizations. Consider the following statistics, outlined by Perlow in a recent ASQ article: "Between 1960 and 1990, the number of married couples in which both spouses worked increased from 28 percent to 54 percent. From 1972 to 1990, the percentage of women working in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations grew from 20 percent to 40 percent; the proportion of women working in professional specialty occupations rose from 44 percent to 51 percent (Hayghe and Cromartie, 1991)" (Perlow 1998, 331). Against this backdrop, many of our assumptions – practical and academic – about what people "owe" or might be expected to commit to their organizations prove complicated or, in some cases, untenable. The mere presence of more two-income and single parent families in the workforce challenges previously institutionalized beliefs about time, how it should be used and distributed. And if these implications are widespread, they are particularly pronounced among professional organizations, which have traditionally imposed prohibitive time demands on their professional employees (Bok 1993; Seron and Ferris 1995). The growing trend toward professional organizations offering flexible work arrangements as a way of attracting and retaining professionals who are unable or unwilling to work full time (Adams 1995; Dey 1989; Sheley 1996) represents a recognition of and response to these changing demographic conditions.

The impact of demographic changes among the professional workforce have been well-represented in the popular and practitioner-oriented literature. Consider just a few examples: A 1995 article in Fortune looked at the widespread dissatisfaction with conventional definitions of professional success which was causing executive women to
leave their professions mid-career (Morris 1995). In 1995, Judi Marshall's *Women Managers, Moving On* explored the same topic. Juliet Schor's (1991) *The Overworked American* explored the broader issue of the pressures confronting today's workforce, and presented the sobering statistic that almost half of all professionals would willingly trade wage increases for a correspondent reduction in their working hours. And Hochschild's (1997) *The Time Bind* took a different perspective on the same issue, describing work as the sanctuary to which a growing number of workers are fleeing, in an effort to escape the demands imposed on them at home by children and spouses all demanding more time for them.

At the same time, the academic literature is starting to take a critical look at how time structures the experiences of today's employees. Seron and Ferris (1995, 27), for example, argue that the demands imposed on professionals would be untenable without a partner at home to manage domestic responsibilities: "[t]he privileges of professional autonomy (including control over one's time) and the demands of professionalism (a willingness to work until the job is done) rest on a negotiated release from private time to have access to professional time." In her recent book, *Home and Work*, Christena Nippert-Eng (1996) explores the different strategies by which people segment or integrate their home and work lives, and the structural conditions which support these different strategies. And Perlow's (1997, 1998) recent work takes a critical look at the mechanisms through which managers control the boundary which separates their employees' home and work lives.

So there is a strong and growing academic interest in the role of time in structuring the lives and experiences of professional employees. As yet, however, few researchers have turned their attention to the growing category of *part-time* professionals. While part-time
work arrangements are often touted as a solution to the demands facing today's professionals (e.g., Child 1992; Sheley 1996), little attention has been paid to either how comprehensive a solution it might be, or how this solution is actually attained in the context of particular work cultures. There is still a tendency in the academic literature to treat "part-time" as a demographic variable, rather than a social construct. This research project provided me with an opportunity to study the social construction of part-time work arrangements, using a symbolic interactionist perspective to explore the processes through which such arrangements are created and maintained. In doing so, I hope to add to the research literature a richer understanding of the ways in which part-time professionals and those they work with develop sustainable working relationships and a deeper understanding of "part-time" as a social construct.

**Personal Motivation**

There was also more personal motivation for studying part-time professionals. I intend to have children myself, and that, coupled with a deep reluctance to entertain the thought of doing anything at all on a full-time basis, prompted my interest in the idea of alternative work arrangements for professionals. Put simply, I wanted to see how other professionals balanced different aspects of their lives within the context of a part-time professional schedule.

At the same time, while recognizing the limits to generalization of an exploratory study, I was interested in coming up with some practical solutions to offer to friends who continued to ask vexing questions such as "yes, but how exactly might part-time schedules work in an office where professionals are working with full-time clients on an ongoing basis,
or on projects that frequently demands concentrated effort that extends above and beyond even the full-time work week for an extended period of time?" These same friends would appear curiously unmoved by my patient explanation that common conceptualizations of social roles are increasingly constraining in a changing society. They kept bringing me back to the practical matters of how (and whether) managers should attempt to accommodate their part-time professional employees, and what these professionals themselves could or should expect in the way of institutional support. These are fair questions, and deserving of some serious answers.

**Major Contribution**

In his recent account of how industrialization has shaped our attitudes towards organizations and employment, Roy Jacques suggested that, during times of transformational change, "'pragmatic' approaches to problem-solving are obstacles to solving concrete problems while questioning basic values and assumptions – philosophy – is pragmatic. Such times of transformation require critically reflective practice, a blending of the traditional theorist/practitioner dichotomy" (1996, 7). He suggests that it is time for organizational researchers to return to the kinds of questions once central to academic theory: "What is ‘the organization?’ Who is ‘the employee?’ What is the purpose of the organization in society? What are the rights, responsibilities and values of organizational members? What power relationships currently structure the workplace? How are these relationships changing? What can/should be done about them?" (pp7-8).

This dissertation represents my attempt to begin to approach those bigger questions, as a way of working toward addressing the more immediate, practical implications of part-
time professional work arrangements for local work cultures. What I hope this project contributes is a richer understanding of the need to embed part-time professional work arrangements in socio-historical context, and a deeper appreciation of the ways in which these arrangements are enacted in local organizational environments. I hope to leave the reader with an appreciation for the challenges facing part-time professionals (and their managers and coworkers), along with some tentative practical recommendations for how organizations might provide the kind of institutional support that I argue is perhaps useful to legitimate a genuinely new role for the part-time professional. I also want to provide a series of inferences and insights that might facilitate further research on this salient topic.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter II presents a theoretical overview of the literatures relating to part-time workers, to professional employees, and to changing orientations toward time following industrialization. I try to embed the part-time professional within a socio-historical context, and then explore the more immediate challenges they may pose to local organizational work cultures and contexts. The challenge, I suggest, is to make the role part-time, rather than simply making the job part-time. Chapter III describes my methodological approach, outlining the organizations where I conducted my interviews, introducing the sample, and describing the research method (qualitative, in-depth interviews). Chapter IV is the first of two "data chapters," and describes the social practices associated with creating part-time positions. The data suggest that the process can consist of three levels of effort: laying the groundwork, creating the position, and setting expectations. Chapter V is the second empirical chapter, and contains interviewees' accounts of the work that goes into sustaining
these work arrangements. The data suggest that the arrangement needs to be managed on four "fronts": the work itself must be accomplished within a reduced work schedule; the boundary separating work from home must be constantly negotiated and renegotiated; the part-time professional must manage their position within an informal network of organizational relationships (or face the consequences of not doing so); and the broader discourse around what part-time work arrangements mean must be attended to. In Chapter VI, I interpret the social practices that go into creating and sustaining these work arrangements, exploring the implications for both part-time professionals and for organizations interested in creating space for them. Finally, Chapter VII leaves us with a critical analysis of some of the limitations of the research, along with some ideas for future research, and a series of practical implications for part-time professionals and HR managers.
CHAPTER II

PART-TIME PROFESSIONAL WORK IN CONTEXT:

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Some people felt that if you were part-time you were just not there."
(Part-time bank executive, quoted in Morgan and Tucker, 1991: 166, emphasis added)

With the increase in two-income and single parent families and changing demographics more generally, a growing number of organizations are moving toward flexible work arrangements - such as part-time work schedules - in order to attract, retain, and utilize professionals who are unable or unwilling to work full time (Adams 1995; Dey 1989; Sheley 1996). However, these part-time workers bring with them a set of unique challenges: they represent a new social category, one which changes the shape of the traditional nine-to-five (or, in the case of many professionals, seven-to-seven) workplace, and introduces challenging new questions about the nature of professional work. Organizations which attempt to integrate these new arrangements into existing work structures may find themselves depending on people who may not be there when needed, and managing issues of equity and accountability among the rest of their staff. Part-time professionals, themselves, face unique challenges not only in terms of managing tasks and projects, but also in terms of managing career advancement, professional image and identity. Their dual roles as professional and part-time employee create potential conflict: they may be considered less committed and less serious than their full-time colleagues, and, indeed, their status as organizational members may become uncertain and equivocal to managers, colleagues and even themselves (Bailyn...
1993; Barker 1993). Consequently, the part-time professional in this situation may face slowed career progress, marginalization from social and professional networks, and diminished organizational power.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the particular challenges associated with creating and maintaining part-time professional work arrangements. I suggest that the main challenge confronting part-time professionals (and those they work with) is to make the role part-time, rather than simply making the job part-time, and that this challenge is best understood by focusing on the social sensemaking practices which constitute the part-time professional in particular work cultures. By focusing on the qualitative social meanings attached to time, and the day-to-day interactions which structure the part-time professional's work experience, I am looking for evidence that the part-time professional represents a symbolic breach of norms surrounding the “proper” meaning and use of time in specific organizational contexts, and for the ways in which part-time professionals (and those they work with) work to repair that breach.

I focus on the routine enactment of part-time professional work in its localized context for two reasons. First, although many firms have developed organization-wide policies and procedures with respect to part-time employees, these often have little impact on the day-to-day work contexts of professionals. It is more often the local culture and work arrangements that affect the manner in which part-time professional work is enacted. For example, in the accounting industry it has been argued that:

The problem often lies in the gap between national office policy, which may encourage alternative work schedules, and its implementation at the local level. Most firms usually leave it up to the local partners to decide whether part time
will work in their offices. Negative attitudes at the grassroots level can stop a progressive policy dead in its tracks. (South 1989, 30)

This example illustrates the criticality of managing the local work context of part-time professionals. It is in the day-to-day routines of work life that the temporal rhythms which structure organizational membership will be most immediately affected by a move to part-time work.

The local work context is also important because professional employees form a distinctly heterogeneous category. I define part-time professionals simply as those professionals and managers who are considered "part-time" by others within their organizations. Typical part-time professionals might include the computer programmer working two days per week in a cross-functional project team; the accountant working in relative isolation, whose responsibilities have been narrowed to 60% of those of his full time counterparts; and the technical support person involved in job sharing so that she works only mornings. By examining part-time professional work from the perspective of its meaning in a local context, rather than in terms of some specific number of hours or overarching, corporate policy, I intend to explore the socially constructed nature of the category.

An implication of this approach is that for a professional to be understood as part-time, it is likely to be in contrast to other comparable professionals working full-time in the same or a similar organizational context. I am not including in this definition professionals whose attachment to organizations would 'normally' be less than full-time, such as those professionals whose role would typically involve their dividing their time among a number of organizations (e.g., some medical specialists or contract workers) (Davis-Blake and Uzzi
1993; Pearce 1993). Instead, I am focusing on those professionals, attached to a single organization on an ongoing basis, whose hourly commitment to that organization is understood as part-time by their coworkers and managers. Feldman (1990) argues that these characteristics will lead part-timers to use as their frame of reference other full-time workers in the same organization; following this logic, I argue that coworkers and managers of such professional employees will also use comparable full-time employees as their frame of reference in evaluating the legitimacy of part-time work.

With this theoretical introduction, then, I intend to (1) establish that the part-time professional is unlike other categories of part-time workers; (2) locate this distinction in the socio-historical development of “the professional”; and (3) make a case for studying part-time professionals in the context of their local work cultures to better understand the social practices involved in creating and sustaining these alternative work arrangements. I believe that taking this approach will yield three significant contributions. The first contribution is toward the development of a more sophisticated conceptualization of the social meaning of work time (Hassard 1989) and consequently toward a foundation for a more theory-driven approach to research into part-time work (Feldman 1990; Rousseau 1995). My definition of the part-time professional is intended to highlight the socially negotiated nature of this position; understanding part-time professional employment simply in terms of contemporary professionals working fewer hours without any significant change in the nature of their professional role identities would, I believe, overlook the critical role of time in the social construction of work roles and relationships. I believe that "being there" (being present in time and space) has been a central and essential element in professional work and that being
Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

there less challenges the identity and ideology associated with being professional. In order to understand the issues facing part-time professionals and those they work with, then, the qualitative meanings attached to time must be taken seriously.

Second, I develop a theoretical framework for approaching the study of part-time professionals. Although the attributes and attitudes of part-time workers in general have recently been examined in great detail (e.g., Feldman 1990; Shockey and Mueller 1994; Steffy and Jones 1990), I believe that the dynamics of part-time professional work are distinctive from those of the general population of part-time workers, and consequently demand a theoretical approach that attends to that distinctiveness. I examine in detail the relationship between the local work context and the roles which may be played by or assigned to part-time professionals, exploring the social rituals through which part-time professionals are embraced as members in good standing or pushed to the organizational periphery. Although the part-time professional has been heralded as the flexible, cost-effective solution to a host of organizational problems (e.g., Luscombe 1994; Wolosky 1995), the impact of the work context on the success or failure of introducing part-time options to professionals has not been systematically explored. Because the concepts of employment, professional work, and time are all socially constructed within local organizational contexts (Boden 1994), I suggest that the particular social practices that constitute organizational membership will play an enormous role in helping us to understand the dynamics of creating and sustaining part-time professional work arrangements.

Finally, my focus on integrating part-time professional work into existing organizational and work settings is intended to provide a theoretical basis for the development
Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

of practical solutions for part-time professionals, their managers, and empirical researchers. A focus on the socially constructed and negotiated nature of part-time professional work highlights the need for managers and part-time professionals to be attentive to the social dynamics of the local contexts they face, and creative in the strategies they employ to introduce and manage this new arrangement.

Part-Time Professionals

Rotchford and Roberts' (1982) call for more research into the attitudes and experiences of part-time workers prompted a flurry of studies designed to explore attitudinal differences between part-time and full-time employees, and the impact of demographic variables on reactions to part-time employment (e.g., Eberhardt and Shani 1984; Feldman and Doerpinghaus 1992; Jackofsky and Peters 1987; McGinnis and Morrow 1990; Miller and Terborg 1979; Shockey and Mueller 1994). However, much of this research has been criticized for neglecting differences among part-time workers (Eberhardt and Moser 1995; Feldman 1990; Rousseau 1995) and for being insensitive to the nature of the part-time employment relationship (Rousseau 1995). Feldman's (1990) call for more attention to different types of part-time workers initiated another research focus, as researchers investigated differences among various types of part-time work (voluntary versus involuntary, temporary versus permanent part-time, etc.) (e.g., Eberhardt and Moser 1995; Feldman and Doerpinghaus 1992; Nkomo and Fields 1994).

As yet, however, very little of this research has focused on the experiences of part-time professionals. This lack of research attention can be explained in part by sheer numbers:
professionals represent only a small fraction of the approximately 20% of the North American labor force working in part-time jobs (Feldman 1990; Nardone 1995; Tilly 1991). In Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, it is estimated that only one in every five or six part-time workers may be categorized as a professional or a manager (Duffy and Pupo 1992, 145). By contrast, the vast majority of all part-time employees occupy "secondary part-time jobs" in the retail, service and manufacturing sectors (Feldman 1990; Tilly 1991), where they have formed a convenient sample for most of the organizational research into part-time work (e.g., Eberhardt and Moser 1995; Nkomo and Fields 1994). These jobs are characterized by low skill requirements, low pay and few fringe benefits, low productivity and high turnover (Tilly 1991). As such, they have also been the focus of labor economists and policy analysts interested in exploring broad trends in nontraditional employment (e.g., Kahne 1994), and researchers concerned about the social implications of the growth in low-pay, low-skill part-time jobs (e.g., Kosters 1995; Snider 1995).

Part-time professionals represent a very different category of part-time workers. Unlike the majority of part-time employees, they occupy "retention" (Tilly 1991) or "new concept" (Kahne 1985) jobs: these are the "good" part-time jobs, with high wages and benefits, low turnover, challenging work, and career potential. In contrast to secondary jobs, part-time professional positions tend to be created by the organization as a way of responding to a valued employee's needs, or of attracting and retaining qualified professionals (Barker 1993; Sheley 1996). Moreover, the idiosyncrasy of many of these new part-time positions is exacerbated by their locations in professions such as law, engineering and accounting which have no institutionalized history of part-time professional work (Adams 1995).
Furthermore, the concept of "part-time" itself is often problematic when applied to professional employees. It is especially difficult to define part-time professionals strictly in terms of the number of hours they work. Part-time workers are defined in Canadian legislation as those employees working fewer than 30 hours per week (Levanoni and Sales 1991), and in the United States as those working fewer than 35 hours per week (Nardone 1995). Whereas these definitions can be easily applied to research studies focusing on hourly workers, the situation with part-time professionals is more complex. Professionals have traditionally worked long hours (Bailyn 1993; Starkey 1991), and in a study of women working in professional fields, Barker (1993) found that even part-time professionals working in fields such as law and finance typically worked forty hours per week. Complicating the issue further is the fact that it is not uncommon for part-time professionals to agree that their organization should be entitled to contact them at home, or call them in for a meeting on their day off, should the need arise (Bailyn 1993).

These circumstances make it clear that operationalizing full-time versus part-time employment solely in terms of hours worked may be overly simplistic (McGinnis and Morrow 1990), and lend support to Rousseau's (1995) argument that a priori categorizations of part-time workers are not sensitive enough to specific organizational contexts. She suggests that "part-time workers actually represent many distinct employment relationships," and that to better understand the work experiences of part-time employees, more attention must be paid to the specific contexts in which they are developed (Rousseau 1995, 110).

I hope to build from Rousseau's assertion a framework for understanding what might be involved in negotiating and sustaining these different part-time employment relationships.
Given the relative lack of research into part-time professionals, I draw on sympathetic literatures to embed the part-time professional within a theoretical tradition. Consequently, I begin with an examination of the social construction of work time and its role in the historical constitution of "the professional employee", and then move to a more focused examination of the ways in which part-time professional work might be enacted within the context of particular organizational cultures.

The Institutional Context: The Social Construction Of Time

In a recent review of research into time and work, Hassard cited Mumford's (1934, 14) observation that "the clock, not the steam engine, [was] the key machine of the industrial age" (in Hassard 1996, 583). With industrialization came the idea that time is a commodity, to be spent, divided, and accounted for. This linear approach to time (Clark 1985; Hassard 1996) underlies conventional treatments of time: only if time is conceptualized as homogeneous and quantifiable can we treat as non-problematic the idea that it can be carved into "parts" and "wholes."

The "work day" and the "work week", for example, presuppose that work time can be measured against an objective standard – *full* time ("being there" forty hours a week). "Part-time", then, means "being there less", and "over-time" represents "being there more." While these represent sensible social categories today, they are in fact socio-historically-bound constructions, traceable to industrialization (Mumford 1934; Thompson 1967; Giddens 1984; Clark 1985; Hassard 1996). Prior to industrialization, most workers did not have a permanent identification with any single organization (Jacques 1996). Instead, they were more
likely to be self-employed farmers, craftspeople and artisans, or transient laborers: "For centuries, one's 'job' was done with every batch of work completed; taking the next batch was a matter to be negotiated between worker and employer" (Jacques 1996, 48-9). With industrialization, however, came a dramatic increase in the number of workers employed by organizations, and a more homogeneous time-work discipline. As organizations become more dependent on fixed human capital (itself a foreign concept before industrialization), and workers grew increasingly dependent on the financial and social security afforded by long term employment, it began to "sediment into 'common sense' that workers should have an ideally career-long relationship to the organization" (Jacques 1996, 71). And with this new sensibility came increasing reference to a new social category – the universal worker, or employee. Prior to the late nineteenth century, "there [had been] no uniform discourse about work ... A term equating the clerk, the tinsmith, and the iron puddler did not exist, nor was it needed" (Jacques 1996, 69). But industrialization defined new disciplinary boundaries around work and the worker which applied across occupational categories and organizational settings.

With the presumption of long term employment came the physical enclosure of more workers within work organizations which, accompanied by the social construction of "the normal work day" and "the normal work week", described spatial and temporal boundaries around "the employee" which had not enscribed "the worker" (Foucault 1977; Giddens 1984). And with these boundaries came an increasing reliance upon the discipline of the clock (Clark 1985). Whereas time-work discipline in pre-industrial society was event-based (Thompson 1967; Clark 1985), characterized by "periods of idleness and bouts of intense working" (Clark
industrialization brought with it a more regular, homogeneous understanding of time and how it was to be "spent." The whole concept of "the employee" is contingent on an understanding of paid work that is closely tied to control, or lack of control, over one's time (Buroway, 1979; Hassard 1996). This understanding rests on a linear, commodified conceptualization of time: "under industrial capitalism not only have the great majority of workers become subject to rigidly determined time schedules, but they have also become remunerated in terms of temporal units: that is, paid by the hour, day, week, month, or year" (Hassard 1996, 583). To the extent that these temporal boundaries are perceived as natural, finite, and enduring (the unstated assumption upon which management thought and action have long been based), the "part-time" employee represents a sensible social category. The work day and the work week measure work time against an "objective" standard — full-time ("being there" forty hours a week). "Part-time," then, means "being there less," and "overtime" represents "being there more."

**Time and Professional Employees**

There is much debate within the literature about the defining characteristics of "professionals" (cf., Abbott 1991; Becker 1970; Freidson 1972, 1986) and the danger of conceptualizing of "the professional" as a separate class of employee without critically examining the political purposes served by such a definition (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Following Freidson (1986), I view the idea of "the professional" as a historically-bounded social construct (Becker 1970), best understood in context:

If profession may be described as a folk concept, then the research strategy
appropriate to its investigation is phenomenological in character. One attempts to determine not so much what a profession is in an absolute sense as how people in a society determine who is a professional and who is not, how they “make” or “accomplish” professions by their activities, and what the consequences are for the way in which they see themselves and perform their work (Freidson 1986, 35-36).

One of the keys ways in which contemporary professionals are identified, I argue, is through the equation of professionalism with time spent at, or available for, work (Zerubavel 1981).

In sociological research, professionals are distinguished by their ability to exercise autonomy over their own work (Freidson 1972, 1986; Seron and Ferris 1985). Contemporary sociologists argue that professionals sustain this autonomy by distinguishing themselves from other occupational groups on the basis of their possession of expert knowledge and training, societal acceptance of the profession’s authority, and codes of ethics emphasizing a service orientation (Freidson 1972, 1986; Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Professionals use these attributes “(with more or less success) as arguments and accounts to legitimate professional self-control” (Van Maanen and Barley 1984; see also Abbott 1991; Seron and Ferris 1995).

As a result of this accomplished occupational control, professional work tends not to be tightly tied to a rigid timetable, so that it is commonly understood that professionals have greater control over their working time than do other employees (Starkey 1991).

However, this autonomy comes at a price. The accomplishment of professional self-control has led to a situation in which, for many professional employees, the distinction between work and home times is highly ambiguous: “Professional workplaces, especially among service professionals, are actually fluid and permeable, because they include an open-ended series of informal and implicit demands and processes, such as networking to ensure
client satisfaction or non-negotiable deadlines to complete a job” (Seron and Ferris 1995: 23). Whereas “the employee” goes to and leaves from work, professional employees are expected to be involved in their work at all times, such that “ever-availability” acts as a symbolic expression of professional commitment (Zerubavel 1981: 153). Consequently, for professionals, the social construction of work time has been both less and more restrictive than for other employees.

The issue of professionals being ever available is not only symbolic. The roles assigned to professional employees generally involve significant task ambiguity, control of critical information, and the resolution of organizational uncertainty (Abbott 1991), all of which heighten the importance of the professionals’ presence in and availability to the organization. At the institutional level, labor laws and organizational policies typically assume professional overtime will not be directly compensated, a situation which has been linked to the concept of “greedy” organizations (Coser 1974). Furthermore, organizational expectations of the professional employees’ ever-availability have traditionally been gendered (Seron and Ferris 1995). Professional work arrangements often assume “a division of labor in which men’s time is devoted to the sphere of work and women’s time is devoted to the sphere of home” (Seron and Ferris 1995, 24; see also Abbot 1989, Dey 1989, and Block 1990), a circumstance which would allow (male) professionals to be free to respond to organizational demands at any and all times.

The situation facing professional employees, then, is paradoxical: “Because their days are not tightly disciplined by a work timetable and because their time is at their own discretion, professionals tend to lose control of their time if control of time is construed as
being able to devote time to anything but work” (Starkey 1991, 51). The social construction of the professional employee has traditionally rested on the relationship between the concept of employment, where workers surrender finite amounts of their time to employers in exchange for wages, and the concept of professionalization, which retains the notion of surrendering time but lifts the restrictive link between time spent at work and wages earned. Consequently, professional employees have traditionally been pushed toward being ever available to the demands of employment. As a result, part-time work patterns may violate deeply institutionalized assumptions about the rights, duties, interests and nature of the "professional" (Jacques 1996).

This renders the very term part-time professional problematic for two reasons. First, "part-time" assumes a homogeneous, linear conceptualization of time, while professional roles have always retained "flexible, event-based task trajectories", which flow unevenly and are difficult to quantify (Hassard 1996). As a result, critics have argued that part-time simply "won't work" for professionals, whose schedules are determined by client demands and the frenetic pace of project work rather than the regular schedule of clock time (Mattis 1990; Adams 1995). This has led to calls by proponents of alternative work schedules for legislation and collective action at the societal level to change the way professionals live and work (e.g., Schor 1991; Hochschild 1997), to efforts by some professionals themselves to clarify clearer performance standards around exactly what is expected of them and when (Starkey 1988; Bailyn 1993), and to efforts by individual work organizations to redefine "part-time" in ways which emphasize performance, rather than simply hours clocked (Bailyn 1993). The focus of these efforts can be broadly summarized as making the job part-time –
developing clear and readily communicable methods for reducing the part-time professional’s workload to one which can be performed in twenty or thirty hours a week.

However, the concept of a part-time professional also highlights the danger in accepting too uncritically a purely quantitative conceptualization of time, and ignoring the "qualitative construction of temporal meanings" (Starkey 1988. Also Clark 1985; Butler 1995; Hassard 1996). Researchers adopting a qualitative conceptualization argue that time is a symbolic structure and a collective phenomenon (e.g., Durkheim 1995, Hassard 1996), representing the "cultural rhythm of a given society" (Hassard 1996, 586). From this perspective, the social construction and meaning of time has become bound up in our whole method of social organization, and particularly the division of private and public spheres:

Our life is socially organized and temporally constructed in such a way that, whereas during some time periods we must be accessible to others, there are other times during which we may be legitimately inaccessible to them. This is why time is so central to the definition and regulation of social involvement, commitment, and accessibility. (Zerubavel 1981,142)

So far as professionals are concerned, this division of spheres has traditionally taken on strong normative tones, with private time clearly subordinate to public time – as seen in the common equation of “time spent at or available for work” with “professional commitment” (Bailyn 1993). Viewed from this angle, the notion of a “part-time” professional is as much a challenge to the role requirements of the professional as it is to the expectations surrounding workload.

The assumption of "ever-availability" is tied to the special privileges and power of the professional employee (Starkey 1988), and to the professions’ attempts to negotiate and sustain their special status (Van Maanen and Barley 1984; See also Freidson 1972, 1986;
Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Larson 1977; Derber, Schwartz and Magrass 1990). As part of their training, professionals themselves learn to equate professionalism with a set of role expectations that include being "ever-available" for work (Starkey 1988; Bailyn 1993). As an example of how this relationship between "professionalism" and "ever-availability" is communicated and internalized, consider student practitioners in law, medicine and accounting, who are often subject to explicit and, at times, extreme demands on their time, with the expectation being that they will work through evenings and weekends for long periods. These practices not only achieve short-term organizational objectives, but, more importantly, develop the students' identities as professional employees by subordinating private/personal time to public/professional time. Consider also Bok's (1993, 265) account of a "fabled" Wall Street lawyer who "took advantage of the time changes on a long flight west to charge more than twenty-four hours of work in a single day." These kinds of folk legends, which make heroes of those "consummate" professionals able to use time to the fullest, reinforce the common understanding of professionalism as ever-availability for work. And the evidence suggests that the message of stories like this is being communicated clearly: the average number of billable hours by Wall Street law firms grew by nearly 30% between 1982 and 1989 (Bok 1993).

This understanding of the presumed relationship between time and professionalism is not restricted to professionals themselves: more general examples of the extent to which "professionalism" has become synonymous with ever-availability and "110% commitment" are found in two recent advertising campaigns in the Vancouver area. One – an over-sized poster appearing in city bus shelters – is a photograph of a battered and bruised Mark Messier
(known by hockey fans as a “consummate professional”). Messier is in full hockey gear, ready to play on despite the blows he has obviously already suffered. Above him, in large letters, is the word “Commitment.” The other example is also an over-sized poster, this time appearing on the back of city buses. It features a box of a well-known brand of pain-relief medication, beneath the slogan “Works even longer than the doctors who prescribe it.” Both advertisements play to widely institutionalized beliefs about the relationship between professionals and their devotion to work – most visibly expressed in terms of hours spent working (e.g., Seron and Ferris 1995).

There are, of course, counter-examples, and stories of active resistance to this interpretation of what it “means” to be a professional. Articles in the popular media describing widespread dissatisfaction with the time demands imposed by traditional workplaces (e.g. Brandt 1991; Morris 1995) and the popularity of books such as Schor’s (1991) *The Overworked American* and Schaef and Fassel’s (1988) *The Addictive Organization* suggest that North Americans may be reconsidering the traditional equation of professionalism with hours spent at work. In a survey of professionals’ attitudes toward work and time, Schor (1991) found that 48.9% of the professionals surveyed would trade wage increases for a reduction in their working hours. Similarly, a recent article in *Fortune* explores the factors driving large numbers of successful executive women to make dramatic changes at the mid-point of their careers (Morris 1995). The women described in the article maintain that the cost of professional success, defined in conventional terms, is too high – rather than defining themselves almost solely in terms of their professional work, they want their lives “to be multidimensional, to include some combination of family, community, and outside interests.”
To achieve this balance, they are cutting back on the number of hours they work, leaving big corporations to found their own small businesses, or applying their business skills to new careers in non-profit organizations. "These mid-life changes," the article argues, "are ultimately not about retreat but about redefinition" (Morris 1995, 62).

Prasad and Prasad (1993) make the same argument, suggesting that downshifting — the "social trend in which "successful" managers and executives sometimes choose to relinquish promotions and pay hikes in return for more time to spend on personal concerns" — can represent an attempt to move beyond restrictive definitions of commitment toward a more balanced integration of organizational commitment with personal, family, and community concerns. There is some indirect research support for this argument, though downshifting has not been well researched. Gurstein (1991), for example, has studied people who work at home, and found that their prime motivating force was control: the ability to manage time and space according to one's needs, and the feeling of control that this affords, is the most important attribute of working at home. And Barker's (1993) study of part-time professional women working part-time found that, even though the majority reported being excluded from organizational activities as a result of their part-time status, they also reported greater satisfaction with their job, and happiness at work, than did women working full-time. These studies reflect the reality of today's workforce: the range of occupations and employees associated with professional status in today's contemporary organizations is broad and heterogeneous, and these new professionals are increasingly likely to attempt to negotiate alternative work arrangements.

However, they do so in the broader socio-historical context of work environments
founded on understandings of professional employment and organizational membership that may be incompatible with or even hostile to the notion of part-time professional status. It is precisely because "the discipline of work-time" has become such a "central but taken-for-granted" characteristic of modern society that Dey (1989, 466) asserts that "the division between full-time and part-time is part of the social construction of work-time, and as such relates less to some objective standard (e.g., 30 hours per week) than to taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning the social organization of work." One key assumption is that men work full-time while women work part-time, while a second is that full-time workers have a more sustained commitment to work than those working part-time (Dey 1989, p.467). Dey argues that work-time "is contrasted with time spent on activities which are defined as 'not work', such as leisure-time or play-time" (or time spent on child care or domestic duties), and that these activities are implicitly devalued (Dey 1989, 457). At the same time, primary responsibility for child care and domestic duties continues to fall to women, and not coincidentally, part-time work remains primarily a "women's option": in Canada, 72% of the part-time work force is female (Duffy and Pupo 1992, 42), with the majority of part-time professionals concentrated in female-dominated professions such as nursing (where 32% of Canada’s registered nurses work part-time ); teaching (where 17% of secondary school teachers and 22% of primary and elementary school teachers work part-time); social work (18% work part-time); and pharmacy (23% work part-time). By contrast, traditionally male-dominated industries are distinguished by markedly fewer part-time workers (e.g. 5% of lawyers; 5% of civil engineers; 6% of architects; and 5% of computer systems analysts).

Evidence that assumptions about work and time continue to frame the behaviors of
many professional employees is readily available in the research literature. For example, in her study of the experiences of professional women working part-time, Barker (1993, 64) found this argument echoed in the comment of an attorney working part-time: "I am a professional, not an employee and a 'part-time' lawyer will always be an employee." Similarly, Schor (1991) argues that part-time work for managers and professionals is often "tantamount to career suicide," and Bailyn (1993) and Hochschild (1997) argue that the mechanical equation of "professional" with "someone who works all the time" is one of the chief obstacles to the acceptance of alternative work schedules for managers and professionals. Note that the objections raised here have less to do with the mechanics of accommodating the professional's workload to a reduced workweek than they do with a more amorphous set of role expectations surrounding "the professional." This suggests that any serious study of the work experiences of part-time professionals must address these role expectations directly.

The Organizational Context: Addressing Culture

Thus far, the discussion has focused on a very broad, macro conceptualization of time as a social construction. This provides a necessary framework against which to position a more situational perspective on the dynamics of the acceptance or marginalization of part-time professionals. My particular interest here is with the social dynamics affecting the enactment of part-time professional work arrangements within specific organizational contexts. This requires moving toward the study of more local meanings of time: the processes through which organizations, and groups within organizations, develop their own temporal rhythms. My focus here is on part-time professionals as members of particular
organizational *cultures*, and the ways in which they challenge, adapt to, or are alienated from those cultures.

I am adopting an ethnomethodological view of culture as a process, something a group *is*, rather than something that it *has* (Friedman 1989; Kunda 1995; Schwartzman 1989; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989; Weick 1979). Rather than adopting a top-down view of culture as an organizational quality that can be consciously managed (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982), I focus instead on the intricate network of meanings and interactions which constitute the social group (Martin and Frost 1996; Van Maanen and Schein 1979). Culture, from this perspective, has been defined as "those things a member in good standing must think, feel, and do" (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989, 49. See also Goodenough 1970; Spradley 1979), and is communicated and maintained through the interactions, formal and informal, of organizational members. The challenge for researchers seeking to understand specific cultures, then, is to interpret this web of meanings and interactions, focusing explicitly on the ways in which culture is sustained and transmitted to organizational members (Friedman 1989; Geertz 1973, 1983; Trice and Beyer 1984; Van Maanen and Schein 1979).

There are three specific points following from this definition of culture as “those things that a member in good standing must think, feel, and do” that bear directly on the concept of creating and maintaining part-time professional work arrangements. The first two points shall be considered together. First, culture is what constitutes the group: it represents the pattern of assumptions and understandings developed by a group over time, through ongoing interaction and negotiation (Friedman 1989; Geertz 1973; Schein 1992). Second, and closely related, culture deals explicitly with the terms of group membership – who belongs, and what
it means to belong. Membership, in this sense, refers to more than nominal association with a
group or organization: instead, membership refers to the social dimensions through which
group members identify each other (Van Maanen and Barley 1984), and the status which their
membership, is accorded. Boden (1994, 57) argues that “[a] great deal of human energy goes
into creating and recreating [these] invisible bonds and boundaries,” which she terms
“membership categorization devices.” Groups develop standards of behavior to which
members are expected to conform, and when these standards are violated, consequences are
immediate (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989). Homans’ (1961) definition of status is useful here:
“A man’s status in a group is a matter of the stimuli his behavior toward others and others’
behavior toward him – including the esteem they give him – present both to others and to
himself, stimuli that may come to make a difference in determining the future behavior of all
concerned” (cited in Cicourel 1972, 239).

Note that the emphasis here is very much upon the identification and punishment of
cultural breaches by members of the culture themselves: these behaviors would not necessarily
appear sensible to someone unfamiliar with the shared assumptions upon which group
membership was based. Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) work on organizational
socialization offers a useful framework for exploring the ways in which members of an
organizational culture sustain and communicate that culture through socialization practices
(ranging from the formal to the informal). For an example more directly related to the
cultural implications of part-time professional work schedules, Hochschild (1989) offers the
illustration of a personnel executive, who found her status within her organization diminished
after she moved to a part-time work schedule. Though she had official organizational support
for her working arrangement, and though the quality of her work was unaffected, it became apparent that her membership status within her own work group was contingent upon her respecting traditional spatial and temporal boundaries. As a result of her transition to part-time status, she was moved to a small, inner office, and asked to report to a peer, both of which communicated to her that her status within the group had been diminished.

Finally, and following directly from this last example, culture has a temporal aspect which cannot be ignored if we are to better understand the social dynamics through which part-time professional work arrangements are enacted within their specific work contexts. Bluedorn and Denhardt (1988) note the importance of “temporal symmetry” (Zerubavel 1981) as a means of developing a shared identity among members of a social group, and quote Barley’s (1985) observation that:

> When people perceive that their lives flow in parallel, when they experience the same sequences, durations, temporal locations and rates of recurrence of events, they are more likely to believe that they share the same set of circumstances and, on that basis, develop a sense of common identity. (Cited in Bluedorn and Denhardt 1988, 307)

This shifts our understanding of time to the level of the organizational or small group culture, and suggests that attitudes toward time and its proper use structure the social interactions which constitute culture. For example, Butler (1995) emphasized the importance of social rhythms "whereby communities and social groups can have their own time relative to other communities and relative to clock time, such that time is experienced as the result of shared activities and events in a community" (Butler 1995, 927. See also Bluedorn and Denhardt 1988; Hassard 1996). Time, from this perspective, is "in the events, and events are defined by organizational members" (Clark 1985, 36. Also Gurvitch 1964; Hassard 1996;
Sorokin and Merton 1937). Roy's classic study of "Banana Time" is often cited as an example of how groups will use event-based time-reckoning systems to establish their own, shared rhythms (Hassard 1996; Clark 1985). As another example, Fine (1990) explores the temporal rhythms guiding work in restaurant kitchens. Similarly, Van Maanen and Katz (1979) suggested that "little can be accomplished that is of organizational interest unless members can situate themselves in organizationally legitimate time and space" (1979, 33). They defined organizational time in terms of beliefs about how things happen in the organization (for example, how careers unfold, or how and when daily activities take place), and organizational space in terms of assumptions about how one "should" perform on the job relative to others. Van Maanen and Katz maintain that these spatial and temporal perspectives are a critical part of an organization's culture: "As such, cultural understandings of organizational time and space must be passed from generation to generation....If they are not, the organization cannot survive over time in the same form. Socialization...fails when individuals cannot gain a perceptual fix on where they can fit within the organization" (1979, 36-7).

Part-time professionals, from this perspective, pose a cultural challenge to their organizations and work groups. Once we tie our conceptualization of culture to the social practices that indicate membership in a social group or organization, we find that those practices are inextricably tied to the times and places through which the group identifies itself. By claiming for themselves time in which they will be inaccessible (or, in some instances, less accessible), part-time professionals will most likely challenge the traditional spatial and temporal boundaries associated with their own work groups and organizations. This can be
expected to have a range of concrete and symbolic effects on the part-time professionals' ability to locate themselves in organizational time and space. The pace and rhythm of professional work, based on an assumption of ever-availability, may lead to part-timers missing key occasions in which information is disseminated or alliances formed. With a great deal of professional work dependent on access to personal networks for information or influence, the potential marginalization of part-timers will compromise those professionals' ability to accomplish organizational goals. Symbolically, part-time status may invite speculation from managers and co-workers about the professional's commitment to and social involvement in the organization (Bailyn 1993; Van Maanen 1992), and their membership status may be diminished. Yet another possibility is that part-time professionals may alter the rhythms of the organizational culture itself: co-workers and supervisors may question their own tacit assumptions about the relationship between working time and organizational membership in the face of colleagues making explicit and public choices to move away from a level of time commitment that had previously been taken for granted.

The Local Work Context: Interaction Rituals

The above scenarios share a focus upon the cultural and symbolic significance of part-time work schedules for managers and professionals. However, we are still operating at an uncomfortable level of abstraction: in order to understand the particular dynamics through which part-time professional work arrangements are enacted within specific work cultures, we need a more direct method for investigating culture. As a means to this, I suggest
conceptualizing culture in terms of sets of interaction rituals (Collins 1981, 1988; Durkheim 1995; Friedman 1989; Goffman 1967; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989), defined as routine interactions of two or more people that are vested with some symbolic significance (Lukes 1975; Van Maanen 1992; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989). Interaction rituals have been offered as a “practical” approach to studying cultural belief systems (Trice and Beyer 1984). They represent examples of the members of a culture “thinking, feeling and doing” appropriately (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989, 49), and in the process, communicating and sustaining the culture itself. These rituals work not only to facilitate specific task or social purposes, but also to structure and demonstrate membership boundaries (Boden 1994; Collins 1981; Geertz 1973, 1983; Goffman 1967; Schwartzman 1989). Consequently, I propose that part-time professionals' participation (or lack of participation) in key organizational rituals will be directly linked to their ability to enact sustainable new roles for themselves within their work cultures.

Rituals can range in scale from the quick greeting in the hallway to highly elaborate ceremonial activity (Collins 1988; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989). Some examples of rituals that are commonly associated with work cultures include meetings, coffee breaks, conference calls, sales pitches, and interviews, as well as after-work drinks and pub nights (cf., Deal and Kennedy 1982; Gephart 1978; Trice and Beyer 1984; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989). These rituals share, to a greater or lesser extent, (1) a “slight to obvious time-out character”, in that while they are associated with work, they occur outside the “everyday” work context; (2) a symbolic quality, associated with communicating the relative power and status of participants and/or celebrating the group as a whole; (3) a common focus of attention among participants;
and (4) a "planful design and orchestrated character" (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989, 48; Also Collins 1988).

To clarify the concept, take as an example a common and critical interaction ritual – the meeting. The meeting clearly constitutes an interaction ritual, in that a group of two or more people are interacting in a routinized way that has symbolic significance. Meetings tend to follow a highly routine format: most of us know with varying degrees of confidence how to do meetings, and the general structure they are "meant" to assume. Similarly, most of us could agree on the broad technical purposes of a given meeting: to arrive at a decision, for example, to share information, or to resolve a crisis. So, on the surface, "the meeting" appears mundane and predictable and is more often treated as a resource for studying topics of interest (e.g., decision making) than as a topic in its own right (Schwartzman 1989). However, as a key interaction ritual, meetings also serve an expressive purpose (Trice and Beyer 1984). They "may be a major form for the creation of community or organizational identity (however tentative)," and, once constructed, may become "a vehicle for the reading as well as validation of social relations within a cultural system" (Schwartzman 1989, 41).

Caught in a meeting and connected through a series of interactions across time and space are the people, ideas, decisions, and outcomes that make the organization. It is in the closed internal times and spaces of meetings, as well as in the many phone calls that link people, topics and tasks, that the actual structure of the organization is created and recreated. (Boden 1994, 106)

In this sense, meetings are richly symbolic events that involve far more than task-oriented interaction: meetings are where organizational actors attempt to negotiate shared interpretations of what organizational membership entails – who belongs, who does not, and what that means (Schwartzman 1989).
The example of the meeting highlights two important functions of interaction rituals. First, the connection between the symbolism of meetings and membership is a key facet of interaction rituals in general. Following Durkheim (1984, 1995), Van Maanen and Kunda (1989, 49) argue that "there can be no group worthy of the name not needing at regular intervals the reaffirmation of collective sentiments and ideals." With a similar nod to Durkheim, Collins (1988) argued that the development of symbols through interaction rituals is central to the production of these kinds of membership boundaries: interaction rituals celebrate and affirm the collective. To return to the example of the meeting as an interaction ritual, then, the location, composition, organization and agenda of a meeting symbolically express a great deal about organizational membership structures.

The example of meetings also highlights a second function of interaction rituals: their role in structuring the temporal rhythms of work, particularly for those organizational members for whom role expectations are often ambiguous. Boden has argued that "the world of work may appropriately be divided into those organizational members who routinely attend meetings and those lower-echelon members whose duties tie them to clerical desk or factory floor" (1994, 81). Managers and professionals tend to find that their time and attention is structured by the series of meetings they attend during their work day (Hochschild 1997; Schwartzman 1989, 58). Given the historical development of "the professional" as a meaningful social category, this is a sensible use of the professional's time. Whereas lower-echelon organizational members are judged according to how well they satisfy the requirements of their particular job task, the performance of managers and professionals tends to be measured against a more ambiguous set of "role expectations": meetings, as discussed
above, play a key role in clarifying and legitimating these role expectations.

The same significance applies equally to other, more informal, interaction rituals in which managers and professionals engage. For example, Van Maanen (1992) studied alcoholic drinking occasions as a means of dealing with conflict within London's CID. He argued that though these "organizational time-outs" were "often thought by those who take part in them to be among the least rule-governed and least conflictual occasions associated with organizational life", they were, in fact, highly ritualized occasions, patterned according to locale, participants, and the intensity of the drinking. He suggested that these drinking episodes played an important role in clarifying role expectations and terms of membership for an organizational elite with relatively ambiguous performance standards.

Whether it is another employee's going away lunch, a regularly scheduled staff meeting, or the gathering in the lounge to celebrate a birthday, these rituals are "'thick' with information" (Boden and Molotch 1994, 259): when organizational members assemble together – whether it be for casual meetings or scheduled events – they "have some evidence that the other party has indeed made a commitment, if nothing else than by being there. Just getting together, either by making an appointment or stopping one's routine to stand and talk, provides evidence of commitment to the social group" (Boden and Molotch 1994). Such participation in key interaction rituals is essential to acceptance in any group, and by the same token, members who fail to engage in important interaction rituals will be regarded as violating the group's symbols of membership, and will accordingly be subject to group pressures to conform or find their membership status diminished. This was evident in Van Maanen's study: officers who chose not to participate in the numerous drinking rituals
through which the CID celebrated its membership were "often made sport of (as aloof "Hooray Henry" types) to their faces by regulars" (Van Maanen 1992, 46).

This is a crucial point so far as part-time professionals are concerned, since they will by definition miss much ritual time. Unless efforts are made to create new rituals which replace the rituals which the part-timer misses, we could predict that the part-time professional will miss crucial organizational information, and be marginalized from social networks. Similarly, if traditional rituals are violated without being replaced with new ways of expressing membership, coworkers and superiors may feel "uneasy" about the part-time professional's status as a group member, and express this discomfort in different ways. For example, professionals may be criticized directly for missing a regular group meeting or an after-work social event. Alternatively, they may be subject to more indirect questions about their "commitment" (e.g., Bailyn 1993; Hochschild 1997), or to ongoing "jokes" about their leaving the office on Thursday to enjoy "a nice relaxing long weekend." All of these behaviours, it can be argued, would serve to marginalize the part-time professional.

Conclusion

The argument so far is that part-time professionals, by virtue of their reduced time commitment, may violate many of the key interaction rituals through which organizational membership is affirmed, and that part-time professional work arrangements will be enacted against these dominant pattern of interaction rituals within specific work contexts. In order for the theoretical framework to be useful, however, it is important to clarify a further implication of the cultural framework which I have adopted: the level of analysis at which the
enactment of part-time professional work arrangements is likely to be most pronounced. Here, I suggest the utility of focusing on the actions of the part-time professionals and the members of their immediate work contexts: their managers, co-workers, and clients. It is at this group level of analysis "where the people discover, create, and use culture, and it is against this background that they judge the organization of which they are a part" (Van Maanen and Barley 1985). Specifically, I suggest that, with often only the sketchiest of guidelines at the organizational level (Hochschild 1997), it falls to part-time professionals, their managers, and their coworkers to translate a simple reduction in working hours into a set of practices which allow the work to get done, perceptions of equity to be maintained, and new standards for assessing performance to be developed. Although a typical organizational strategy may be to develop human resource policies that legitimate and regulate new arrangements, these policies may well fail to achieve their goals if they are not matched with careful management in local work contexts: the values and routines embedded in localized work interactions. I suggest that it is in this local work context that ritual patterns of interaction occur which will either facilitate or discourage the enactment of sustainable work arrangements for part-time professionals (Weick 1995). The following study, then, attends to the substance of the creation and maintenance of part-time professional work arrangements within particular work cultures: my emphasis is on the ways in which part-time professionals and those they work with make sense of the part-time arrangement within the structure of their specific work contexts.
The purpose of this study is to begin to address the specific social practices associated with creating and maintaining part-time working arrangements for professional employees. In an effort to overcome the reliance of previous research on preconstructed categories and concepts, this study relies on an inductive qualitative research methodology to uncover the social practices through which professionals and those they work with create and sustain part-time professional work arrangements. Rather than approaching the part-time professional as if it were a “natural,” purely demographic category, then, I treat it as a social construction “to be studied as a public and social process” (Edwards and Potter 1992, 95). Accepting that the public meaning of part-time professional work will change with time and with different social contexts, the research challenge is to explore the variety of interaction rituals which part-time professionals and those they work with use to construct, justify, and maintain part-time professional work arrangements.

Research Design

While there is no hard and fast definition of qualitative research, Mason (1997) offers some general features: qualitative research is grounded in an “interpretivist” philosophical position; sensitive to the social context in which data are produced; and based on methods of analysis and explanation-building which admit complexity and the need to be sensitive to social contexts. In keeping with these guidelines, this study utilizes in-depth, semi-structured interviews in a variety of organizational settings to explore the ways in which
part-time professional work arrangements are socially constructed and maintained within specific social contexts.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) offer three criteria for assessing the adequacy of qualitative research designs: informational adequacy (Zelditch 1962); efficiency (Zelditch 1962); and ethical considerations. I will address each in turn, and describe how they influenced the design of this study. First, informational adequacy describes the extent to which “the research design maximizes the possibilities that the researcher will be able to respond to the [research] questions thoroughly and thoughtfully” (Marshall and Rossman 1995, 42). In order to gain a better understanding of the social “work” involved in the creation and maintenance of part-time professional work arrangements, and in order to gain a richer understandings of the ways in which these arrangements are negotiated in particular social contexts, this study was designed so as to allow me to interview part-time professionals working in a number of organizational contexts. The interviews themselves were in-depth, and designed in such a way as to return to the same topics several times. This was done to encourage the interviewees to consider the creation and maintenance of their part-time role from a variety of different angles – which they could be expected to do if the topic were raised in independent conversations with the subject over time (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Finally, the study was developed with the understanding that I, as the research interviewer, would play an active role in the research gathering process, rather than playing the role of a quiet, neutral observer (Anderson and Jack 1991, Mishler 1986, Wetherell and Potter 1992). My aim here was to encourage the interviewees to reflect, as exhaustively as possible, on their own experiences with creating and managing their part-
time work arrangements. This required that I be able to prompt them to elaborate on their own experiences, rather than working from a structured script.

*Efficiency* refers to gathering data at minimal cost in terms of time and access to participants (Zelditch 1962; Marshall and Rossman 1995). Because this is an exploratory study, my concern was with developing a broad understanding of the social practices associated with creating and sustaining part-time work arrangements. Consequently, I chose semi-structured interviews as a way of capturing participants' own general understandings of how they have been able to create and maintain their part-time work arrangements. This allowed me to (1) gather a broad range of information from a range of participants across four organizational contexts in focused, in-depth interviews; as a means to (2) uncover a framework for more detailed, ethnographic work in the future.

Finally, *ethical considerations* are the third criteria used by Marshall and Rossman (1995) to assess the sufficiency of qualitative research designs. Field research cannot be conducted without attention to its possible consequences for research participants: I approached this study with the recognition that asking participants to discuss the relative success or failure of their own part-time working arrangements could subject them to some risk, particularly as I was also interviewing their managers and coworkers. In an effort to minimize the risk associated with participating in the study, subjects were asked to give their informed consent to the research on the understanding that the content of the interviews would be kept confidential from other participants within the study, and that the anonymity of the organizations themselves and those persons working there would be protected when it came to developing research papers for publication.
Data Collection

The Subject Group

I interviewed part-time professional employees and, in some instances, their managers and their co-workers from a total of four organizations. The four organizations in the sample were: an oil company (OilCo) and a gas company (GasCo), both located in Alberta; a telecommunications company (PhoneCo) and a public utility (ElectricCo), both located in Vancouver. I was referred to each by colleagues of mine who had worked with these organizations in the past. This gave me a direct link to a contact person at each organization.\(^1\) I phoned each directly, explained the nature and purpose of my research, and asked if they would be willing to put me in contact with part-time professional employees working at their organizations. I employed a snowball sampling technique, asking each of my initial contacts “who should I talk to about part-time professional work? Who has experience working part-time in this organization?” (Patton 1990). In one instance, my initial contact was himself a part-time professional employee, who formed part of my sample. In the other three instances, my initial contacts were professional employees who worked with or knew of professional employees working part-time, and were able to put me in touch with them. My contacts developed a list of part-time professional employees working within their organizations, and circulated an e-mail message from me, describing my proposed research and soliciting volunteers to participate in the study. I then dealt

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\(^1\) I am confident that my colleagues’ prior associations with these organization did not bias the data I was able to gather. In each instance, their relationship with the organization was brief and/or in the dim past, and my association with them served simply to help me establish primary contact with organizational members.
directly with the volunteers by phone or, in some instances, e-mail, and made arrangements to meet with them and, where feasible, with their managers, coworkers and spouses.

In all, I interviewed 21 part-time professional employees, 9 managers of part-time professionals, 11 co-workers of part-time professionals, and 5 spouses of part-time professional employees across four organizations. (For more complete information on subjects interviewed, see Table 3-1). The interviews with the part-time professional employees were the focus of the analysis, while interviews with their managers, co-workers and spouses added a broader perspective on the social practices and resources needed to create and sustain part-time professional positions. Most of these supplementary interviews occurred in the OilCo and GasCo samples (which I did first). By the time I began interviews at the phone company and the electric utility, I had reached theoretical saturation in terms of interviews with managers and coworkers (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Patton 1990). Thus, my focus in these final two organizations was almost exclusively on the accounts of the part-time professional employees themselves.

The sample of part-time professional employees included engineers, financial analysts, systems analysts, and marketing account managers. All of these professional employees worked between two to four days a week (though most found that they ended up working additional hours on a flexible basis). My particular interest was with studying part-time professionals attached to a single organization on an ongoing basis: while the exact nature of their work differed, all of the part-time professional employees I interviewed worked in project-based positions involving a relatively high level of interaction and coordination with co-workers and/or clients (see Table 3-1).
Table 3-1: Subject Group²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part-Time</th>
<th>Org</th>
<th>Days/Week</th>
<th>Yrs P/T</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type of Work/Interaction</th>
<th>Supplementary Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>OilCo.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Systems Analyst</td>
<td>Member of Logistics Support Group, Working on complementary product which is not part of base product. Works independently of project team; lots of contact with clients.</td>
<td>Manager¹, Coworker, Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>OilCo.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analyst</td>
<td>Project position – could be working with anyone in organization’s corporate group. Work is time-driven, likely to have an impact on everyone who uses the system.</td>
<td>Manager, Coworker, Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>OilCo.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Financial Analyst</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manager, Coworker, Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>OilCo.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>Systems Analyst</td>
<td>Member of Logistics Support Group for base product. Group provides Monday to Friday support to users of system.</td>
<td>Team Leader, Coworker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>Engineer/ Customer Account Rep</td>
<td>Works closely with GasCo customers on daily business transactions and customer “partnering” – requires meeting with customers to develop new projects/services. Customer Service Group offers daily support to GasCo accounts.</td>
<td>Team Leader, Coworker, Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Engineer/ Customer Account Rep</td>
<td>Working on high-level computer project. Frequent interaction with GasCo employees from other departments (internal customers), and members of project group.</td>
<td>Team Leader, Coworker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineer, Systems Design</td>
<td>Runs project team looking at revising design criteria. Lots of coordination – works closely with project team.</td>
<td>Team Leader, Coworker⁵</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² While I did not attempt to distinguish the socio-economic status of my respondents, no such status differences became apparent during the course of my interviews.
³ Kate and Maria have the same manager.
⁴ The recording equipment failed during Maria’s interview, and I was unable to write out my memories of the interview promptly. This interview was not included in my analysis.
⁵ Rachel and Nina share the same team leader and coworker.
### Chapter III: Research Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Time Prof'1</th>
<th>Org</th>
<th>Days/Week</th>
<th>Yrs P/T</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type of Work/Interaction</th>
<th>Supplementary Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Engineer, Systems Design</td>
<td>Coordination of design project – mentoring/consulting to group members. Frequent meetings with coworkers. Develops communication plans for various technical projects. Works closely with other various project teams within GasCo.</td>
<td>Team Leader, Coworker, Team Leader, Coworker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engineer, Design &amp; Operations Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Engineer/Team Leader, Systems Design</td>
<td>Project Leader – group is putting together ten-year forecast of supply and demand to guide decisions about facility design. Works closely with members of project team.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>GasCo.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>HR Consultant (internal)</td>
<td>Works closely with project teams within GasCo, assisting with set-up of alternative work arrangements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>PhoneCo.</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Develops business cases, economic assessments for marketing proposals – many impromptu meetings and discussions with most dept.'s within PhoneCo. (See Amanda)</td>
<td>Coworker²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Phone Co.</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coworker Manager²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>PhoneCo.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sales Support Specialist</td>
<td>Delivers documentation for process design (how to deliver services/products to customers). Represents customer service rep at marketing meetings – many meetings with people whose services they support. (See Sylvia).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette</td>
<td>PhoneCo.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sales Support Specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>PhoneCo.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Manager, Customer Information Service</td>
<td>Revenue projection, technical system support, some project management. Interaction most likely on request basis (e.g. &quot;could you generate revenue impact of this?&quot;) More interaction now because involved with implementing project database.</td>
<td>Coworker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 Nina works two full days and two half days per week.  
7 Jill works two days one week, three days the next; Nicole works three days one week, two days the next.  
8 Jill and Nicole have the same coworker.  
9 Sylvia and Annette have the same manager.  
10 Heather works 7:00 am to 12:00 pm four days a week.
### Part-Time Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Org</th>
<th>Days/Week</th>
<th>Yrs P/T</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type of Work/Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>ElectricCo</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financial Analyst</td>
<td>Member of Internal Audit Dept. – works in group of six members, identifying key risk areas within SBUs, looking at processes around risk, and making sure processes are mitigating risk. Describes work as relatively autonomous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>ElectricCo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financial Analyst</td>
<td>Member of Internal Audit Dept. See Margaret.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>ElectricCo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Business Analyst</td>
<td>Responsible for developing efficient business processes. Works closely with Programming area to analyze software from business/user’s perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa</td>
<td>ElectricCo</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Financial Analyst</td>
<td>Reviews internal controls in customer services area of ElectricCo. Studies controls already in place, recommends new controls. Fair amount of interaction with managers of different customer services areas. (See Vanessa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>ElectricCo</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Financial Analyst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

11 Vanessa and Yvonne have the same coworker.
While I had initially hoped to have equal gender representation in my sample of part-time professionals, this proved impossible; in all four organizations, the vast majority of professionals working part-time were female. In all, 18 of the part-time professional employees interviewed were women; three were men.

Research Context: The Four Organizations

OilCo is a multinational oil and gas company with offices around the world. The Alberta office (where I conducted my interviews) had, until the early 1990s, been characterized as a paternalistic organization, in which employees could count on cradle-to-grave employment and a highly social culture. In the early 1990s, the company was hit hard by environmental change, and went through a series of dramatic downsizings. The company is presently attempting to rebuild, and hiring new employees for the first time in several years. Employees remaining with the organization describe morale as low, and the work environment as pressured — managers report difficulty in finding time to schedule departmental meetings, along with a growing concern that employees are working too many hours of overtime. Part-time work arrangements were introduced at the company gradually, with a number of test cases in the 1980s. While part-time schedules have become more acceptable at the company over the last ten years, there are still very few part-time managerial and supervisory jobs at OilCo, and part-time work is still considered primarily a "women’s" issue.

GasCo is a gas company headquartered in Alberta. Until recently, the organization had a monopoly on pipelines in Alberta; with increased competition, the company recently
went through a reorganization (downsizing) and has shifted its focus toward a heightened emphasis on employee performance, rather than simply membership. While the company made an effort to ease employees out of the company gradually and voluntarily, a number were still let go abruptly. Though a number of the people I interviewed indicated that there were negative attitudes toward the company among GasCo’s employees, the people I spoke to generally felt that the layoffs were “fair.” Nonetheless, attendance in extracurricular activities, such as company ski trips, has declined to the point where a number of these events face cancellation. GasCo considers itself a leader in alternative work place arrangements, and was recently written up in a national magazine as a “family friendly” employer. It prides itself on that reputation, which employees argue is consistent with the value the company places on “balance.” However, while the company offers a variety of alternative work arrangements, as at OilCo, there are still few part-time professionals in leadership positions, and it considered unusual for men to work part-time.

*PhoneCo* is a national telecommunications company with offices across the country. Employees attribute a relatively high level of bureaucracy to the organization’s large size, and to what a number of employees described as a “traditional” unionized working environment. However, the company has a reputation for offering longterm employment and generous working conditions. While deregulation has led to a more competitive work environment, the company maintains a reputation for being a “fair” and “progressive” employer. A number of alternative work arrangements are in place at the company, for which the employees I spoke with expressed great appreciation. However, employees maintain that there is still a tendency to equate hard work with long hours.
Finally, ElectricCo is another large organization with a local reputation for being a flexible, progressive employer. Like PhoneCo, it has a unionized workforce and, also like PhoneCo, is currently dealing with competition engendered by deregulation. This had led to recent layoffs, and to a new interest in developing more efficient business systems (with a consequent focus on attracting and retaining skilled professionals in the areas of accounting and auditing). While the company offers a wide variety of alternative work arrangements, employees maintain that people in key managerial positions still tend to be those who work through evenings and weekends – this tendency toward working long hours, they maintain, is embedded in the company’s culture.

Data Sources

My primary data source was the interviews themselves, which were conducted between January and May, 1997. Prior to these interviews, I conducted three pilot interviews\(^\text{12}\) to test the salience of the interview questions to part-time professionals (Janesick 1994), and practice “thinking on my feet” (Mason 1997). These pilot interviews allowed me to develop a sense for the appropriate sequence of the questions, pacing of the interviews, and balance between questioning and listening. All but six of the interviews were conducted face to face, while those six were conducted over the telephone. The interviews ranged in length from 30 to 90 minutes and were all tape-recorded, save for three in which the audio equipment failed to record properly. (In two of those instances, I was able to write out my memories of the interview within an hour of the interview, aided by notes I had taken during the interviews themselves. In the third instance, the interview
occurred early in a day full of interviews, and I was unable to record my impressions until that evening. I have not included that interview in my analysis.) I had the tapes professionally transcribed: questions and answers were transcribed verbatim and in their entirety. I then ensured the accuracy of the transcripts myself by checking them directly against the audio recordings.

The interviews themselves followed a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide (see Table 3-2). This was an inductive study, and my research focus shifted over the course of the study itself. I began with a relatively tight research focus, on the relationship between part-time professional work arrangements and organizational commitment. I was interested in exploring the social interactions through which organizational members identify and define commitment, and the ways in which part-time professional work arrangements breach these understandings. As I began to analyze and interpret the early interview data, however, it became apparent that my original research question was too narrow. It presupposed a straightforward conceptualization of part-time professional work which the data did not support. As I began the iterative process of data collection and data analysis, therefore, I decided to expand the focus of my analysis to the social practices which are necessary to create and sustain part-time professional work arrangements. This decision affected my analysis of the interview transcripts, but did not significantly affect the interviews themselves.

The interview guide was designed to allow, as much as possible, for a dialogue between my interview subjects and I. The questions were open-ended, to encourage interviewees to introduce their own priorities and experiences with regard to part-time work arrangements.
### Table 3-2: Interview Guide

#### Topics of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background/Contextual Information</th>
<th>Illustrative Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please describe your position and your responsibilities to me.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Background/Contextual Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long have you been working part-time?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creating the Part-Time Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many days per week do you work?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creating the Part-Time Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are there other part-time employees working within your organization?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creating the Part-Time Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you tell me a part-time “success” story? A “failure” story? What distinguished them?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creating the Part-Time Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tell me about how you decided to switch to part-time, going back as far as you need to fully explain your decision and the events leading up to it.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did you go to anyone for advice before moving to part-time?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What was your impression of what the implications of your move to part-time would be, in terms of your career?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the advantages of working part-time? The disadvantages?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How have your manager/coworkers reacted to your move to part-time?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has anyone you work with been particularly supportive? How?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has anyone you work with reacted particularly negatively to your move to part-time? Why?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How do you make contact with others in the organization? Has this changed since you switched to part-time?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How and when are you included in meetings, conferences, etc.?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How do you stay in the loop? How do you get organizational information?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing the Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How committed are you to this organization?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commitment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How committed is this organization to you? Why do you say this?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commitment</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

This guide was adjusted slightly for interviews with managers, coworkers, and spouses of part-time professionals. For example, “What are the advantages of working part-time?” became “From your perspective [as a manager/coworker/spouse], what are the advantages of working part-time?”
professional work. However, the interview guide also imposed a certain amount of structure on the interview, by focusing the interviewees' attention on their own specific actions and interactions with others as they related to the part-time work arrangement, rather than the scripts or rationales they had developed to “explain” part-time professional work.

In addition to the interviews themselves, I collected as much documentary information as I could from each interview subject. This included copies of their curriculum vita, copies of their proposals to move to a part-time position (where these existed), and any formal organizational guidelines for alternative work arrangements. In addition, each part-time professional, manager, and coworker completed Meyer and Allen’s Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Meyer and Allen 1997).

Reflections on the Data Gathering Process

As mentioned above, I gained access to the four organizational sites through contacts of my colleagues. This meant that, from the beginning, I benefited from an association (however tangential) with an “insider” at each organization. In addition, I spent a fair amount of time on the phone or on e-mail with each part-time professional employee, arranging dates and time for the interviews. By the time we met face to face, a certain rapport had already been established with most interviewees. The fact that two of the sites were out of province also generated interest among my interviewees (as to where I staying while I was in town, how my trip was being funded, and why I felt it important to travel to their organizations). And finally, because the majority of the interviews were conducted on site, I became a familiar presence in each organization. By the time I met with each interviewee formally, I had usually been casually introduced to them in the hallway. All of
this served to establish a good rapport with the interview subjects, most of whom seemed to treat the interviews themselves as something of an “event.”

I am confident that my interviewees generally enjoyed the interviews, which gave them an opportunity to talk about themselves and their own personal experiences with part-time professional work arrangements. Many expressed the opinion that the interview had given them an opportunity to speak frankly and openly about issues which they had not thought about in such detail before. Others were eager to discuss with an interested observer the thoughts and opinions that they had had for quite some time. While many of the interviewees approached the interviews as a professional courtesy (expressing pleasure that they could help me out with my research, and the opinion that the interview had been a pleasant diversion), three particular interviews stand out as different. In these interviews, I was struck at the time by how much significance the part-time professionals placed on the interview. For example, I recorded in my field notes after one interview that the part-time professional:

“fiddled with her rings, locket while talking to me. Never looked at watch, no sense she was in hurry. Where other interviewees had been reserved and stuck to the facts, her words tumbled out, as if she were anxious to talk about these issues. Raised topic of problems she’d had very early on, unprompted. After tape shut off, asked me if her responses to similar to what I’d heard from other people – seemed to be seeking reassurance.”

I had a similar reaction to a part-time professional working for the gas company, who told me that she regarded the interview as another way of trying to figure out what role she wanted to play, in terms of her work, her marriage, and her children. Similarly, a third professional, this time working for the electric utility, began talking about her experience as a part-time worker before I turned the tape recorder on, and continued long past the
scheduled end of the interview. In all three cases, I left the interviews with the same sense of excitement and urgency which I had felt when I began my research: they served as a warning against approaching interviews with the attitude that I would simply hear “more of the same.”

Despite these more personal revelations in three of the interviews, my status in all organizations was that of an outsider who had come into the organization to research a specific topic for a finite period of time. While I made myself accessible to respondents after the interviews themselves (several followed up on conversations we had had, or called to advance me news of what they were now doing), in no instances did I develop a long term relationship with either individual interviewees or the organizations in which they worked.

**Data Analysis**

Following standard guidelines for qualitative methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretation was an iterative process (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Miles and Huberman 1994). The first step was to sort and organize the transcript data into manageable categories (Wolcott 1990). I began this process by entering the interview transcripts as complete documents into QSR NUD*IST, a qualitative software analysis package. I chose the NUD*IST software because it offers search and retrieval features, a relatively simple method for coding (and revising codes for) qualitative data, and because it allows for multiple codes to be attached to a single chunk of text – all of which make it especially useful for exploratory research (Weitzman and Miles 1994). With that said, I ended up treating NUD*IST simply as a tool for simplifying the storage and retrieval of data: all coding and interpretation of the data was done manually.
At this first stage, then, I read through a hard copy of each transcript, and sorted the data into broad categories which would provide me with a useful "index" of the interview data (Weitzman and Miles 1994; Mason 1997). Some of these categories were demographic, others housed the contextual information which would be necessary to make sense of the interview data. The seven broad categories were: "gender" (data from a man or a woman); "organization" (data from the gas company, oil company, phone company, or electric utility); "position" (data from a part-time professional employee, manager, coworker, or spouse); "organizational context" (data describing the culture, policies, or history of the different organizations); "team context" (data describing the culture, practices, or history of the different project teams); "individual context" (data describing the interviewee's own position and work responsibilities); and "actions/interactions" (any reference to the social practices through with the part-time professional or those they worked with created and maintained the part-time work arrangement). This last category was explicitly theory-driven: my ontological position was that the social 'reality' of part-time professional arrangements is made up of the actions and interactions which surround them. In other words, part-time professional work is something that people do within specific social contexts: my research focus, therefore, was these actions and interactions.

This first step, sorting and winnowing the transcript data, was relatively straightforward: my objective was simply to make the data manageable (Wolcott 1990) and organize the textual data for further analysis (Mason 1997). From that point on, coding and categorizing the data occupied the major portion of my analysis. Given that my research focus was the specific social practices associated with creating and sustaining part-time professional working arrangements, I focused on the data housed within the category
Chapter III: Research Methodology

“Actions and Interactions.” NUD*IST allowed me to print out a hard copy of all the textual data I had stored in this category, with each textual segment identified by the speaker.

As I had done when initially sorting the data, I went through this hard copy line by line, attaching a code in the margin to every reference to anything the part-time professional employee, their manager, coworker or spouse did to create, sustain, or accommodate the part-time work arrangement. This initial coding scheme generated a long list of first order concepts: participants’ own accounts of the practices involved in creating and sustaining a part-time professional position (Van Maanen 1979, Strauss 1987). Examples of these descriptive, first order concepts include “soliciting the support of clients and coworkers before approaching management with a proposal to work part-time,” “developing a business case,” “checking e-mail from home on days off,” “working through lunch,” and “being flexible about days off to accommodate meetings.”

These first-order concepts were interesting in themselves, if only as evidence of the amount of effort – both individual and collective – necessary to create and sustain part-time professional work arrangements. However, the next step in the coding process was to look for themes, or “recurring regularities” in the data (Guba 1978). My interest here lay with how the data fit together, or what joined together the experiences of different part-time professional employees (Mason 1997). Working inductively from the interview data, then, I assembled these first-order concepts into a set of core categories, or second order concepts: conceptual categories which “capture informant categories at a higher level of abstraction” (Gioia and Thomas 1996, 377; also see Mason 1997 and Van Maanen 1979). Here I was looking for patterns within and across accounts which would not necessarily be apparent to the part-time professional employees (or those they worked with) themselves, but which
would contribute to broader practical and theoretical understandings of the social practices involved in constructing part-time professional work arrangements.

This process generated a final list of seven second-order concepts, which are analyzed in chapters four and five. Together, these second-order concepts satisfy Guba’s (1978) “test for completeness” (Patton 1990). First, they are inclusive of all of the data I had sorted into the category of “actions and interactions.” Second, they have been verified by two independent coders to ensure that (1) the categories are reasonable, given the data; and (2) the data have been coded consistently. This process of verification occurred in two stages. First, having identified these second-order categories, I developed a coding protocol which laid out the rationale for including actions/interactions in each category, some examples of the types of behaviours that would be associated with each category, and some textual examples from actual interview transcripts. For example, the coding protocol for one of the eight second-order concepts, “Laying the Groundwork,” reads:

“Laying the Groundwork: These are interactions associated with the “background” work that goes into developing a part-time position. The key here is that these are actions/interactions in which the part-time professional engages before making a formal request to move to part-time.

Examples of the types of behaviours involved in laying the groundwork include:
- surveying coworkers to find out whether they’d support a move to part-time;
- approaching Human Resources to investigate the company’s part-time policy.

Examples from interviews include:
- ‘though I hadn’t talked to anybody about working part-time per se I had begun to investigate possible opportunities elsewhere’;
- ‘I called a friend who was working part-time for the company, and asked her for the names of managers she thought might be open to the idea of managing a part-time employee.’”
I gave a copy of this coding protocol to an independent observer, along with a hard copy of all the material I had categorized as "Actions/Interactions" from five transcripts. She and I each coded that material independently, using the Coding Protocol as a guide, and then met to compare our coding sheets and discuss any disagreement. That first run-through generated a number of coding inconsistencies, which eventually led to the merging of two core categories which I had initially conceived of as distinct, and more explicit guidelines for the coding of several of the other categories. We then independently coded two additional transcripts, using the revised protocol, and found inter-coder agreement greatly improved. As a final check on the coding scheme, I gave a second independent coder the revised protocol and one interview transcript, which we each coded independently, and consistently.

As a final "test for completeness," these categories satisfy Guba's (1978) criteria for convergence: they are internally homogeneous (in that data within the category hold together around particular themes); and they are externally heterogeneous (in that differences among the categories are clear and identifiable) (Patton 1990). Viewed internally, the categories appear consistent, and, viewed externally, they seem to "comprise the whole picture" (Guba 1978, Patton 1990). The final seven conceptual categories are: laying the groundwork [for the move to part-time], creating the part-time position, and establishing expectations (all associated with the move to part-time work); and managing work, managing boundaries, managing social networks, and managing [the social] discourse [of part-time professional work].
Chapter IV: Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

CHAPTER IV

CREATING PART-TIME PROFESSIONAL WORK ARRANGEMENTS

The following two chapters tell the “story” of part-time work arrangements as described to me by the part-time professionals I interviewed. This is not a simple, linear story: the part-time professionals described a variety of different social practices and interactions through which they created and maintained their part-time positions. What are common across the different accounts, however, are the broad thematic categories into which I have coded the different interactions. In these two chapters, then, I present specific textual examples of more general themes in order to illustrate (1) the social complexity associated with creating and maintaining part-time professional work; and (2) the utility of approaching that complexity from the perspective of managing the different aspects of the part-time professional job and the part-time professional role.

These two chapters tell the story of part-time professional work arrangements in chronological order. Outlined here are the social practices and activities associated with creating part-time professional work; Chapter V explores the processes of Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements. Together, the two chapters speak to the importance of attending to the part-time professional role: whereas few of the professionals I spoke with attended to the cultural and symbolic significance of their part-time status when creating their work arrangement, the significantly more elaborate section on “Managing” the part-time professional relationship suggests that it is here that much of the work associated with creating the part-time professional role is accomplished (see Tables 4-1 and 5-1 for an overview of coding categories and dominant themes).
### Table 4-1: Coding Categories – Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Order Concepts</th>
<th>Second-Order Themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing an economic argument to support the move to part-time</td>
<td>Laying the Groundwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliciting support from clients and coworkers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigating opportunities at other companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting alternative work arrangement as a solution to an organizational “problem”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding an ally in management and gradually structuring a move to part-time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Drawing on informal networks to find a manager sympathetic to part-time work arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying for the conversion of a full-time position to a part-time position</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking personal responsibility for finding a part-time position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relying upon management to find a part-time position</td>
<td>Creating the Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relying on organizational policies to guide transition to part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going in to “grovel”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering a long and personal account to explain objectives behind move to part-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presenting a “take it or leave it” offer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreeing to part-time work arrangements as way of demonstrating the company’s commitment to its employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding to a management initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding a political ally in management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing a formal proposal</td>
<td>Setting Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking advantage of vague organizational policies to establish locally advantageous expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing a trial period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refuting management’s “unreasonable” demands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaching an informal, face-to-face understanding as to how part-time schedule will affect project timelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing non-negotiable parameters around availability to the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting clear parameters around duration of part-time arrangement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Focusing on availability to organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from the experiences of other part-time professional employees working within the company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing the implications of move to part-time with co-workers personally</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
We begin, then with the process of creating part-time professional positions. As a means of soliciting accounts about the creation of their part-time position, all respondents were asked to “Tell me the story of how you came to part-time, going as far back as you need to to fully tell your story.” I present these stories as a sequence of events, reflecting three levels of preparation around the transition to part-time status: laying the groundwork, creating the position, and setting expectations. However, these categories did not, in the cases of many of my subjects, represent a linear progression: a number of the part-time professionals I spoke with “skipped” steps entirely, or “backtracked” between, for example, creating the position and laying the groundwork. However, for the purposes of gaining a richer understanding of the social activities through which part-time professional work arrangements are developed, I suggest that it is useful to lay out the data in this “sequence” – if only to allow us to see where organizational policies are likely to be insufficient in structuring such arrangements, or how and where local understandings tend to be negotiated.

Finally, in reading these accounts, it should be become apparent how very loosely overarching organizational policies guided the process of creating part-time professional work arrangements. As explained in Chapter III, all four organizations had in place a variety of alternative work arrangements and all four had, at the organizational level, developed more or less formalized policies to structure part-time working schedules, at least in terms of eligibility for benefits, vacation time, and sick pay. However, in the majority of cases, these policies were used as rough guidelines or post hoc resources only, and the actual task of creating and implementing a new part-time position was pushed down to the local work context. A striking manifestation of this was the absence of part-time positions in internal job postings. As a consequence, none of the part-time professionals that I spoke to actually
moved into job already designated part-time; instead, they created a part-time position. This allowed part-time professionals and their managers alike considerable latitude in defining the nature of the working arrangement, and resulted in wide variations among the experiences of the different part-time professionals, as demonstrated below.

Laying the Groundwork

The focus of laying the groundwork is the background, preparatory work that goes into creating a part-time professional position. Any references by interviewees to actions or strategies aimed at developing a strong case for why a move to part-time would be personally or organizationally appropriate, along with efforts to locate part-time positions or managers known to be sympathetic to part-time work arrangements, were coded in this category. The emphasis here is on efforts by part-time professionals to frame their request for part-time work in such a way as to improve the likelihood of its being accepted. Whereas “creating the position” and “setting expectations” describe the interactions occurring during and after the request for part-time work, “laying the groundwork” involves the preparation of a strong argument or backup plan to accompany the request for a part-time work arrangement.

Some obvious differences among professionals’ accounts of their move to part-time positions first surfaced here, simply in terms of whether they took responsibility for laying the groundwork for the move themselves, or relied upon organizational guidelines to structure the switch to part-time work. For a number of the professionals I spoke with, “laying the groundwork” was the starting point in their move to a part-time position. Others started to lay the groundwork only after having their initial request for part-time work denied, while still others found it unnecessary to “lay the groundwork” at all. As a relatively
explicit example of laying the groundwork, consider Sam’s account of how he *developed an economic argument to support his proposed move to part-time* at GasCo. Sam drew on other, preexisting organizational policies to frame his proposed new work arrangement as an incremental change, not significantly unlike the work week of any full-time employee benefiting from the company’s flextime policy and generous vacation schedule:

"I did, I put quite a bit of work into preparing a case for this, and one of the things I found, particularly in our area, where take a lot of weekends off, or we work weekends and then take off, you’re gone quite a bit of the time anyway? Between our training days and, well, I could give you a copy of my proposal if that interests you. I put together a pie chart. Yeah. How much everyone is gone anyway?...So my case was, well, whatever works for all those days off should work for a few more days off, was kind of the angle that I was pushing."

Sam also took efforts to frame his proposed new arrangement as politically acceptable, as well as economically viable. Sam describes how he *solicited the support of managers and coworkers* before approaching his manager with his proposal to convert his full-time job to a four-day-a-week position:

"I also was, I went to quite a bit of effort to discuss my idea with quite a few people. And so it was pretty well known throughout our team and the organization that I was interested in this idea before I actually asked about it? So politically I think that I had set it up so that it would have been impossible to say no, kind of thing? 'Cause I managed to get a lot of people kind of saying, oh, you know, a lot of people gave me positive feedback, you know, 'that's a great idea.'"

A similarly self-conscious attempt to lay the groundwork for a move to part-time was described by Mark, a systems analyst at OilCo. However, while Sam went to some lengths to position his move as an incremental change, Mark viewed his as a dramatic departure from organizational norms, and began *investigating opportunities elsewhere* in the event that OilCo denied his request:
"I had some concerns around maintaining my career – as a part time person, I thought I would have a chance of staying in touch with industry changes. Especially because I work in the computer industry, to be away for a couple of years could be devastating to a career. So I wanted a foot in the door somewhere. And thought, well, if I could work two days a week, that would be great, but I had to, I had to come to terms with the fact that OilCo may not be open to that. I wasn’t sure what to expect. I knew we had part-time workers here, but I’ve never met a male part-time worker, first of all, and also because I work on a critical project, I thought perhaps they would see this as not being advantageous. And it would be better to be a full time person. So I was prepared to resign from OilCo. And then look for some part-time work in the industry. And though I hadn’t talked to anybody about working part-time per se, I had began, begun to investigate possible opportunities elsewhere."

The two men described above considered themselves “pioneers” within their organizations (where the vast majority of part-time professional employees were women with small children). Perhaps consequently, they put a lot of effort into making a case to their managers for why they should be permitted to move to part-time. The same strategy was adopted by Jill and Nicole, who considered their application for a move to part-time/job share arrangement at PhoneCo “unconventional.” In 1993, PhoneCo had introduced formal guidelines for structuring the actual terms of professional and managerial job share arrangements. Nonetheless, these two would-be participants still invested considerable effort into developing a strong case for job sharing, ultimately presenting their proposed work arrangement as a solution to a problem that the company did not know it had yet:

“Um, in October of 1994 I was due to come back to work full time; I had taken 13 months off from, after the birth of my first child, and I was quite anxious about it because just leaving a baby and stuff, I really didn’t want to do that. And [Nicole] had recently started working at PhoneCo. and I had known her before, she was a friend of mine. And much to her surprise she got pregnant, like, not a week after she started here, and so she was in a bit of a quandary because she felt a bit guilty that here she was, she had just started a new job and she was pregnant. And I was feeling nervous, so I said to her, maybe one way of solving this problem is, why don’t we propose that we would job share. Because there would be continuity for her job; they
wouldn’t have to find someone and I, what we have to agree, one of the conditions of job sharing is that you have to cover full time when the other person is on maternity leave. So, um, that would be fine, you know, I could live with working full time for six months; I could manage that. And, um, we thought it would work well, and her having to go and tell her boss that she’s pregnant, but I have a solution for you, I’d like to go part time. Because this was going to be her second child. She was sort of anxious about how she was going to handle all of that. And also, I’ve got a replacement who could, you know, I’ve got a partner, and so that’s how we decided to do it. So then we wrote up a proposal, just a little one page proposal saying how we would do it. And we talked to her manager, which is actually our current manager still, and she was very open to the idea.”

In this instance, Nicole felt that her pregnancy stretched the limits of the organization’s maternity policy, given her short tenure at the company. She took the initiative in developing a proposal which would guarantee the organization full coverage, while at the same time allowing to her to cut back on her hours after the birth of her child.

A final account of a professional taking the initiative in laying the groundwork for a move to a part-time schedule comes from Elaine, who went to work for ElectricCo because of its reputation for being open to alternative work arrangements. Elaine, who has three children, had learned from experience that part-time professional work arrangements often involved a certain amount of political manoeuvring. She describes how she found an ally in her manager and gradually developed a workable part-time arrangement:

"That’s kind of been my philosophy mostly through my work is to pursue any job and then try to convince them of the merits of working part-time. Make it a success. [Her previous employer] was not impressed. So I had heard that ElectricCo was quite a flexible and progressive employer, so I came here and spoke with [her current manager] and I sort of scoped out the part-time situation and he, I believe he knew from the beginning that that’s what I was interested in. I did start off full time and then he assisted me in structuring an arrangement where I could work part-time. So that’s how I came to ElectricCo."
In contrast to the above accounts of professionals taking initial responsibility for laying the groundwork for a move to part-time, others described feeling *pushed* into taking the initiative in finding and securing support for a part-time position. For example, Sarah initially relied upon OilCo’s guidelines for women wanting to work part-time after returning to work from a maternity leave, but describes how she was frustrated by her manager’s lack of help. She ended up *drawing on informal networks to find a manager sympathetic to alternative work arrangements:*

“They were very stressful. I sort of had some bad luck with managers. I found in addition to being on maternity leave for almost seven months, I was at home on sick leave for about, I guess it was almost four months before they were born, so I was literally almost gone for a year? So kind of out of sight, out of mind. And I would keep phoning the manager who was supposed to be looking out for me 'cause they permanently replaced me when I left and I found I wasn't getting a lot of direction from him and I finally did get the name of a manager that sort of was rumoured that he had some part-time, a part-time position or was looking for somebody so I started just dealing directly with him. But I don't think it was resolved until about two or three weeks before I was supposed to come back.”

When it came to moving to a *new* position within the company, Sarah was better prepared to take the initiative herself, rather than relying on organizational policies. Despite the difficulty she had had in finding a part-time position after her baby was born, she argues that the guidelines for promotions or transfers for part-time professional employees within the company are even more ambiguous:

“There really is very little, they sort of bend over backwards if you’re coming sort of back from a Mat leave. They sort of, the position is sort of in a lot of cases kind of created, but once you’re back, there doesn’t seem to be a lot that you can sort of put your name forward for.”

Consequently, she explains, she obtained her current position, as a financial coordinator, by *lobbying for the conversion of a full-time position to a part-time position:*
"And you don’t see many jobs posted, we have a job posting network, and you don’t see a lot of jobs posted as part-time. In fact, the job I’m in now was posted as a full-time job and I was very close with the person that was in here and I said to her, well, how do you think they’d react if I said I’m interested if you make it part-time? And she said, well try it, and I did, and it worked out."

Sarah’s reliance upon personal initiative was echoed by Christine, who found the transition to a part-time position at GasCo slow and cumbersome. In contrast to Sam’s efforts to developing a compelling case for moving to a reduced work week, Christine had initially assumed that the process would be straightforward. When her project team denied her request, she took personal responsibility for finding a part-time position – she began to lay the groundwork after failing in her first attempt to move to a part-time arrangement:

“And when I had come to the other group and they said no, like, I had gone in January, and I said I just have to discuss my New Year’s resolution with you, and it was that I needed part time, and I was really in rough shape, though, because I was losing weight, and I was just sort of spiralling downwards, I was just getting so burnt out. And then after six months they came back and said No. And then I thought, well, okay, it’s up to me. And then I started doing, making phone calls to other managers."

Like Sarah’s description, Christine’s account of her move to part-time speaks to an “internal network” of sympathetic managers in the different organizations. “Laying the groundwork” was, for these women, a matter of learning to speak knowledgeably about which managers were “good” when it came to approving part-time work arrangements, and which were “bad.”

**Creating the Position**

Interactions associated with making a formal request for part-time status and/or obtaining a particular part-time position were coded as “creating the position.” Unlike
interactions associated with "laying the groundwork," these involved an explicit commitment
to part-time work, on the part of both the professional and his or managers. However, these
interactions did not necessarily include an explicit commitment to formalizing the concrete
terms of the part-time arrangement. Indeed, one of the most striking features of these
interactions, as they were recounted by part-time professionals, was just how vague they
could be. Consider, for example, Kate’s account of how she relied upon her manager to find
her a part-time position when she returned to OilCo from her maternity leave:

“At the time it was the boss, my boss, supervisor, whoever I left with was
supervising me, and they have to bring you back in [after a maternity leave]
and then find the work for you as part-time, and that didn’t seem to be a
problem.”

Kate’s account of her move to part-time is straightforward: her manager took
responsibility for finding her a part-time position, and she moved smoothly into it. Her
experience stands in sharp contrast to those accounts from professionals who found it
necessary to lay the groundwork for a move to part-time. Similarly, whereas other
professionals developed a case for why they wanted to scale back on their working hours, or
drew on an informal network of managers known to be sympathetic to part-time work
arrangements, Margaret explains that she simply relied on organizational policies to guide
her transition to part-time at ElectricCo:

“Because job sharing had been in probably for almost two years by the time I
came back to work and also because I knew the manager very well of the
department, it was pretty straightforward. There is some job sharing
guidelines that we had to read and sign off on and that was about it, really.
And just an understanding of how you cut your benefits and so on and so
forth but no, it was very straightforward.”

Margaret and Kate’s accounts also contrast with that of Rachel who, like them,
anticipated that her transition to a part-time schedule would be smooth. Another member of
her work team at GasCo had been working part-time since the birth of her first child, and Rachel expected to do the same. What she found, however, was that the process of creating the position involved, in her words, “going in to grovel”:

“So yeah, when I first, so when I left on maternity leave I was working for [her previous manager]. And Nina [her teammate] was already part time. So I said, ‘that’s what I want to do,’ right. ‘Yeah, whatever.’ So while I was gone there was a change of management, or whatever you want to call it, and about two weeks before I was supposed to come back, so I phoned the guy, [her new manager] and I said, ‘well, whatever’ and he goes ‘this part time thing’ and he, you know, we used to talk normal to each other, and he says ‘well I have a business requirement for full time staff.’ ‘What are you talking about?? Like, what does that mean? You know? I mean, I know what it means, but speak English!’ So he actually made me come in and kind of grovel.”

Whereas Kate and Margaret benefited from explicit managerial and organizational support, Rachel ended up taking responsibility for structuring her own part-time arrangement. Her manager insisted that the team could support only a job share arrangement, rather than the part-time that she had requested, and that Rachel should develop a workable proposal to “sell” the idea. Rachel and her job-share partner, Nina (who had previously been working part-time on the same team), went to Human Resources for guidance. They found HR unable or unwilling to even tell them who else in the company was working part-time or job sharing, and ended up drafting their own proposal for job sharing, using the employee manual as a rough guide.

While Rachel was surprised by the requirement that she justify her proposed move to part-time, Mark approached his managers at OilCo with the presumption that he would have to defend his request for part-time work. Mark had two reasons for wanting to work part-time: he was enrolling in a part-time MBA program, and he wanted to stay at home with his young son. When he met with his managers to suggest that they create a part-time position
for him, he offered them a long and personal account of why he was presenting them with this “take it or leave it” proposal:

“I, initially it was a bit difficult because what had happened earlier this year was I had expressed some concerns about the nature of my job, around whether it was fulfilling enough. You know, for the level that I’m at I felt that it wasn’t. And so by the time I had made this decision to work part time and go back to school I thought, by the time I present that to them, they will think that I was disgruntled, and as a result took this action. When in fact the two were independent. And so when, so first of all I had to clarify that, when I went to talk to them and say, well, what I’ve done is I’ve come to terms with what my values are and, you know, I believe in, in parents participating more in the rearing of their children, so that’s important to me. I believe in continuing education, and I think now is the opportune time for me to do that. I started with that and then said so what I’m offering to OilCo, the nonnegotiable thing, is two days a week and I would love to continue on as a, as a technical consultant for sixteen hours. But if you think that’s an awkward arrangement or whatever, that’s fine too. And I’ll move on. And it was accepted right away without any real debate or, some discussion. But general agreement that, you know, that my manager, project manager understood why I was approaching it and there was nothing OilCo could say that would change my mind because it wasn’t monetary and it wasn’t job content related. It was outside of what OilCo could influence.”

That Mark was framing his transition to part-time as a dramatic request, driven by personal values, was not lost on his manager: the personal significance of the transition to part-time was addressed directly in his manager’s account of Mark’s proposal to scale back his working hours. Also evident in this account is his belief that agreeing to the proposal was a way of demonstrating the company’s commitment to Mark:

“To the point, by the way, I don’t know if he shared this, but he was willing to say, when he made his decision to go part time, that he was quite willing to say let’s entertain a contractual arrangement, where I will resign from OilCo, and make the break, and I will come back if you want me two days a week and work as a contractor. And like I said, we preferred the route of staying a little bit tighter with him in terms of keeping him as an OilCo employee, taking care of him, and hopefully he will see that as value and appreciate it later and say, hey, this is a good place to work. It’s another stone on the balance to keep the OilCo option a little bit better.”
Chapter IV: Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

So whereas Kate and Margaret’s move to part-time was framed as simply an organizational policy, and Rachel’s as a concession, reluctantly granted by her manager, Mark and his manager approached the arrangement as more of a gift exchange: Mark was granted a part-time work schedule which would allow him to spend his time according to his own personal values, while the organization demonstrated its commitment to him. In time, his manager hoped, Mark would be able to repay the company by coming back to work for them on a longterm, full-time basis.

In not all cases were part-time professionals responsible for initiating the move to a part-time position: several of the part-time professionals gave sole credit for their positions to their managers. Jackie moved into a part-time position at ElectricCo at the initiative of her manager. Jackie had quit work after her child was born, and then:

“...I guess about eight months after I had quit, my manager phoned and said would you think about coming back part time. So I said sure, two or three days a week would be fine. So I was part time temporary for two to three years and it was at the time when ElectricCo had an awful lot of temporary jobs and the union had been fighting this for some time and so as a result a lot of jobs were posted at that time. There were 100 or 150 jobs that came up so my job was put in at the same time for this group because before that there wasn’t a part time job section. So one was created, part time regular, and I bid on it and I got it so since then, that was February, so since then I’ve been part time regular as opposed to part time temporary... as I say I feel fortunate that the job was created for me and that I’m in this position. But it was more the manager at the time who worked on that as opposed to ElectricCo actually going out and saying, well, we should create some part time positions. Because I don’t think that’s an initiative at all.”

Christine recounts a similar experience at GasCo. Having decided that it was “up to her” to find a part-time position, she applied for a full-time position within the company (at a higher level than she been working at) and explained at the interview that she was really interested in working part-time. While the manager was unable to hire her part-time into
that position, he remembered her request and referred her to Bridget, who was also looking for part-time work and who ultimately became Christine’s job share partner. When asked if anyone had been particularly helpful in helping her secure a part-time position, Christine places all credit for her position on the manager:

“I’d say [name of her previous manager], and that was the manager of the group that I was in before, and it was because he remembered from our interview what I really wanted. And he was the one that went to Bridget and said, because at the level that Bridget was at, he said she couldn’t do her job on part-time, it had to be job share, which I can, because he was sort of breaking new ground there I feel that that was the most conservative route for him to go, so that’s fair, he’s got his reasons. And she said she would job share with me, and then he was the one that got me this position. He’s just been an absolutely super, super person. If it wasn’t for him, I don’t know if, I might have a job share now but I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t have held my breath.”

Nina, whose team leader was not directly responsible for initiating their move to part-time, describes the importance of finding a political ally in management nonetheless. Her own team leader at GasCo helped her to overcome her manager’s initial resistance:

“I was actually the first one in the department that went part time, and so it was pretty new. I don’t think my team leader was, my manager wasn’t very keen on it, and my team leader pushed pretty hard back then to get it. So I think he was on side with that, which helped, because then I kind of felt a little better about, maybe, some of the things, the work I’d still get to do, and things like that.”

Managers and project leaders, then, figured prominently in these accounts of how part-time professional positions were created, just as they did in the descriptions of part-time professionals “laying the groundwork.” Given that part-time professional work arrangements tended to be created in an ad hoc, idiosyncratic fashion, it is not surprising that the importance of a sympathetic manager or team leader would emerge as a dominant theme. Without formal, explicit, and well-understood organizational guidelines for how and when part-time
professional positions should be structured, many professionals found that their efforts to create a part-time position were directly enhanced or impeded by their managers. A similar preoccupation with negotiating mutually agreeable terms for the part-time work arrangement *in the local context* is evident in those interactions coded as “Setting Expectations.”

**Setting Expectations**

The most fully elaborated rituals were associated with the coding category entitled “Setting Expectations”: these interactions occurred after the part-time professional received general approval for his or her move to part-time status, and involved hammering out the actual terms of the part-time arrangement. As with the other categories, these expectations were made more or less explicit in different contexts. At PhoneCo, for example, professionals who moved to a job-sharing arrangement were required to *complete a formal application* specifying how their work would be divided and why that division was optimal, how the job share partners would accommodate training and unscheduled absences, how information (including that coming out of scheduled staff meetings) would be exchanged between the partners, and what advantages and disadvantages were associated with job sharing in that particular position.

Other arrangements, while equally formal in terms of the development of a written contract, were more idiosyncratic to the particular part-time position. For example, Sam and his manager found that, in the absence of clear organizational guidelines for structuring part-time professional work arrangements, they were able to develop their own, mutually agreeable understanding. Sam's manager describes how they were able to *take advantage of vague organizational policies to establish locally advantageous expectations:*
“Actually one of the big things [this company] has, I guess management’s made a statement that the company will support alternative work arrangements, but doesn’t have any formal guidelines around how to set them up, what needs to be considered or anything like that. So there’s been some work done a number of times that never seems to get for whatever reason full completed and shared and those kinds of things. So there’s bits and pieces and it’s been done in different places along the way, and so in some ways I guess we sort of, we grabbed some experience from other people and just sort of used some logic around what do we consider, and at a high level it was sort of what are [Sam’s] needs here, and what’s he trying to achieve, and what’s the business need? And um and really just looking at the two of them and saying, you know, where’s there a conflict between the two and how can we resolve that? So you know at a high level I think those are really the only things that we looked at, and then, then from there looked into what do we need to do to formalize this thing and get it accepted and agreed to within the team and outside the team and those kind of things. But we had a lot of flexibility I’d say just because we don’t have sort of a formal policy on how to go about them.”

In this instance, the organization’s very loose commitment to alternative work arrangements allowed Sam and his manager to structure an arrangement focused primarily on the needs of the Sam and of his work team. Formal guidelines to structure the arrangement were developed at this local level, and were very much a response to Sam’s own proposal. What fine tuning did occur focused on which weekdays Sam would be in the office, with his desire for a long weekend offset by his manager’s desire to keep the account team fully staffed on Fridays, when other employees tended to take flex days. After negotiating between themselves, Sam and his manager each signed a written memorandum outlining the terms of their particular arrangement. The memo specified that Sam would work Monday through Wednesday, and Friday. On occasions where it was necessary for him to work on Thursdays as well, he would be paid for the hours worked. The memo also specified that the arrangement would be reconsidered after a three month trial period, and that should any concerns arise at that time which ‘could not be resolved within the
framework of this arrangement," it would be discontinued at that time. Finally, it stated that there would be no guarantee of full-time employment should Sam wish to reverse his status, and that, should the company require Sam to return to full-time status, he would be given reasonable notice. If he were unable or unwilling to return on a full-time basis at that time, he would lose his position with the company.

Both of these examples represent formal, explicit guidelines binding the part-time arrangements. Whereas many of the professionals were required to develop written guidelines, they were not always nearly so explicit, or so straightforward. Consider Rachel, whose manager at GasCo surprised her by putting up a resistance to her proposed move to part-time. Rachel was asked to develop a proposal to support her move to part-time and, whereas Sam and his manager treated their proposal as an opportunity to develop joint expectations, Rachel treated hers as an opportunity to refute what she believed to be her manager's unreasonable demands:

“So the proposal I wrote up was, it was uh, it was something like, he wanted, he was getting at, his angle was I want you to cover for like, so if you take a flex day I want, you know, somebody to be there. Or if you’re on vacation then she can’t be. And I thought now wait a minute here. And I get the employee manual. And it was like, well, it doesn’t say anything about anybody else having their flex days covered, so I just actually copied right out of the employee manual, right, that “You will be entitled to . . . “, you know, and he says, well, flex days, and I said, Is somebody here when you’re flexing? No. Well then why should somebody be here when I’m flexing? So he kind of got this proposal and that shut him up for quite a while!”

Rachel’s experience stands in contrast to Sam’s in several respects. First, whereas Sam and his manager developed a document which established that their expectations for the part-time arrangement were congruent, Rachel and her manager each viewed the proposal as an opportunity to assert their own agenda. Second, whereas Sam’s document was relatively
exhaustive (at least insofar as it established expectations around how and when the job would be handled), Rachel’s proposal was far sketchier:

“But you know, all it was, was, he wanted to know about vacation, flex days, and all I did was take it right out of the employee manual (rustling) so, You and Your Job. (Pause) I think I just said that, we will, you know, will the same, or just basically the same rules will apply. And I just took the words right out, and then it was only one page. It was a lot of white space. I remember sitting and typing it going, ya know, oh, we’ll make the page smaller, right!”

In other cases, the part-time proposal was less formalized still. For example, Sarah describes a less elaborate process for setting expectations with her current manager at OilCo. Rather than developing a written proposal, she and her manager reached an informal, face-to-face understanding at the hiring interview as to how her part-time schedule would affect project timelines. Sarah recalls that:

“I did interview with her and I said you know I’m interested in the job but if it can be a part-time, a true part-time job, then I’m interested, and her comment back to me was, well, it’s project-related so all it means to me is that a project that would have taken six months is now gonna take eight months because you’re only here three days, so to me those kind of comments were very supportive, that she’s willing to truly accept that you are here three days and you’ll do three days worth of work and not five in three days.”

Sarah’s interpretation of the agreement is echoed in her manager’s account of what creating a part-time position entailed:

“Now this particular one, it wasn’t a part-time job. The previous person who did it was full time, and actually worked a whole ton of overtime. It was during a new system implementation, so there were extenuating circumstances. Um, when I was looking for a replacement for her, initially I wasn’t looking for a part-time person. But she, Sarah, had the skills that I was looking for, the right other qualities, you know, interpersonal qualities. And I thought you know, what it will mean was that the projects that she was going to be doing would just take a little longer. I mean, project work lends itself quite well to part time, so that kind of fit. But I was a bit anxious to get things going and get them done quickly. But I explained to my boss, you know, that I thought she was the best person for the job and it just meant instead of
taking six months it might take eight months to do something. So we'll have to adjust our targets.”

There are a couple of significant points to notice here. First, as stated above, these expectations were developed informally, as part of the hiring interview itself, rather than being explicitly spelled out in a written document. Second, there is congruence around expectations: both Sarah and her manager clearly identify the impact of her part-time schedule in terms of its consequences for project timelines. This suggests a couple of dimensions on which to classify the expectations surrounding the part-time work arrangement: the extent to which they were formalized, and the extent to which these expectations were shared by both the part-time professional and his or her manager.

Mark also worked with his manager to informally establish a set of explicit, concrete expectations when he negotiated his move to part-time status at OilCo. As we have seen above, Mark made a conscious effort to lay the groundwork for his move, and to construct a coherent “story” to explain his wish that OilCo convert his position to a part-time arrangement. So far as Mark was concerned, then, when it came to actually “setting expectations,” it was simply a matter of establishing non-negotiable parameters around his availability to the organization:

“Right from the beginning, I said I would only work two days a week, and I would consider only on special occasions such as Christmas or vacation time whether I could step in to help out a little bit. But I would need to know in advance and the, the main rationale here is, is the requirement to have child care set up in a structured way so I have a nanny on Monday and Tuesdays, I don't have flexibility to work on Wednesday, generally, so I set it up that way, right from the beginning.”
Chapter IV: Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

Mark’s concern with setting concrete guidelines was echoed by his managers, who wanted to set clear parameters around the duration of the part-time arrangement. Mark recalls their concerns:

“They wanted to know more about the school program. What that might entail. How much time was, you know how much time was it going to take? Really what were my career objectives upon completing the school program, you know, would OilCo still be in the running or am I just looking for something to help pay the mortgage, you know, x number of months and then move on to something else. So, you know, fairly legitimate things. Just to clarify the context in which I was making this.”

Recall that Mark and his manager approached his part-time arrangement as a “gift” from the company – the preoccupation demonstrated here with negotiating the duration, scope, and extent of the arrangement are consistent with that perspective.

The actual content of the expectations developed by the professionals and their managers is also worthy of comment. Common to all of the different arrangements, regardless of how elaborate they were, is an almost exclusive concern with specifying the terms of how and when the professional’s job requirements would be performed. So, for example, discussion focused around how long projects would take, how and when training needs would be accommodated, and whether or not the professional would be required to be flexible around their days off, should work requirements demand it. Far less attention (if any attention at all) was paid to the changing role requirements associated with a move from full to part-time status. Sam’s transition is a case in point. Here, his manager recalls their efforts to establish agreement around Sam’s schedule at GasCo:

“Sam’s hope really was to set this up as a, so four days a week is what Sam works, and that was what he had wanted to see. One of the conflicts was Sam wanted to work Monday to Thursday and take Fridays off. The business struggle with that is we have, well, apart from regular vacation time we have what’s called flex time, where people get an additional almost two weeks a
year that they can use whenever they want. And Fridays is a popular day to make long weekends. We also have, the role that Sam's in we call Customer Account rep or Customer Advice Rep, depending on who you're talking to, and they have weekend duties? Where they're scheduled in on a weekend and then get time off in lieu. And typically people take Thursday and Friday off and make an extra long weekend with those two days. So Friday was a, was a day that we're typically short-staffed anyway, and so the business concern was now, if we agree to giving Sam Fridays off, we'd be agreeing to make ourselves even further short-staffed. So we worked through that a little bit, talked about Monday. Sam didn't like Monday because he wanted to be able to do some things to set the family up for the weekend as opposed to clean up from the weekend, that kind of thing, and so we talked about it a while and ended up landing on Thursday. So he works Monday to Wednesday and Friday. Thursday's his day off. So that would be, that was probably the biggest hurdle. There were a couple of minor things probably but that was sort of the biggest one."

Where professionals did exhibit an explicit concern with the role implications of a move to part-time, it tended to be because they had learned from the experiences of other part-time professional employees working within the company. So, for example, Rachel’s manager recalls the interview at which they established the terms of her job share arrangement. (Note that this was Rachel’s second manager as a part-time professional. Her previous manager, for whom she had prepared the formal proposal, had since left the organization).

"Um, I think that Rachel had had discussions with one of the other supervisors at the time. And there were some other people on the floor that had entered into some part time employment at that point. And that wasn’t working out well because the supervisor, he took a different view. He thought that if you weren’t here full time you shouldn’t be doing full time work, you should be doing part time and more of the grunt kind of things. So they [Rachel and Nina] were very concerned about that, but when we started talking about it that was sort of an issue, right off the front. That no, I’m coming back because I want to focus on my career. It’s a career move; I don’t want to give up my career. So it was set out right at the very beginning that we dealt with that issue. Mostly because of some negative things that they’d heard about that were happening in some other areas that they were close to and for people that they did know.”
For the most part, however, topics such as the type of work part-time professionals could expect, or the implications a reduced work week would have on their eligibility for promotion or bonus opportunities, were not discussed.

A key factor around which there was considerable variance was the involvement of team members in the development of guidelines to structure the part-time arrangement. Mark, who as we have seen took a very active role in guiding his transition to a two day work week, was explicitly concerned with the impact of his new schedule on his team members. A team member recalls Mark discussing the implications of his move to part-time with him personally:

“Well, Mark announced to me personally that he was planning to do this, and when it was going to happen. And we talked about it for a while. You know, Mark seemed concerned about how it was going to influence me, and the stress that it might add to my...because it was particularly around month-ends and things here it can get a little stressed, because you'll have all-nighters and things like that, so, I guess Mark being a friend and colleague, was concerned about how it was going to affect me. But I was, I was less concerned about that. I just accepted it. That's great, Mark, it's a very mature thing that you're doing, and I fully support it, and you know, we'll deal with, don't worry about it.”

Similarly Bridget (who moved to a position as a team leader at GasCo) demonstrated a concern with clearly communicating the terms of her new role to team members. As with most of the professionals, her primary concern was with communicating how and when work would be performed:

“Um, mostly that I'd be there Monday to Friday, if we were real busy I'd come in on the Friday, to do, if there were some projects or something, if I was needed enough, then I would come in the five days. I could always be reached at home. Um, I also, um, through my team, I gave the same proposal to my team, my co-, my peers, and my boss. So they all had the same proposal, they all gave me feedback, and they all said that it wasn't a problem. So then that's how we moved forward.”
Chapter IV: Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

Barbara was concerned when efforts were not made to involve her team members during her move to a new part-time position at GasCo:

"Um, I'm just starting in a new team, and one the things that I had to do, and I still haven't actually done it well, we recommend that every time you change teams or leaders or work, that you need to sit down as a group and really make sure that everyone shares, you know, that they're holding hands on this? That they do see, that they do support you being part time, that it's not just an entitlement you've gotten used to. And I don't know what I'd do if anybody says "I don't support this anymore." Recently this job that I've just come into in October was posted, and I applied for it and asked if consideration would be given to it as a part time job, and that's what I've always done. And there was no problem, from that, but they didn't go back to the team and ask the team. And all of a sudden Barbara's on the team and she's working part time. So I have a little bit of concern about how that process would work, but yeah."

In most cases, however, the implications of the professional employee's move to part-time on other members of their project team were not addressed directly. Given that the role (as opposed to the job) requirements of a professional position extend directly to their relationships with co-workers, it is of interest that these relationships received so little attention during the actual creation of the part-time roles. The implications of this fact will be explored further in Chapter V, "Managing the Relationship."

What was particularly striking about these accounts of "Creating Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements" was how few of the professionals interviewed were able to give accounts of their transition to a part-time position which reflected all three aspects of laying the groundwork, creating a position, and setting expectations. In fact, many of the respondents gave very sketchy responses indeed when asked to tell the story of how they had come to be working part-time. Given the theoretical importance of social rituals as a means
of establishing organizational roles, I had expected that the act of creating a part-time position—as a first, and significant, interaction ritual peculiar to the part-time professionals—would have been memorable to them and to those they work with. I had further expected that the process would have proceeded linearly through all three stages. What was noteworthy instead was how matter-of-fact and scanty these reports often were. This relative sketchiness is of interest in and of itself, since it suggests that the practical and symbolic implications of the move to a part-time professional role were not, in fact, articulated through salient and memorable interaction rituals. In terms of the theoretical argument developed in Chapter II, this raises the possibility that many of the part-time professionals I interviewed entered into their new position with no clear understanding as to how that position would challenge the existing local culture, or their own role within it.

As well, the accounts presented above confirm the importance of the local work context as the site for best understanding part-time professionals and their relationship to their organizations. Managers and teams were central to all of the different accounts of how part-time professionals created and moved to their part-time positions, with organizational policies guiding the local arrangements only indirectly. All four organizations in which these professionals worked had previous experience with part-time work arrangements for professionals. All four had clear guidelines for the calculation of benefits, vacation time, and sick leave. And yet the actual process for, and terms of, a transition to part-time professional work varied significantly within and amongst the different organizational contexts. In all cases, responsibility for structuring the terms of the work arrangement were pushed down to the level of the professional’s immediate manager or team leader, with the professional more
or less involved in working with that manager to fashion an agreeable arrangement. The significance of the local context is further reinforced in Chapter V, "Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements."
In this chapter, we move from the creation of a part-time professional work arrangement, to its ongoing management. The chapter comprises four broad themes, each addressing different aspects of the “managing the job/managing the role” continuum. First, **Managing Work** addresses the issues of direct interest to those critics of part-time professional work arrangements who claim that professional work is not amenable to part-time schedules. Around this theme, part-time professionals and those they work with describe how and when the work gets done, the strategies professionals adopt to use time efficiently, and the organizational rituals they miss (or initiate) as a result. Next, **Managing Boundaries** moves beyond simply getting the work done to the broader issue of how and when the part-time professional is accessible to the organization. The specific “boundary” in question is that which separates work from home, or “public” from “private” time. Where “managing work” deals almost exclusively with making the *job* part-time, the social interactions described in this theme start to address some of the *role*-related issues associated with part-time professional work arrangements. These issues are also the subject of **Managing Networks**, in which part-time professionals and their managers describe the social practices through which they essentially “stay in” or “fall out of the social loop”, and the significance they attach to these choices. Finally, in **Managing the Discourse of Part-Time Professional Work**, professionals and those they work with describe the interactions revolving around the meaning of part-time professional work as a general concept and its implications for specific social roles within the organization. These exchanges are anchored
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

at the "managing the role" end of the continuum: the emphasis here is on determining the part-time professional's status within the organizational group, rather than assessing his or her job performance.

While the content and ordering of the themes suggests a coherent "story" with its own logical progression, it is important to recognize that any coherence was imposed by me. Just as the interviewees jumped back and forth between their descriptions of how their role was created and how it is managed, so did their accounts weave together elements of these different themes. I have separated them here to illustrate how managing part-time professional work arrangements might usefully be conceptualized as a variety of social practices involving job and role-related issues, and the limited value of focusing on one while ignoring the other (see Table 5-1).

Managing Work

The emphasis here is on reconciling professionals' "flexible, event-based time trajectories" with the homogeneous, linear conceptualization of time which "part-time" implies. "Managing Work" addresses the practical issue of compressing what is still, in many instances, a full-time job, into a part-time schedule: the activities described in this section address the immediate questions of "does the work get done? When? And how?" Any references by interviewees to actions or strategies aimed at getting the work (the specific job) done were coded in this category, including references to efforts undertaken by managers and coworkers to ensure that the part-time professional was able to accomplish his or her work within the limits of the part-time schedule. The references to activities geared toward managing work have been further divided into three categories: those enacted by the
### Table 5-1: Coding Categories – Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

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<th>First-Order Concepts</th>
<th>Second-Order Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Careful documentation</td>
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<td>Scheduling work days to be continuous</td>
<td>Managing Work</td>
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<td>Adjusting schedule to allow a less distinct division between work and family time</td>
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<td>Scaling back on non-essential reading</td>
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<td>Working through lunches and coffee breaks</td>
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<td>Being more discriminating about attending meetings</td>
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<td>Reduced participation in training and development opportunities</td>
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<td>Working offsite to minimize distractions</td>
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<td>Delegating tasks and responsibilities</td>
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<td>Using managers and coworkers to stay in the loop</td>
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<td>Keeping others working up to speed</td>
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<td>Framing work as a group/team responsibility</td>
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<td>Identifying pieces of work for others to pick up</td>
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<td>Framing work spill-over as a management responsibility</td>
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<td>Communicating and reinforcing the part-time schedule</td>
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<td>Setting parameters around what others could expect of the part-time professional</td>
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part-time professional to manage his or her own work; those requiring the part-time professional to use others to manage their own workload; and those that require the part-time professional to manage the way that other people do their work, in order to accommodate the part-time schedule. Looking at the issue in this way helps to highlight the socially constructed nature of part-time work arrangements: the extent to which their success is dependent on the renegotiation (subtle or otherwise) of work practices and relationships suggests that part-time professional working arrangements are best understood in terms of their local context, rather than broad generalizations.

Managing Their Own Work

None of the people I interviewed reported any problems with the productivity of part-time professionals. In fact, many of the part-time professionals felt that their productivity had increased as a result of their reduced schedules. Heather found that when she moved into what had been a full-time position at PhoneCo:

"...the job content didn’t change. It’s just the way that you work. The job that I’m working on used to be picked up by a full time person. And now I’m doing it in half the time. And I picked up more stuff than the other person did, because I picked up project management, I’m picking up market planning, I’m picking up a lot of other stuff like that that the other person hadn’t done, on top of what she did before, full time."

Christine also described a situation at GasCo where she found herself accomplishing more than her managers might have expected had they set out to define the limits of her part-time job:

"Well, see, what I’m doing now, I don’t know that anybody even gave it any thought as to how long it would take. And because it’s something that I hadn’t done before, I didn’t know how long it would take, and right now I
would say that what I was working on was quite possibly full time, trying to squish it into three days a week.”

And Nina and Rachel’s manager confirmed their perceptions that they accomplished more in a part-time schedule at GasCo than did some full-time employees:

“And I guess in a sense I think it’s worked very well for those two individuals, because sometimes I think productivity wise we probably get as much productivity out of them on a part time basis as maybe we do for some of the more full time employees who are here five days a week, but you know, they don’t have the pressure on them to get their work done. So these two are very concentrated while they’re here.”

From the perspectives of my subjects, then, the issue was not whether the work got done, so much as how. A first common thread linking together the different part-time professionals’ accounts of their experiences was the number of professionals describing elaborate strategies for making sure that their work got done, and done efficiently. A common strategy here was to rely heavily on careful documentation, as a way of keeping work on track. At the phone company, for example, where four of the five part-time professionals I interviewed were in job-sharing relationships, “transparency” was the organizational buzzword for how those relationships should be managed. The emphasis at PhoneCo was on making sure that a full-time job was divided seamlessly between part-time professionals. The method for achieving this, in the case of Jill and Nicole, was “The Book”:

“Well, we have a book. We have a log book and basically we write every single thing down. We write every phone message we receive, every conversation we have, everything that we do in the day. We write it down and we write it down as we go along. So it doesn’t take very long; we’ve developed some shorthand techniques that we know, and we’ve also developed a system that indicated what’s still outstanding....And then, what I’ll do is when I come in, I’ll just read over Nicole’s notes, which probably takes me ten minutes now, to do. You know, you’re so used to it; and because we’re not away from it for very long, and we talk to each other every
day, during the day. That’s the other thing, we keep each other updated, usually once or twice a day. We have conversations about different things, so anything important we can have discussions about” (Jill, PhoneCo).

While “the book” was an example of relatively extreme documentation, other professionals reported a similar reliance on careful record-keeping as a means of allowing them to work efficiently. This emphasis on documentation seemed to serve two purposes: to ensure that coworkers could find job-related information when the part-time professional was away, and to allow the professional to maintain a productive rhythm during the time they spent at work. For example, Jackie describes her approach to managing the work at ElectricCo:

“We have a lot of bulletins and memos whenever there is something that is implemented or changes that we go through, we circulate information. And I do the same thing. I probably keep a better record of what I’m working on now than I did before just in case on the days that I’m not here that someone has to, you know, find out what I’ve been doing or complete the job, then they have something to follow through on.”

Similarly, Kate describes her reliance on record-keeping as a means of “hitting the ground running” after four days away from OilCo:

“And I’ve often sat down and wrote notes. You know, like, I will often sit down Thursdays and say okay, and write down my schedule for next Tuesday, so that when I come in here it’s on my terminal and I can say, okay, what have I got? What’s important, what’s outstanding that I need to worry about from last week. Just so you don’t forget about it, because if you’re busy, you don’t see it over the weekend, and four days later you’ve forgotten completely what’s going on, you try to avoid that by keeping notes to yourself.”

In the same vein, Sarah makes a point of scheduling her work days at OilCo to be continuous:

“And I’ve always scheduled my work days to be continuous, so that I can sort of get in my work frame of mind Tuesday morning and be there til Thursday night and then turn it off, try to turn it off Thursday night. And I find I’m much more productive doing that ‘cause I can leave something tonight and I
know that I'm coming in tomorrow at seven o'clock and I'll remember where I was at."

Elaine, on the other hand, is considering adjusting her schedule to allow a less distinct division between her work at ElectricCo and her family time:

"I'm finding what I'm doing right now, being at the end of the week, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday a bit difficult because I find there's a big separation between what I'm doing the rest of the time and what I'm doing at work and it's almost like you have to get back into it a bit when Wednesday rolls around. And just with three kids at home and everything that goes on I'm kind of tired. It would be better to come fresh on Monday."

As a further means to working efficiently, part-time professionals described "guarding" their work time from organizational activities which they felt did not serve their performance objectives. So, for example, Heather describes her practice of scaling back on non-essential reading at PhoneCo:

"Well, there's a lot of paper in this, in this department. There's a lot of memos and I'm on the distribution. I don't get a lot of details from a lot of things. But you know, it's depending on how you want to spend your time. I have four and a half or close to five hours here very day, and I have to prioritize as to what is more important. And if it's a request and they are first, then I will do this first rather than, you know, reading all this informational stuff."

Similarly, many of the professionals I interviewed spoke of working through lunch and coffee breaks. Barbara describes the efficiency tradeoff at GasCo:

"I think that I'm more productive. I almost think there's no question, that I would be carrying the equivalent of five days a week in four. And so, I don't know whether that's good or bad but I think that I just, I feel more productive. Downside also is that you're working part time so that you tend to really work hard on the days that you're here to make that day off available. And as a result I have let social relationships kind of drop off, and not as important because I don't have time to do that. I am working. I've got to work through lunch hour every day."
Along with being less inclined to spend their work time on lunches, coffee breaks, and "informational" reading, part-time professionals reported being much more discriminating about attending organizational meetings. Kate describes being much less patient than she might have been in the past with activities that do not relate directly to her work at OilCo:

"Well, I think we tend to spend a lot less time in meetings. One thing that, I try to avoid them like the plague, because they're a waste of time. I've got three days, I've got to get a lot done, and I don't want to be sitting in two hour meetings. So I try to keep those way down. I noticed that when I came back from my second maternity leave, or my first maternity leave. I mean I was spending 25% of my time, regardless of whether you're full time or part time, if you're spending 25% of your time doing administrative stuff and tracking things, and it's like, oh this is ridiculous, you're spending half a day out of your week doing this stuff, and it doesn't make any sense, it's not productive."

Kate's pragmatism is echoed by Bridget at GasCo:

"I found when I went part time, even now, you realize you're only there the three or four days, so you really cut out some things that you were doing before, well, do I really need to go to this meeting? No, I'm only here three days a week, so I can get it from somebody else, or something. So I find you're more productive at work, when you're here. I probably get as much done in four days as I did in five."

And Margaret describes going so far as to make minimizing her attendance at "administrative" meetings one of the conditions of her part-term work arrangement with ElectricCo:

"I'm more selective, definitely. In fact, when we go through the process, in our department we've got performance measures and we talk about reidentifying our performance measures, what we're going to accomplish, what our goals are and we are measured against those, and that was one of the, my sort of criteria, that I would attend a maximum of how ever many hours worth of administrative meetings a week, because otherwise it's just overload because you're only there half the time so essentially your percentage is doubled in terms of if you attend them all, so I limit what I would attend."
Just as part-time professionals described scaling back on meetings without direct relevance to their immediate work assignments, so did they relate examples of reduced participation in training and development opportunities. Sylvia describes how she and Annette “never seem to take the time” to participate in training offered by PhoneCo:

“PhoneCo encourages the employees to take as many courses as they can. We find that our job is very busy, and that’s why we’re looking at picking up some more hours, just to make sure that we’re, you know, keeping the desk up. We haven’t, Annette and I haven’t, some employees are on courses an awful lot. Annette and I have not taken very many courses in a long time. We just never seem to take the time to go over and do that.”

Similarly, Christine describes how she tends to focus on immediate concerns at the expense of long term career planning opportunities at GasCo:

“I’m really just focussing on my project, and I really should be paying attention to some of the other aspects of the job, like the development dialogues, and the IO’s. I don’t know if anyone’s spoken to you about those. Just, sort of, your long term planning, about what you want to be doing, so they can help focus you in a way you want to be going when opportunities come up. So I haven’t done any of that, I’m really behind on it. So I don’t know how I’m going to fit that in. Because some of that stuff, that could easily turn a three day a week job into a five day a week job too.”

Elaine’s efforts to rid work time of “unnecessary” (non-job related) interruptions took an extreme form at ElectricCo, where she in essence adopted a strategy of working offsite to minimize distractions:

“I try not to work any more than the hours I’ve sort of established for the project, so I might come in at 9 o’clock and leave at 4 and have worked an hour and a half at home or two hours in the night. A lot of my work is reading and ElectricCo. doesn’t have a very conducive environment to reading. It’s all that open-office kind of concept so I find if I have to read and comment on sort of, one of the things we’re sort of going through is sort of an economic debate about the appropriate form of regulation in structuring monopolies, right? So it’s fairly detailed, comprehensive information. I mean, there’s phones, and I just find it’s not an environment to get anything out of people’s research, reading research reports on that or other utilities’ experiences of structures, that I can’t do that at work.”
Mark recounted a desire to adopt a similarly extreme approach to minimizing “non-job” related distractions at OilCo. Working only two days a week, he is away from the office most of the time, and finds he often spends a fair amount of his work time “catching up” on office gossip:

“While I don’t hear anything Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, there’s some people that love to update me on Monday, so I don’t know. I’ve even thought that it might be worthwhile, you know, coming in Monday, getting all my work organized, and staying at home Tuesday and doing it from home.”

The activities described above paint a picture of part-time professionals making more or less explicit choices about how they work so as to maximize their productivity while minimizing distractions (personal or organizational). Their emphasis on “getting down to the real work”/paring down work to the essentials also extended to their work relationships, as seen in the following two sections.

Using Others to Manage Their Own Work

Along with adapting their own behaviour in order to work productively within their part-time schedule, part-time professionals described interactions which involved directing the work of others within the organization, in order to get their own work done. These practices ranged from more or less direct dependence on coworkers to help carry the workload, to more educational practices aimed at changing the way that others work to better match the part-time professional’s needs. Delegating tasks and responsibilities was a common strategy for confining work to a part-time schedule, particularly when the duties delegated were not seen as having a direct impact on the part-time professional’s specific job, but were viewed as serving “the larger interests of the team or group.” For example,
Sarah, finding herself swamped with meetings at OilCo, spoke of sending co-workers in her place when it was possible to do so:

"So it hasn't been that much of an issue, but there's some days I just, there's some days that I get, there's another person in this group that I do a fair bit of work with, and some of the meetings she can go to just as easily as I do, so there's some days I say look, I just don't have time to go to this, can you go for an hour and let me know if there's any issues or whatever. I find a lot of things I go to are not, they're more sort of For Your Information or, you know, let us know if this is going to cause you a problem, we're going to do this. So it's not really, it's not directly work related, but they're still, they're still fairly important. So sometimes I'll get her to attend some of that stuff too."

Similarly, Christine from GasCo references her team to explain how she fits her full-time workload into a part-time schedule:

"So I think as a member of the team, I don't think the part-time is a huge aspect. I just kind of make sure I delegate some of the things that are really time consuming to people that are full time instead of trying to do it myself."

Like Sarah, Christine relies on delegation as a means of effectively managing her own time, but describes it as an opportunity for co-workers to become more involved in the work:

"Some of the issues that we're dealing with, well I can just send someone from my team to represent me, and that gives them an opportunity to learn, and it's not really that critical that I'm there."

This is a mindset echoed by Nina at OilCo, who also frames delegation as beneficial to her group members. Nina is currently taking the lead on a design project, and describes how she views the impact of her absences on the rest of the group:

"And, like right now, this thing we're in is called a design review, and it only lasts about four or five months, and it's pretty intense, like every week, kind of thing. But obviously I'm not here some of the time. So, in some respects that's bad, because you're not here when a decision has to be made, but that's good because the people that you're working with, you have to make sure they're up to speed enough to, you know, that they kind of get a bit of extra responsibility."
Along with delegating responsibilities to coworkers explicitly, part-time professionals spoke of using managers and co-workers to stay in the loop. In this sense, coworkers were not given formal responsibility for tasks that might once have been performed by the part-time professional, but were asked (explicitly or implicitly) to fill a kind of liaison role, mediating between the (absent) part-time professional and the rest of the group/organization. Mark describes how it falls to his team leader at OilCo to fill him in on information he may have missed during his days off:

“My group leader would typically come in early on the morning on my first day of work of the two days, and she will ask for a little bit of an update, it’s quite informal, and she’ll update me on any activities that she thinks are relevant.”

Kate recounts how she relies on coworkers to bring her up to speed on events she might have missed at OilCo:

“Like, for example, last Thursday I elected to work from home, missed the afternoon staff meeting, and I still haven’t found out what it’s about. But I’ll probably go ask one of my coworkers, did you go to the meeting and what did we discuss? You know, was there anything of importance that I should know about. And that’s usually how I’ll do it, is I’ll just go ask a coworker and say, what was discussed and was it important? Do I care? No, okay.”

Nina uses the same informal approach to staying on top of information at GasCo:

“It’s just a case of, you know, when you come back Monday you know you have to hit someone up and say what happened on Friday, or what happened at that meeting, and make sure you just get brought back up to speed. You know, there’s a bit of onus on your co-workers to help you get back up to speed too. But I don’t think they mind too much.”

Barbara elaborates on the responsibilities this liaison role places on her coworkers at GasCo:

“Downside is also out of sight, if you’re not around and something comes up, and this did happen a couple weeks ago, a fairly important issue came up on a Friday and I wasn’t here. And I came back to work and I said, “it’s odd, I’m part of the group but why wasn’t I told about this?” “Well, you weren’t here.” So you really have to make sure you’ve got an informal
communication system that would help you to keep on top of that stuff. And that puts some pressure on your colleagues then.”

Delegating and using coworkers to stay up to date on organizational information allow the part-time professional to “confine” their job to one which can be accommodated within a part-time schedule. Keeping others working up to speed within the context of that part-time schedule allows the part-time professional to sustain a productive rhythm and use their time at work more efficiently. Kate has found that she needs to manage others’ work schedules assertively in order to minimize her own “downtime”:

“I tend to use e-mail more, well, just having the voice mail, I think that’s just the technology age. I also like it because it’s easy to file. So you can keep records of, you know, okay I sent you this on last Thursday, and it’s still not done today. It’s been four days. I get that a lot. Even though you’re part time and you’re, you know, you get stuff lined up on Thursday, nobody does anything until Tuesday when you come back. Yeah. I find that a lot. Oh, she’s not back until Tuesday, so they don’t do anything. Whereas instead of getting everything done so you can come in Tuesday and be very productive, it’s like, now we can get to do your stuff so that I get to do my stuff. So you’ve got to hound them when you’re not in the office. So e-mail, voice mail a lot more.”

So far, the social practices offered as examples of ways in which part-time professionals “use others to manage their work” have served the same objectives identified in “managing their own work”: allowing the part-time professional to “hit the ground running” and to fall quickly into a productive, uninterrupted work rhythm. A final set of practices, however, addresses the circumstances in which co-workers find themselves picking up pieces of the part-time professional’s job, or dealing with work spillover. This was not raised as an issue by the part-time professionals in job sharing situations (who achieved full job coverage as a requirement of the job share arrangement), but did come up among the part-time professionals working on project teams. Here, a common response was
framing work as a group/team responsibility. Heather describes how she relied on her team members to help her out when she first moved to part-time at PhoneCo:

“When I started part time I had a very small team, with a manager and there were two girls that I worked with. And we were good friends, and it’s the support, you know, when you cannot finish the work, or you’ve got something that has to be followed up, she is willing to follow up and do that, and that’s a good transition. You know, people think that there’s still the responsiveness. And it’s more of a working in a team type of environment where it’s not just my work, it’s everybody doing it together to get the work done. And I really like that. That really helped. Yeah, if there’s some coworkers, they’re willing to cover you and carry on, then it will work a lot better.”

Sam explains how his team members at GasCo themselves frame managing work around his part-time schedule as a team responsibility, by offering to cover his duties for him:

“Like, whenever I have a day off, they, you know, I often say, well do you think I should be taking this day off, ‘cause it’s pretty busy, and stuff like that, and they always say no problem, I’ll take your accounts for the day* kind of thing. So my teammates have been very supportive in that way, in covering things for me while I was gone. Although the main responsibility is still lying with me.”

Mark’s team leader describes the consequences for her of his framing work as a team responsibility, while endorsing his practice of identifying pieces of work for others to pick up:

And so [Mark] has a PC at home, and if something comes up, like last week or the week before we were in a real struggle with a deadline, and on Tuesday he left me with a bunch of things, but he left me a note saying, you know, I’m not sure if these things can wait until I get back, and you can send me an e-mail when you’re done. So I picked up that piece, so essentially, hopefully, the client thinks it’s seamless, which it isn’t, and they probably do know that, but then, when I take it to a certain point I can send Mark an e-mail saying, okay, I think this is resolved, can you verify that? And then he can do that from home....Because most of them [part-time professionals] have a commitment to doing their job well, and I think for most of them that doesn’t mean, well, it’s 5:00 and I’ll forget about it. If something really needs to be done, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re going to come in the next day to do it, because
they have other commitments, but at least they understand it’s their job to identify that.”

As the above quotation indicates, Mark adopted a relatively explicit strategy of passing on work to other team members at GasCo as a way of handling his part-time work arrangement. At the same time, Mark lay responsibility for alleviating any co-worker resentment squarely at the feet of management by framing work spill-over as a management responsibility:

“And also, I’m not sure, with a couple of my peers, in general I think people support me in this but some people have been negatively impacted, I think, by my decision in that work is now spilled over to them. And I, with one individual I’m not sure whether she accepts, you know, I think she’s supportive of my decision but she’s not that happy with the outcome for her. So that may be, you know, a management challenge there is to, to deal with the spillover of my work onto other people as a result of this decision.”

Managing How Others Work

The final category of practices and strategies aimed directly at managing work are those which involve training coworkers to manage their own work so as to conform to the part-time professional’s schedule. Again, these range from practices which would have a relatively minor effect on the coworker’s schedule, to those which involved a fairly explicit (often assertive) expectation around how and when others should bend to the part-time professionals’ schedule. A first and common practice was simply that of communicating and enforcing the part-time professional’s work schedule. Part-time professionals typically relied on the use of voice mail and electronic to communicate how and when they would be available to the organization. Lilli recounts how she uses technology to communicate her schedule and to direct clients and coworkers to support staff when she is away from ElectricCo:
“What I do is on my voice mail I always leave a message to say that I am away until Wednesday or whatever and if you need immediate assistance I give them another phone number to call. On my [internal e-mail system], because I’m not converted to [new mail system] yet, I put a message on there as well, if they send me a mail message.”

Similarly, Christine’s coworker describes how she has learned to adapt her schedule to suit Christine’s:

“We are all assigned little processes. I’ve got a project chart on the wall there. And each one, we’re each a business analyst for each project line, and so [Christine’s] project line, she just times herself so that her meetings and her discussions with anybody else in the company happens on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. And then I know that as well, so I will only try to make sure that I ask or answer any questions on those days as well.”

And his manager describes how Nathan communicates his part-time schedule at GasCo:

“I think he does use the computer system here to leave a notice as to where he is or to contact, for example, our associate here, and she’ll help them out with getting in contact with him.”

Rachel and Nina adopt a more low-tech approach to communicating their part-time schedule, but make the same point of broadcasting when they will be available. Rachel elaborates, explaining that the process is not as straightforward as might have been expected:

“Here’s our little schedule, here. And we have that pinned on the door and they say “Is Nina here?” And they peer at the schedule. You know, is there some problem, you can’t read or what? You know, the idiots, there are idiots anyway.”

Allowing little room for negotiation, Sarah uses technology at OilCo to not only communicate her part-time schedule, but also enforce it:

“I use open time to block off the days that I’m not here so they can’t, I mean they can overschedule me, but I’ve got it there that I’m not in.”

Communicating and enforcing their part-time schedule is one way in which part-time professionals have an effect on the working rhythms of their coworkers. Slightly more
assertive are practices aimed at setting parameters around what others could expect of the part-time professional. Again, these practices are more or less direct. An example of a relatively minor change was described by Heather, who works at PhoneCo from 7 am to noon, Monday to Thursday:

“Even with this job I don’t think I impede too much on my availability to the work. You know, mostly, it’s just working on a different way of doing things. Usually, you know, I come in early; I start work at 7:00, so they usually leave me messages or leave stuff on my desk if it needs to be done. And I make a point of being very responsive to any request. I don’t want to impede on them. But I only work four days a week and I don’t work on Fridays, and if really a clinch came, then I would work on Fridays. I would be more flexible. But they know if they leave it on my desk this morning, usually before they come in they will have a reply.”

An even more assertive approach was described by Kate, the Systems Analyst working three days a week for OilCo. Kate’s practice is to make explicit her part-time schedule when meeting with any of her vendors (clients):

“Well, I tell everybody, up front, I’m here Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. So if, and we’ve had meetings, like I’ve had meetings with [a major client] and my vendors in Vancouver last August, where we had a meeting, and they said okay, we’ll get it to you, like say, Friday afternoon. And I say, well, if you get that to me then, you might as well keep it until like, Tuesday. Because I’m not here, I’m not going to get to it, and I’m not going to try to get to it. And I just make that plain and clear up front. And they say okay, well that makes sense, we’ll get it to you Monday then. Or we’ll ship it out Monday so you get it Tuesday morning. My vendors in Vancouver will do that. They will ship things Monday so I get them Tuesday morning, you know, that type of thing.”

Nina describes a similarly no-nonsense approach to her schedule at GasCo:

“Meeting wise, I try to get people to be cognizant of my schedule, you know, and really, it’s, if they schedule something for a Tuesday or a Thursday afternoon when I’m not here, I just don’t attend. Because I can’t change my personal schedule. Not that quickly. Yeah, so most people are actually pretty good with that. They don’t seem to mind. You know, it’s just a little bit of effort to book a meeting in the morning as opposed to an afternoon.”
Along with establishing when they would be available to coworkers and managers, part-time professionals also described practices targeted toward determining how they would be available. This required educating others in the organization to work differently with part-time professionals. For example, PhoneCo's emphasis on "transparency" required that managers and coworkers also change their traditional association of a management position with a single job holder. Jill describes what this entailed:

"We had to train people a little bit in terms of how to deal with us, because at the beginning people would tell me one thing and then they would repeat everything again to Nicole, and that's not very efficient. I mean, one of the whole goals is to behave, or to be, transparent to everyone else that you're two people, you know, you should really actually be one. So if someone tells me something on Monday, and they have to follow up with Nicole on Friday, she knows about the conversation that happened on Monday."

Similarly, Sam's manager at GasCo raised the issue of training co-workers to call the part-time professional at home (a practice which the part-time professionals I spoke with regarded as appropriate when work demanded it). He describes how coworkers took some time to get used to the idea, and so found themselves taking on more work than they would have had they felt comfortable with the new working arrangement:

"There was a little bit of concern, so the example I'm thinking about here where somebody did a little extra work instead of phoning Sam, part of that I think was their concern was put aside when they talked about it and found out, well yeah, I could have phoned him, and actually I knew I could have done that, I chose not to, so how can I blame Sam for that? And we're lucky enough to have a fairly reasonable group here and so in this case the individual just I think realized that it was kind of hard to blame Sam in that case, there was no reason why they couldn't have picked up the phone and talked to him."
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

Managing Boundaries

While Managing the Work might conceivably be construed as a relatively straightforward matter of determining how and when work is accomplished, Managing Boundaries deals with the more ambiguous issue of navigating the boundary between home and work, or between the part-time professional's "private" and "public" time. Here, professionals and those they work with address the issue of accessibility: when is (or should be) the part-time professional accessible to the organization? When do professional role expectations extend beyond the part-time schedule? In terms of the boundary itself, there are two dimensions of interest: its permeability, and the intensity of "boundary crossings." Put more simply, is there a firm distinction between "work" and "home" time and, if not, to what extent does the one intrude into the other? And how and by whom is the boundary managed: who decides when and to what extent work can spill over into home time (or vice versa), and what are the strategies and social practices through which these boundary crossings are enacted?

To better illustrate the strategies and practices associated with "Managing Boundaries," this section has been further divided into four categories: those activities geared towards keeping "home" out of "work"; those which bring home into work; those which bring work into the home; and those which keep work out of the home. Of particular interest throughout this section is the question of who is "managing" the boundary. There is a certain tentativeness in these descriptions of what is and is not acceptable practice around the work/home boundary – particularly around those practices initiated by managers and coworkers. Questions of interpretation are also raised here: when is flexibility around the boundary a professional responsibility, and when does it represent a "sacrifice" of family
time? The ambiguity associated with these issues suggests that we are starting to address the area of role expectations, rather than simply performance standards.

**Keeping ‘Home’ Out of ‘Work’**

It was discussed above, under “Managing Work”, how part-time professionals made a practice of protecting their “work time” from organizational demands which did not directly affect the task at hand. Similarly, the practice of *buffering work time from personal concerns* was repeated again and again in my interviews. Yvonne describes how she confines her personal errands to her days away from ElectricCo:

“When I’m at work I don’t, I’ve already done all the stuff I needed to do during the few days that I’ve had off so I don’t need to do a lot of errands or running around like at lunch time or after work because I’ve sort of done them already.

Sarah offers a similar approach to her work at OilCo, but describes a more conscious effort to shield the company from her personal concerns:

“I think the company, to me, or at least the way I approach it is, I find I work much harder in the three days that I’m here than sort of working five days. For instance, I bend over backwards to not schedule any kind of outside appointments like doctors or dentists or anything like that on the three days that I’m here. If at all possible they’re done on the two days that I’m not here. Whereas if I were working five days a week and I needed to go to the dentist, you know, you just go to the dentist, kind of thing. I find most days I work through lunch, ‘cause I know I’ve got this much I’ve got to get done this week and I have to get it done by Thursday, ‘cause I’m not back ‘til Tuesday.”

Sarah’s explanation reflects an urgency with regard to accomplishing a set amount of work in a compressed amount of time. Jackie adds an element of accountability to ElectricCo, for “allowing” her to work part-time:

“And as far as the working, being in the three days, sometimes I feel I get more done in the three days than I would in five. You know, depending on
what I’m working on at the time. And sometimes I get the feeling that they may get more out of me in the three days than they do some people in the five days. Because I tend to take all of my doctors and dental appointments on my own days rather than on my three days, and I feel a little more conscious of my starting and stopping times and my coffee breaks and lunch breaks. Just feel that, you know, I should put in a little more while I am here.”

Annette and Christine extend the practice of buffering work from personal concerns beyond “routine” doctor’s and dentist’s appointments, to more “pressing” personal issues: they make a point of putting off sick days in order to meet their work schedule. Annette attributes her stellar attendance record at PhoneCo to her part time schedule:

“I think I feel a lot more positive about coming to work just because you are only here for two days, you’ve got a lot more energy to put into it. You know, you are not taking off time to go the doctor or anything. I mean, you know, how can you do that? You’re here two days a week and you’ve got to go to the doctors, you know? No sick days. I mean, I don’t think Sylvia and I probably took sick days when we worked five days a week, but coming in part time, you know we’re here pretty much consistently. It’s a rare day when anybody has ever missed any time due to illness or whatever.”

Christine explains that, with her work load, she cannot afford to miss a day’s work at GasCo, regardless of whether she or her children are ill:

“The other advantages are when they’re [her kids] are sick, you can usually postpone having to stay home with them because, like, I haven’t taken a sick day ever. I think I probably had some about ten years ago or whatever, but a large part of that, too, is since I’ve come part time, you can’t afford to be gone a day, usually. And when the kids are sick it’s just, sorry, and you can usually make them squeak by, or yourself squeak by for the three days.”

Together, these practices point to a concerted effort among part-time professionals to keep personal concerns out of work time.

Bringing Home Into Work

While keeping home out of work was a consistent theme among the part-time professionals I spoke with, practices which effectively brought personal issues into the work
setting were recounted much less commonly. Those social practices are also differentiated from efforts to keep home out of work by the extent to which they require the cooperation (tacit or active) of managers and coworkers. Keeping home out of work was characterized as a solitary activity, designed (in many cases) to show appreciation for the flexibility afforded by a part-time schedule. By contrast, practices associated with bringing private concerns into the work sphere were more public, requiring the approval of managers for these special arrangements. They became in effect another reason to feel gratitude toward the organization, though professionals varied in the extent to which they viewed these arrangements as major concessions on the part of management, or simply evidence that management was prepared to be flexible with their time. For example, Sarah describes her reluctance to allow personal problems to affect her work time at OilCo, and how she was finally forced to bend her part-time schedule to accommodate private concerns:

"And I, I try very much to not sort of bring all the personal problems in here and go running to my boss and say, well, my kid's sick so I have to do this, or, well, you know, I have to take my child here. So I try as much as possible not to, not bring their problems into work. But it's getting quite difficult with the youngest one that has, that has this problem. So when I came into this job I said, look, I'll let you know that every week I have to be gone for three hours and I'll make that time up, you know, either once a month I'll come in on a Sunday and work all day or I'll take some stuff home, but you have to know that I just can't be here that morning and so far it's gone alright."

Rachel has also manipulated her schedule to deal with problems at home. Unlike Sarah, she offers no apology for these concessions to private concerns, but does credit her manager with allowing her this flexibility. Others within GasCo, she explains, have not met with as much management cooperation:

"I mean, [my manager's] been flexible, like if, the thing too, like the other advantage, I guess, that like, they didn't have, is that if my kid is sick on Monday, I come to work on Thursday. Like, I've got a flexible baby-sitter
too, who doesn’t mind that. Whereas they, no, you have to take a sick day, or whatever it is that you do. So that flexibility has been there.”

Annette describes how she and Sylvia, her job share partner, entered into their work arrangement with the explicit motivation that it would enable them to spend more time with their families. Given the nature of their arrangement, the cost to PhoneCo is slight, as between them, Sylvia and Annette guarantee full-time job coverage, regardless of the personal arrangements they make with regard to who will work when:

“Sylvia and I have always maintained that if there is something special going on with your kids – I mean, that’s one of the reasons, well that’s the primary reason why we are job sharing is to be there with the kids. So if somebody has a swim meet on a certain day or a track meet or a sports day or whatever, a professional day and the kids are going to be home, we spell each other off without having to take vacation time because you can’t always take VT, but so that works really nicely.”

Bringing Work Into Home

If home (for the most part) stays out of work, part-time professionals described a host of ways in which work regularly spills over into the home. While these practices were, for the most part, described as “exceptions to the rule,” the volume and range of “exceptions” suggests that, for many of the part-time professionals I interviewed, the boundary between home and work is highly permeable. In part, this can be attributed to attempts by these part-time professionals to create conditions which allow them to use the time they spend in the office most productively. For example, Barbara describes how she accepts aspects of her work at GasCo spilling over into her home life, by making a practice of taking “extra” work home:

“Yeah, and also if you’re not a good communicator, you better figure out how to be. Because you’ve got to stay in touch with a lot of people, and you’ve got to read as much as everybody else reads, in their five days a week.
You know, like that in-basket of mine that's stacked up, it never seems to go away because you don't have the time, the time that you're here you're trying to get work done. And getting work done doesn't include as much time for all the extra reading, so, I end up taking skads of that home at night. So just be prepared for some of that as well. I think it's reasonable.”

Barbara does her “extracurricular” reading at home to leave her “work time” clear for “real” work. Similarly, other professionals described using technology to stay up-to-date from home as a way of ensuring their time in the office can be spent efficiently. For example, Kate (OilCo) elaborates on her strategies for minimizing the possibility of surprises interrupting her productivity during her work days:

“So, yeah, I think it’s more of Tuesday is coming up, I’ll check e-mail all the time so that I’m not coming in to surprises, that type of stuff. If I’ve got a problem, then I’ll be resolving it over the weekend. I’ve got a, I was just talking to my vendor and I’ve got a new lease coming up in March, and that looks like a whole weekend I’m going to have to put aside to do that in peace, because it’s not pretty, it’s a big one. So things like that, so now I’m planning, okay, we gotta come into March, that weekend, book around that Saturday and Sunday, how am I going to do that, what am I going to do with the kids? That type of stuff. So yeah, that’s also a big help, if you’re part time, is being able to plan.”

Mark describes a similar practice to controlling the rhythm of his work at OilCo:

“When I said, you know, I work sixteen hours, I should work sixteen but I probably work closer to twenty. The four would probably be made up of work from home where I am checking, say, the progress of some work, reading some email, and just keeping in touch that way, so when I come in on a Monday, I hit the ground running.”

The above practices represent strategies by which part-time professionals work from home in order that they might be able to use their time in the office most efficiently. Doing informational reading at home, and monitoring voice-mail and e-mail correspondence to ensure that they will not return to any surprises represent strategies to control the pace and rhythm of work time. However, another class of activities addresses the ways in which part-
time professionals respond to the pace of work, rather than controlling it. Here, the part-time professionals manage the boundary between work and home so as to accommodate the needs of managers, coworkers, or clients. For example, a common practice was Taking Critical Calls at Home. Barbara describes how she will, on occasion, invite clients to contact her during her “private” time:

“If there are unique things going on, or you know that you don’t – I have one client group, I didn’t want them to perceive that I was difficult to get a hold of when they were going through a particular thing. I would make myself available. But that’s not, it’s not like I broadcast my number on my voicemail, just say I’m not here today but you can call me at home. Just sort of give it out, more on an ad hoc basis as it’s needed. But I don’t have any problems doing that, and it doesn’t happen that frequently.”

Kate has adopted the same approach at OilCo, treating the home/work boundary as fluid in response to workplace emergencies. However, she makes clear that she does so only in response to genuine problems, and is not prepared to subordinate her home time to her work time on an ongoing basis:

“I have put out, I worked from home last Thursday, so I put my phone number out, and said hey, phone me at home! And so they know that’s there, and in emergencies I have given out the phone number on Friday and said phone me, right now, if you need help, that type of stuff, so if I’m working on a problem. And they will contact me, they don’t seem to have a problem with that. But in terms of phoning me all the time at home, no. They tend to respect the Friday-Monday type thing. I’m also busy. Like, I’m not necessarily available on a Friday or Monday.”

Heather echoes this sentiment in describing her arrangement with PhoneCo:

“I don’t mind them calling me at home if they, you know, respect that they only call me at home when it’s an emergency. I mean, they have my phone number.”

Other professionals described a more habitual practice of using the phone to deal with “quick” issues from home. Here, professionals express a willingness to make
themselves available to deal with ongoing issues from home, either by calling in to work, or by accepting phone calls from the office. Jill describes how she and her job share partner at PhoneCo rely on telephone updates as a way of dealing with “subtle” issues efficiently:

“You know, some things, there are a lot of subtleties to them, that you can’t really write things down, and I’ve got here, we’ve got a letter... and there’s an issue we have to resolve, but for me to write down everything is just too complicated, so I’ve just said here, Nicole, talk to me about this. So she’ll call me and we’ll just have a little quick discussion about it at some point and, you know, she won’t have to write it all down and we know what’s going on.”

Similarly, Margaret explains how she and her manager at ElectricCo will keep each other updated on the status of projects during her days off:

“Usually if something has come up that, it is a project that I’ve been dealing with, and you know, the call if I’m not there might go to my manager, and she’ll just phone me to find out what the status is or how that happens. And some of the special projects I’ve been working on have had tight timelines, so although I don’t have to be there for the Monday, Tuesday that I’m off, I’ll phone in just to provide comments if that was what was required, or you know, just sort of conference with somebody else involved in it.”

For Elaine, dealing with quick issues from home is a way of ensuring that her project team at ElectricCo remains unaware of her part-time status. She not only manages the boundary on her own, but does so in such a way as to disguise the boundary:

“My work tends to be that I would be the lowest level person on a project and it would be more senior people and I would doubt that a lot of them know I work part-time. I don’t go into a project and say I only work on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and you can only reach me between these hours and everything. With the voice mail I pick up my messages at home. I end up doing a lot of stuff at home.”

Christine, on the other hand, likes the “surprise” element associated with calling in to GasCo on a day off. Like Elaine, she treats the home/work boundary as permeable, but explains that calling work from home serves, in her case, to call attention to this boundary:
“So I’ve had a couple of calls at home. But most often I would call in here, if I remember something or just whatever, if something’s been bothering me. I usually try not to do either. It kind of shocks people, they don’t expect you to be calling in and you do. But sometimes it’s kind of nice, because if I think of something I like to phone whoever before I forget it, because there’s a good chance I’ll have forgotten it by the time I come in on Monday. If it’s not on one of those yellow stickies!”

Finally, Annette described how she and her job share partner, Sylvia, take an extreme approach to making themselves available to PhoneCo on their days off, going so far as to remain accessible while on vacation:

“So we always make ourselves accessible, even at home. If one of us is on vacation, and the other person, it’s not their day to be in, we can always be reached at home. We phone in for voice messages on our holidays. We take holidays together, yeah, and we always make ourselves accessible to the people we support.”

Many of the professionals I interviewed invited their managers and coworkers to call them at home. However, very few of the managers and coworkers felt comfortable doing so, suggesting that these efforts by professionals to manage the ways other work by inviting them to make the boundary permeable were, in many cases, ineffective. For example, Sam’s coworker explains he makes a practice of avoiding calling the part-time professional at home. As far as he is concerned, that is “time off”:

Q: Do you ever contact [Sam] at home on his day off?
“He keeps telling me to, but I try not to. It’s a day off. It’s just like a week end. Unless it’s really important, you know. I think that over the time that I’ve been doing it I think I’ve paged him one time.”

Sarah’s manager at OilCo seems to have adopted a similar philosophy – that the professional should only be disturbed at home in the case of “something bad” happening:

Q: Does [your manager] contact you at home on your days off?
“No. So far she hasn’t. In my previous job they did, but so far she hasn’t. I’ve given her my number, and said, you know, if anything comes up on these
two issues call me, and she’s said, well, not unless it’s really bad, kind of thing. So far no one’s phoned me.”

As Nina and Rachel’s manager from GasCo explains it, he would only contact them at home on a day off if it was about a matter which would benefit them directly:

“I have their phone numbers and stuff. Mostly from the point of view of if something comes up that would be uniquely important to them. So maybe there’s something going on, and they leave on Wednesday, and maybe Thursday I’ll find out, gee, something’s happening, you have to get your name in if you’re interested, by Friday. So I might phone them at home and say, gee, there’s this opportunity to go on a course or put your name in the hat for something, and I have to let somebody know by Friday. Are you interested? So that’s about the only time I’ll contact them. I think that their privacy at home is important to them. That’s outside of work. But that’s no different than anybody else. Same thing with other people. I wouldn’t be bugging them at home.”

Nathan’s manager at GasCo has a similar approach:

“The only situation where I believe that [calling Nathan at home] was appropriate was where I knew he was taking a day off and the next day he was also missing, as it were, and my concern then is more for, so, are you okay? More of a health, safety type of perspective.”

Mark’s team leader (who also works with Sarah and Kate at GasCo) has an interesting approach to the notion of calling him at home. First, she feels it’s inappropriate to make a habit of contacting part-time employees on their days off:

“I have only, I think, probably once or twice, phoned them at home. That, in my mind, is something that you should only do in an emergency. Because there’s a reason they’re at home, I think. So actually, I phoned Sarah, Sarah I phoned at home a couple of night when actually she would have been off anyway. And Mark I phoned at home last week when we were having this problem with the tax reports that he had been working on, and it was a fairly urgent item. I’ve never had to phone Kate at home. So it hasn’t been an issue. The area she has been working on has been quite stable. Which is good from that perspective. But, like I said, if it came up that would be my last choice, and only if something couldn’t wait would I try to do that.”
On the other hand, she does make a practice of leaving voice or e-mail messages for the part-time professional at work on their day off. In effect, she leaves it to the part-time professional to determine whether or not they are prepared to work from home, and by so doing, assigns responsibility for managing the boundary to the part-time professional:

"So I’d say our internal rule is that it is acceptable to phone at home and people signal that by giving me their home phone numbers, you know, before they leave for a trip or something like that, well, not a trip, that doesn’t make sense. But I think there is another rule, which is, you know, I have to make a judgement call about, how urgent is this, before I phone someone. And in fact, sometimes I’ve done that with people where they’ll say, if something comes up, you know, you can phone me at home. I’ll say I’ll leave a message on your phone here. If you want, you can phone in and pick up your messages, and if there’s a message for you then you know that I’ve got something urgent. But that way it’s still, it’s still up to them. I don’t go into their home, I just go into their office and if they want to phone into their office then, that’s just my own personal thing about that."

A more obvious blurring of the boundary between home and work occurs when the part-time professional works extra time in the office, either as a result of switching days to accommodate work demands, or in response to job pressures which require that they work full-time to meet project deadlines. Whereas the above strategies represent the intrusion of work time into home time and space, other practices involve the subordination of home time to work time and space. For example, a number of the part-time professionals reported Rearranging Their Part-Time Schedule to Accommodate Work Demands. Nina attributes the success of her part-time work schedule at GasCo to precisely this willingness to adapt her schedule to organizational demands:

"I think being flexible is probably the biggest thing, so I’ve always said, you know, if something was, if there’s a big deadline on Friday, I would never have a problem, you know, coming in that week or whatever it is, to help make it. So you know, if you said nope, that’s my day off, I don’t bother coming in, that might not go over quite as well."
Similarly, Kate explains that there are times when she “has to” conform to OilCo’s scheduling requirements:

“There’s the occasional time where you have month ends, like I used to support some systems where there was a month end, so depending on when that month end fell, I had to arrange to be here, or to be available, or whatever. So you have to do some of that type of thing, going on, but I had no problems, in four and a half years, with managers, coworkers, or clients.”

On other occasions, she explains, her flexibility is a “gift” to OilCo:

“Because my family is always, my family and home life comes first, always. But yet, I’m committed, like if I need to go to Montreal to train, I will, you know, put my kids in day care an extra day and organize that, and I will organize car pools around it, and I will do all of this extra work to be able to do that, but it would have to be on my schedule. Like, if they phoned me up and said, can you do this tomorrow? I’d say nope.”

A more dramatic blurring of the boundary between work time and home time occurs on those occasions when part-time professionals find themselves working a full-time schedule in response to job deadlines. So, for example, Heather (PhoneCo) describes that she will, when necessary, **work extra (often full) time in the office when work demands:**

“At time, when I have to, I work full days, planning sessions and here sometimes, like I have to work full days. You can take it for a day or two, but you know, after a few days you really feel the stress.”

Sam and Christine report that they have both been putting in extra time at the office to respond to the hectic pace of work at GasCo. Sam views working Thursdays (his traditional day off) as a trade-off for the opportunity to work on an important assignment:

“Right now I’m kind of setting up to work quite a bit through the month of February. I’ve been given a high-profile project, just starting up now, that will take quite a bit of my time. And I’m already fairly busy. So I’ll use, I’ll try to come in some Thursdays, or partial-day Thursdays.”

Christine explains that giving up at least one of her days off has been regular practice over the last few months:
“Well, November and December I was working four and five days a week just about the whole two months, and I worked four days last week, I’m working four days this week, and I actually think for the next month I’ll be four and five days. Well, hopefully not five days, because that’s too much.”

While the response is common (working full time in the office when necessary), part-time professionals offer different interpretations of the “reasons” they work overtime. Jackie explains that she views this extra time as a response to internal pressures, rather than to demands imposed by ElectricCo:

“And if there is a project, like I have worked on projects where I have changed from three days to five days just because it was so much work going on and I thought, well, I better put a bit of extra time in, but those were my own pressures rather than others putting that on me.”

By contrast, Sarah explains that, in the past, she had “sacrificed” time that she could have spent with her family in order to meet GasCo’s needs. She was upset that this sacrifice was not acknowledged by her former supervisor, with whom she had what she considered a very poorly prepared performance appraisal interview:

“My last position was a lot more time-oriented and short time lines and I was working a lot, a lot of extra time, and that’s why I was quite disappointed when bonus time came around, ‘cause I said, you know, I was supposed to be here three days a week, I ended up sacrificing this much time with my family and getting this much work done, and now you’re asking me how long I’ve worked for you?”

Sarah contrasts her previous manager’s attitude with that of her current manager’s:

“But generally, she’s been very accommodating, she’s been very good about specifying that she really, if I could at all come in this day, could I, kind of thing. I was in, I came in on the Saturday at the end of a week where I worked every day, and was leaving about two o’clock, and, you know, she said thanks, it was commendable that you came in, and thanks. And I’ve never had previous managers do anything like that.”
This notion of whether or not working the occasional full time day, week, or month represents a professional obligation or a "gift" to the organization raises interesting questions about how firm the boundary between home and work should be, in the minds of part-time professionals and those they work with. It also raises questions about the extent to which part-time professionals should be acknowledged for allowing work to spill into home time, and whether or not their managers are obliged to help them maintain a firm boundary. Sarah's description of her current manager, above, suggests that she considers her overtime a gift for the organization to acknowledge. However, Kate's manager credits the success of her part-time arrangement to the fact that she has effectively managed boundary issues on her own, without asking her manager for "special" accommodations or acknowledgement:

"You asked for success stories, Kate's been a good one. We just went through a project phase where she had to implement, and she made that work, there was, for a period of months, the work requirements exceeded her part time commitment, and she just made them up. She didn't make it an issue for me. She didn't come and say you've gotta do something about, you gotta reject a project schedule or whatever. She just accommodated it, no complaints. It included travel, by the way. She was in Montreal and various other cities, and that could have become an issue but it didn't."

Interestingly, Kate herself credits the success of her arrangement, in part, to other managers' attempts to help her maintain a firm boundary between home and work:

"I've had supervisors tell clients, 'she works these days, and no, we're not going to ask her to work overtime because you need something really, really quickly and you're in a fuss about it. You know, these are her hours, and that's the way we're going to do it.' I've had supervisors do that for me. Yeah. So it's actually quite good here. But then, I do have to comment that I am, I make myself available on off-hours too."

The interviews also surfaced a lot of discussion around when and how it is appropriate to schedule meetings around the part-time professional's schedule, or vice versa.
The issue here is not strictly job-related since, as many of the part-time professionals pointed out by their decision to skip meetings held on days when they were at work, there is the perception that meetings are often a “waste of time,” a social event, or simply occasions for professional posturing. Rather, the issue seems to be one of professional responsibility — when and to what extent is it incumbent upon the professional to make himself or herself available for departmental and organizational meetings not directly related to specific job responsibilities? And to what extent should managers be accommodating the part-time professional’s scheduling when planning these meetings? For the most part, the part-time professionals I spoke with expressed a willingness to bend their schedule to accommodate organizational meetings, at least on occasion. For example, Jill explains how she will extend her scheduled hours at PhoneCo in order to attend meetings:

“I don’t work a lot of overtime. I really don’t — I leave at 4:00 on my days. I mean, that’s the routine we have, because my commitment to my child is there. I’ve got to see her and pick her up and that kind of thing. But, where it’s necessary I will work around that. Like, yesterday I stayed later because there was a meeting later. And that’s fine, I’ll do that. But on an ongoing basis I’m not willing to do that.”

Similarly, Elaine does what she can to attend meetings at ElectricCo:

“I try and structure my schedule that if there’s meetings and it’s not on a day that I’m schedule to work, that I would alternate or whatever.”

However, part-time professionals also described exercising discretion around when to come in for meetings. Margaret explains that she is willing to bend her schedule to accommodate ElectricCo, but only when the meetings represent a worthwhile use of her time:

Q: And will you come in on your days off for meetings?
“Mmm hmm. I mean, I will if it’s important. If it was a regular administrative type meeting or something I wouldn’t do it, but if it was something that couldn’t otherwise be scheduled I would.”

Yvonne and Vanessa will also work together when “important” meetings at PhoneCo demand that both job share partners attend:

“If it’s a really important meeting then both of us will come in for the meeting, and if it’s something that one of us doesn’t need to be in and we’re away, then one – like Vanessa, for example, if she’s in she will just fill me in on what happened. But there were certain, like we’ve had strategy sessions in the department which both of us had to attend, and we were both in that day so it’s not a problem.”

However, meetings are not always made to represent a boundary-management issue. Some managers made a practice of scheduling meetings to accommodate the part-time professional’s schedule, thereby relieving the part-time professional of the need to make decisions about how and when home time should be subordinated to work time. As Mark’s manager explains it, including part-time professionals in regular meetings at OilCo is not a difficult task:

“I do try to accommodate – typically, most people tend to take off the latter part of the week. So, for instance, I’ve just set up department meetings for the year. They’re Mondays. And yeah, other meetings I am aware. It’s not something you have to learn that many times before it sinks in. You schedule big meetings at the beginning of the week and that seems to work.”

Similarly, Jackie explains that, though she is willing to be flexible, her team at ElectricCo generally make a practice of scheduling meetings on days she is in the office:

“Meetings if they are scheduled, if I am one of the key people in the meeting, people are pretty good actually, they will book it for the day that I am here. Team meetings that we have or project meetings, you know, they usually take place on the days that I’m here. But if it’s another type of meeting and it’s booked on a day I’m not, I’ll try to make it in for that meeting or I’ll just work that day or I’ll try and get somebody else to go.”
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

However, other managers of part-time professionals are of the opinion that it is the professionals’ responsibility to make themselves available for meetings, rather than expecting that they will arrange meetings around the part-timer’s schedule. These managers require that the part-time professional bend their own schedule, rather than bending to the part-time professional’s. For example, Sam’s manager explains that, as part of his part-time arrangement with GasCo, Sam is responsible for attending important meetings held on Thursday (his traditional day off). When it comes to boundary management, he explains, the responsibility is Sam’s:

“Well, [Sam’s] included I guess like any other member of the team. We don’t think about Sam any differently. When we set up his arrangement we actually said one of the things we agreed to was if there’s a need for any reason for him to be here on the Thursday that he’s not normally here, that he would be. And so some of that we leave to discretion. If we have a meeting on a Thursday that he really doesn’t need to be to and he decides not to come, that’s fine. But our expectation would be that he’s gonna catch himself up. And it hasn’t been a problem at all.”

Christine’s manager takes the same approach. Like Sam’s manager, she maintains that Christine is treated “the same as anybody else”, but Christine’s project team meets every Thursday, which is one of her days off. Her manager is of the opinion that “it’s up to Christine” to decide whether her participation at that weekly meeting is important:

Q: “To what extent is [Christine] included in meetings, conferences, or training?

“I’d say the same as anybody else, but her availability, the project team meeting is every second Thursday and she doesn’t normally work Thursdays, so, you know, it’s up to her, you know, she could come in that day, okay. But we can’t reschedule the meeting to accommodate her schedule. It has to be done at the convenience of most other people.”

As with meetings, training represents a professional responsibility around which part-time professionals expressed a willingness to be flexible. As Rachel describes it, training
opportunities at GasCo are not structured enough for her to rely on being included while maintaining the parameters of her regular part-time schedule. She makes a practice of adapting her part-time schedule in order to take advantage of training opportunities as they arise:

"The training, like I say, I sort of have to keep on top of it, and make sure that things don’t happen that, you know, de facto eliminate you. Changing days, if I have to, and there’s not that much training around here.”

Jackie describes a similar flexibility in her attitude toward training at ElectricCo:

“Well, actually I just had a training session yesterday on one of the new screens that we’re bringing in. So Tuesday isn’t generally my day in, so what I do is I just shift my week. So this week I work Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. And the same goes for hours as well because I work about 9:30 to 5:30 or 10:00 to 6:00 depending on the day. If it starts earlier that day, well then that’s when my day starts. I’m pretty flexible as far as what’s happened. And if it’s an all week training session, then I’ll just do the whole week.”

That it is typically the part-time professional who is responsible for managing the homework boundary when it comes to training issues is acknowledged by Mark’s manager at OilCo:

“[Another part-time professional] attends conferences. I don’t know whether Mark’s been off on one. They’re usually the ones that actually do the accommodating there, because it usually means breaking their schedule. There’s a class set to go Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Mark normally works Tuesday, he normally accommodates that in his schedule.”

However, as Christine describes it, the need to be flexible with her schedule is more than offset by the benefits she gains from participation in training courses at GasCo:

“There is, and it’s funny, because I had thought that this last team leader that I had told you about wasn’t at all supportive of part time, I thought that he would say – like they came out with the department standards, that everybody would get X number of days training a year. And I thought, okay, that’s X number of training per everybody per year, multiply that by .6 because that’s my work week, and that’s how many days I should be doing. And when I spoke to him on that, he said no, I think you should be getting the
full amount of training. And I thought, hey, bonus! Because that to me is an extra expense on GasCo's part. But, on the other hand, it's hard to fit in that extra training, so I've sort of chosen on my own to do that training above and beyond my three days a week. So those were some of my five day a week stints that I did in November and December, were to accommodate some of the two days or three days worth of training, so that I didn't find that I was getting behind in my job. Whereas, when you look at some of the full time employees who took those days, I mean, even though I was paid for it, it was still extra, whereas they would get a little bit behind when they take training, because they would be out of the office.”

Keeping Work Out of Home

A final category deals with efforts by part-time professionals to keep work out of the home. As detailed above, the home-work boundary was, in most cases, described as permeable, to a greater or lesser extent. Those part-time professionals who tried to restrict the intrusion of work into home time described making an active effort to discipline themselves to stick to a part-time schedule. As Barbara explains it, the onus is on the part-time professionals themselves to ensure that the contours of the work arrangement are respected:

“For me, though, that means that sometimes we work really hard and work really long hours, because you really want to make it work, and other times it has meant that it's just, you really have to discipline yourself to stick to what is your part time. It's very very easy to get called in for extra days and extra meetings and those kind of things.”

Margaret recounts a similar experience at ElectricCo, where she feels a constant tension between her own high performance expectations, and her desire to protect her time away from the office. She describes having to “push quite hard” to manage this tension:

“For me the disadvantage is a lot of time I feel that I can't give enough to the job. I mean, you still have that sort of attitude of wanting to do a good job and you are professional and you're dealing with senior people. And I don't like the idea that a lot of times I have to just walk away from things and say, well, I can't make that deadline but would this day be okay? And work
around it. You tend to sort of ask for leniency a lot of times to work around your job sharing, and I find that if you don’t do that, and from past experience, you say ‘Okay, I’ll come in on this day and I’ll come in on this day’ it becomes the norm instead of the exception, so you have to kind of push quite hard to make sure that your time off stays your time off.”

As a means of protecting against the intrusion of work into her home time, Annie described a ritual to mark the transition from work to home. As a way of symbolically differentiating her work at PhoneCo from her life at home, she makes a point of attending a daily exercise class before heading home, where she will not entertain work-related issues:

“I make a point of not to check my voice messages. I don’t do that. And they know that, you know, when I come in I’ll do the work, when I leave, I leave. And, I mean, just because I can do an exercise class downstairs at 12:00 I have to leave on time if I go to exercise class. And that’s just a good transition for me: one physical work place to another. I go do my exercise, work off the stress, shower, change into my regular clothes, into my own clothes. Go home and start different.”

Similarly, Barbara recounts how she has made a point of “filling up” their home time, so as to guard it from work demands. Barbara explains how an effort to maintain firm boundaries around her part-time work schedule at GasCo has resulted in more structured use of her home time:

“I was into a real habit of going home and taking my computer with me all the time, and now when my Thursday night rolls around, that’s the end of my week. I lock it up and I leave it here. Yeah, unless it’s really critical. Just like any professional in any job, if you need to do some catch-up, then I do that. And I think anybody would work some extra hours in their day, and all of us do. But I’m really vigorous about doing that, because otherwise my day off, it’s 12:00 and it’s not my day off anymore. So I organize things on my day off. Piano lessons for myself, which I’ve never done. I volunteer with both of my kids’ schools on Friday, and those were the things that I wanted to do. So I’ve got them scheduled, and I’m not a schedule person, but I’ve done that deliberately.”
Managing Networks

So far, "Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements" has been described as a series of social practices designed to ensure that the work gets done, and that the part-time professional walks an organizationally acceptable line between adhering to the contours of the part-time schedule and satisfying departmental and organizational demands for accessibility. "Managing Networks" adds to these practices a series of decisions around when and how to participate in social rituals (formal and informal), so as to stay "in the loop." The focus here is not so much on the way that part-time professionals work with others in the organization, so much as it is on the kind of day to day socializing which helps to secure their positions within organizational and departmental networks.

For some of the part-time professionals I interviewed, staying in the loop was simply a matter of capitalizing on physical work arrangements which were conducive to socializing. Jill describes the networking implications of physical layout at PhoneCo:

"That's easy to stay in the loop. Well, we sit in sort of pod areas. There's usually about four people in a sort of cubicle arrangement. And the person we share an area with, she's very into all this stuff, and she's always chatting to us and letting us know. And we always update each other, and 'did you know this person is doing this, and this person is doing that?'"

Sam's manager at GasCo makes a similar observation in speculating on Sam's ability to remain up to speed socially, despite his reduced work schedule:

"I think the, I'm guessing here, I've never asked Sam this, but because he's in a bull pen type situation, he's got lots of interaction with his peers so that he has a lot of opportunity to catch up on things."

Other part-time professionals, whose physical work arrangements do not lend themselves as easily to socializing, describe more explicit tactics for ensuring that they retain their informal networks. For example, Nathan maintains that his visibility within the
organization remains high because he makes an active effort to maintain social relationships at GasCo:

“I have lots of friends here, I walk around all the time in the morning, ‘Hello!’ ‘Good Morning!’ And talking to people. So I’ve been considered not a threat at all. So how people see it, they probably don’t really see it. Because I don’t present any significance in their lives... I talk, as I say, I try to always walk around the floors and talk to people. Briefly, how can I help you, talk about something, a joke, anything that might be on their mind or something. So I’m more of a feeling sort of guy, that’s how I work.”

Similarly, other part-time professionals describe making a conscious effort to take advantage of lunch and coffee breaks as occasions for informal networking. This practice stands in contrast to that of those professionals who described making strategic choices to work through these breaks, or feeling forced to do so in response to a heavy workload (see “Managing Work”). However, as Sylvia explains it, participating in morning coffee breaks is a ritual she and her job share partner would not dream of missing. So much informal information about PhoneCo is exchanged at these “breaks”, she explains, that she likens them to attending a meeting:

“Organizational things I’m probably really behind on, company things. I tend to stick to my job, and unless it came up at morning coffee, I tend to miss any gossip. But we, that’s, we, that’s really important to us, that we go down for coffee every morning. We go first thing in the morning when we arrive, and the whole group basically groups. And that’s almost like a meeting, because any gossip or any changes, or anything that’s sort of happened within the company is usually discussed at that time.”

Margaret is similarly explicit about her motivation for participating in informal breaks and lunches at ElectricCo:

Q: How about staying in the loop in terms of organizational information? How do you get that?
“I guess just by going for coffee with people and that’s doesn’t change too much. I just, I mean I get a lot of information from my manager who, we used to work at the same level and so it’s, there’s a fairly close relationship
there. So she fills both my job share partner and I in on the sort of, the
informal informational stuff that’s going on, and other than that it’s just sort
of by contact that you’ve had in the past when you join up for lunch or coffee
or whatever.”

As Yvonne describes it, a “social/informational lunch” has became a regular part of her
routine at ElectricCo:

Q: How do you stay in the loop and get organizational information, social
information?
“Lunches. Some people say I only come in for lunch. I almost have a lunch
date every day that I come in, and that’s how I get sort of informal
information.”

Rachel also makes a point of going for lunch with colleagues at GasCo, but rather than
stressing the networking benefits of these occasions, she frames them as a way of balancing
the isolating effects of working a part-time schedule:

“Contacts are still the same. So yeah, nothing’s really changed. Probably I
tend to maybe go out for lunch more, just to see people. Yeah, you know, to
get, because you don’t have as much BS time, for sure, so lunches are very
important.”

Along with relatively informal coffee breaks and lunches, the part-time professionals
I spoke with described making a conscious effort to maintain their involvement in more
formal social events. Nathan explains that GasCo’s social club schedules a full calendar of
events, which he tries to attend whenever possible:

“As often as I can, you know. Yeah, I didn’t get to the skating party, but I did
go last year. So I try to participate in the pot-lucks. So I buy some 20 pounds
of ice and 50 bottles of Coke, or something. And social club, they sometimes
do Christmas parties, and so forth. But I would say I’m an on-
average participant in these things.”

As with training and meetings, part-time professionals described rearranging their
schedule to accommodate social occasions. Christine’s coworker at GasCo acknowledges
this flexibility, while explaining that her project team will, whenever possible, try to schedule events to coincide with Christine’s work schedule:

“But yeah, generally, if, so with our project, we generally try to schedule anything that’s remotely social on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday so we know [Christine’s] around. Unfortunately one we did go on, I think it was a Thursday, and she did miss out. She was going to try but just couldn’t organize the babysitting to get herself down there.”

Similarly, Sarah’s manager makes note of Sarah’s involvement in social events at GasCo, and her willingness to bend her schedule on those occasions:

“Well, last week we took out, the person that [Sarah] replaced actually went on an overseas assignment and we took her out for lunch on Friday. [Sarah] joined. She had a babysitter, or her husband actually babysat, and she came for lunch. She couldn’t make it at 12:00 so we moved it to 1:00, so she was there. So she’s accommodating that way too.”

For Nina and Rachel, participation in social events is inevitable, as they are the most active members of GasCo’s social committee:

“And the other thing, for some reason, I don’t know, maybe it’s just us, but Nina and I seem to be the driving force of the Fun Committee around here! So like, we do skating parties, Halloween parties, I don’t know, maybe it’s, I don’t know why! We don’t have to do this stuff! But we do, we don’t mind. But we, actually, yeah, I mean one of the, like we are the loop, in a lot of ways, on the social side of things, sort of thing.”

This involvement is recognized by their manager, who takes their active participation as evidence that they are a “very functional part of the team”:

“Like I said, they’re part of the work Fun Committee, as we call it. So they go around and create and organize events for the departments. So we have a bowlarama at [a local bowling alley]. We have a staff meeting once a month, so once every year we go to [the bowling alley] and rent the bowling allies and the pool tables and just get together on a socializing basis, a team building basis. And they’ll organize that, and get involved with that. They’re a very functional part of the team....They really help with the department activities and being involved in things. Even if they’re only here three days a
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

week, they contribute probably as much, if not more, than people who are permanent.”

Nina and Rachel’s manager’s estimation of the importance of social involvement was echoed by other managers, suggesting that decisions about how and when to participate in social activities do not simply represent idle choices on the part of part-time professionals. Mark’s manager elaborates on what he sees as the significance of social events at GasCo:

“You know, I don’t know, if you happen to work Mondays to Thursdays, and most of the team functions are on a Friday night, you should maybe plan on it because it’s not, you’re missing out on that opportunity to just kind of network with your group in an informal setting and find out what’s happening. Or if going away functions, or Christmas lunches, or whatever tend to be at the end of the week and you’re working at the beginning of the week, you’re not going to feel as much a part of the team, so there is that part of it. I guess the initial thought I was thinking of, I could see, once again, people only working a couple days a week kind of coming in and being much more focussed on the work on their desks, and gee, I’ve only got two days here so I really better get this done, because I don’t want it to drag on. And maybe they’re working with others and the results of their work get presented at a meeting that they’re not there at, and so somebody wouldn’t maybe think of, oh yeah, that was theirs too.”

Sarah’s manager offers a similar assessment, explaining that this is an area where she questions the work strategies of many part-time professionals:

“The other thing I find about part-timers is, there’s always slack time, right? There’s chit-chat time, talk around the coffee station and the water cooler and all that. Part timers have less of that time to spare, so I find they’re down to business quite a bit more. They’re here between 8 and 5 and they work. And I knew of another part-timer in the tax department that even worked through here lunch….I think they, well, it is kind of important, because that’s where your networking happens. And you know, gossip does exist in the office, and that’s how you get to be part of the team, and you get included, and you just find out what’s going on in the organization, and you get little tidbits from all over. So it is important. I wouldn’t discount that stuff as being trivial.”

However, a number of the professionals I spoke with pursued precisely this strategy of making a conscious effort to avoid office socializing. As Heather explains it, her
choosing to "fall out of the loop" is not so much a rejection of the importance of informal networking as it is a reaction to a full work schedule at PhoneCo:

"I do confess, I miss a lot. I have no idea what's going on. Somebody's leaving, you know when the card comes around that I have to sign. So that's it, I guess. It's really depending on how you want to spend your time. When I spend the time in here, I really spend the time in here to get everything that needs to be done done. So the rest, you know, if I have some spare time then I will, you know, check things out and if not, then I guess I missed it."

As Kate describes it, falling out of the social loop means she does not have to be immersed in office politics – a factor to which she attributes her continued employment at OilCo:

"I've got excellent projects, I really like what I do, I like the hours I work here. And I think that has contributed to me liking OilCo, to some degree. If I worked here full time, there's no way. I wouldn't be here. Part time, at least you have, you can get a break, you can get away from the office, and you're not submerged in the political stuff, which sort of helps a lot."

Nina speaks with more regret of her decision to minimize the time she spends on informal socializing at GasCo, but maintains that this represents a logical tradeoff when trying to be productive within the confines of a part-time schedule:

"Yeah, things like I tend to not take coffee breaks and go with, so you miss a bit of that, I must say. But you know, because, like I said, you have to come in and do what you gotta do, you don't have time to spend a half an hour going for coffee or whatever. So I guess you miss a bit of that. But I don't know if that's detrimental or anything like that, you know, either. You kind of get enough without trying too hard. You know, because people stop by and tell you the scoop, so. Yeah, I think the only thing was when they unfortunately punted somebody, or terminated somebody, and it was like on the Tuesday I wasn't here. So Wednesday morning everybody's all abuzz, and I'm like whoa, what's going on? You know, and halfway through the morning somebody finally came and said, oh, they fired this guy. You know, so you miss, but I mean, so you're half a day late. No big deal, right?"
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

As Mark describes it, staying out of the loop at OilCo may be a big deal, but with a two day a week work schedule, it is a state he considers inevitable:

Q: What do you think are the most significant things that you miss by being part-time? Work-related things?

"Interaction with my coworkers. And I guess through that obtaining just feedback. In subtle forms you’re, we use feedback to assess how our careers are going, and now I can see, simply there being less feedback. We certainly, throughout the week, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, I don’t get any career feedback. So I could, I could see that affecting me over time to some extent."

A final point of interest with regard to part-time professionals and social networks was the development of new networks around part-time professionals working in the same organization. Sarah describes the development of a (short-lived) formal network for part-time professionals at OilCo:

"And I think when I first came back part-time they actually formed a group here. I think one of the first women that came back part-time sort of formed this part-time group, and it tended to be, I think there was one man but it was primarily women with young children. And there was about seventy, seventy people at the time who were part of this. It was interesting. I don’t think it exists anymore. We had little lunchtime conversations and stuff."

As Barbara describes it, the network of part-time professionals at GasCo is less formal, but still serves the same purpose of bringing professionals together to discuss the kinds of tradeoffs and tensions associated with working part-time:

"There’s very few part time people. But for those of us that work part time, there’s quite a few people that I know, you know, you get to know your own circle of part timers, in an informal, support way. And you work a lot to make them work."

Managing Discourse

The practices described above have been wide-ranging and complex, involving the way part-time professionals work, their accessibility to the organization, and their position
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

with informal organizational networks. All of these issues contribute, in one way or another, to managing the meaning of the part-time professional’s work, and the part-time professional’s role. In this category, we focus more on directly on efforts undertaken by part-time professionals, and those they work with, to manage the discourse surrounding part-time work. By “discourse”, I am referring here to the language and symbols through which part-time professionals are identified by their managers and coworkers as organizational members in good standing, or as “other.”

For example, Sarah describes how OilCo minimizes the contributions of part-time professionals through the structure of its bonus program:

“We had one talk from HR, ‘cause they sort of changed the whole administration of part-time, and you tend to get the impression that it’s, because they offer it it’s accepted, but I’m generally finding that I believe part-time status is definitely, you’re making a statement, and you’re making a statement, and I believe it impacts things like our bonus pay program. I don’t know if anyone has talked about that, but there’s sort of a set bonus for everybody if the company earns a certain percentage. But then there’s sort of a high performance pool of money, so the top twenty-five percent of performers get carved out and they get some extra and I definitely believe that part-timer just has a stigma that, well, you’re only part-tie so how could you possible be achieving beyond expectations, and they don’t seem to think, well, I’m part time so my expectations fit around the days that I’m here, and if I meet or exceed them then I should be just as eligible.”

Sarah’s perception is supported by her manager, who describes the bonus situation at OilCo as an “unfortunate reality” for part-time professionals:

“And it sounds like the people, it’s hard to compete for bonuses when you’re part time, because the volume of work isn’t comparable to someone who works full time. You’d really have to stand on your head, I think, to beat someone for a bonus who is full time. And that’s kind of the unfortunate reality.”
At GasCo, Rachel identified the *allocation of office space as a way of designating part-time professionals as “other”*. She describes how she and Nina were required to share an office after they moved to a part-time job share arrangement:

"Like, so we sat, so Christine and Bridget sat next door to us, Nina and I, and we all had, we called it the low rental district, right? All the duplexes. So we sat next to the manager and we used to bug him that he was in the low rent district."

This symbolism was not lost on Nathan’s coworker at GasCo, who speculates that the space-saving arrangement is a comment on not only the part-time professionals’ work arrangement, but also their gender:

"We talk sometimes and he goes, ‘I’m part time and I still have an office?! That’s amazing! And I’m not sharing an office with anybody!’ You know, but most of the other part timers are sharing an office or they’re in a cubicle. You know. So actually, that answered my own question, about the man stereotype thing. Like, the women who go part time, they’re all sharing offices now, or they’re in cubicles. Nathan goes part time, he’s the only guy I know that goes part time, and he’s still got his own office."

In terms of the language used to manage the meaning of part-time professional work, a recurrent theme among the part-time professionals I spoke with was “the jokes.” These references to *teasing by coworkers about the part-time professional’s status* were often buried within long explanations of how well the part-time arrangement was working: without exception, these teasing comments were dismissed as minor annoyances. However, the regularity with which part-time professionals described being asked to account for their part-time schedules indicates that there are some role expectations which are being violated by the part-time arrangement. These jokes typically suggest that it “must be nice” to work part-time, implying that the part-time professional’s life is a charmed one. For example, Mark’s team leader laughingly recounts her interpretation of what it means to be part-time:
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

“But actually I kind of joked about it with, I can’t remember, Brenda or Sarah, it’s too bad you have to have a baby to do that, because I could use every Friday off! That would be all right.”

Sarah, who goes home from her job at OilCo to look after four kids under the age of four, explains that she is well-used to these comments:

“I think in a joking way a lot of people will say, well, gee, you’re off now, like I’m gonna go sit on the beach for four days. My closer friends of course realize that it’s not that I want to just sort of lounge around. I’ve got a lot of work at home and kids to look after and things like that.”

Barbara describes a similar reaction among colleagues at GasCo:

“For years I got, oh, well, Barb’s on another day off, and those kinds of digs, where I think you almost felt like people thought you were kind of less committed to your work.”

A commonly described occasion for these jokes is when the part-time professional is seen to equate problems they may encounter at work with those faced by their full-time colleagues. Annette offers an example of the form the exchange takes at PhoneCo:

“I think the odd person, the odd coworker has resented the flexibility it [job sharing] has given us, and I mean everybody wants to work part time. You know, but the resentment is not serious. It’s just the regular, you know, when I come in and say I had a rough week, [they say] ‘both days’. You know, that type of thing.”

Yvonne dismisses these kinds of comments by colleagues at ElectricCo, describing them as “probably a joke”:

“No one has come back and given us any kind of negative feedback. People sometimes tend to just joke, ‘Your are only here for three days, you have nothing to complain about.’ Stuff like that. It’s probably a joke but I don’t know how much they really mean anything by it.”

Christine is similarly reluctant to attribute too much significance to these kinds of comments at GasCo, explaining that her negative reaction to them may simply be evidence that she is overly sensitive:
"Well, when I went back to the group, like where Bridget and Nina were, I, like maybe I’m overly sensitive, but there were a lot of comments made that did start to bother me after a while. But some of them were continually made by the same people and they got turfed anyway. Like, they would make comments like, ‘gee, I wish I could work three days a week.’ I don’t know if they always just supposed you were getting paid five days a week, or what the story was.”

The part-time professionals’ responses to these comments take a variety of forms.

For example, Barbara frames working part-time at GasCo as an economic sacrifice:

“I mean just the little digs that you take about, oh, well, must be nice to have Fridays off, that you get from time to time. And I just remind people that you have an opportunity, that you just have to take a 20% or 40% pay cut, if it’s three or four days a week, you know. So you just get chided with those, but that hasn’t happened for a long, long time.”

Rachel also defends herself against critical comments at GasCo by arguing her case on financial grounds:

“You see, some people seem to think you get, so we get paid for our overtime, but it’s just straight time up to 40 hours. Right? So if we work the extra, but you know, there’s this perception that we’re getting paid for our overtime, and it’s, you know, just don’t let anybody take shots at you! Just give it right back!”

Kate describes how she does “give it right back” to envious colleagues at OilCo, reacting quickly to suggestions that she has a “sweet deal”:

“They all comment about how lovely that must be, just to work three days a week. Which I quickly remind them that it does require a pay cut! And they could have it too, if they wanted to take a pay cut.”

Other responses to jokes and comments include framing part-time as nothing special.

Nina describes using this approach when responding to coworker envy:

“Like some people, they’re, you know, ‘oh you’re so lucky.’ But then other people are like, you know, like one comment I can remember. I came in on a day I wasn’t supposed to be here, to go on a course or something like that.
Chapter V: Managing Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

‘Oh, like you get paid to go on a course?’ You know? I kind of looked at him and went, ‘well, don’t you?’ You know, it’s the same thing.”

Christine is similarly pragmatic when describing how she responds to criticism disguised as envy at GasCo:

“And then there was another person that was working in these groups, and he continually made comments about how lucky we were to be able to work part time, and how much he would like to, but in the meantime, he had never asked for it himself”

A final example of passively negative reaction to aspects of the part-time professional working arrangement comes from Rachel, who describes *dealing bluntly with her coworkers’ seeming inability to learn her part-time schedule*:

“Mostly they go, are you here then? Or oh, you’re here today. This guy next door, he’s kind of a goofball anyway, but he said something about, oh, you’re working three days now. And I said [Martin], I’ve been working three days for two and a half years now! Don’t ask me again! You know? So a lot of times it’s like, when are you here?”

On the other hand, Rachel also describes how she has been able to *use her part-time schedule to her advantage* when it comes to managing her project team of engineers:

“And it actually, lately, has been almost helping me, career-wise. Because if I was doing what I was doing, what I’m doing with this project team, full time, I would be a threat. So I can, so mostly I’m meeting a bunch of these really intellectual, they’re 100% thinking types, no feelings. On those tests they never have any feelings and so they think I’m, this is the impression I get, it’s like, ‘well, we’ll let you do this for us, and you know, well, you’re mentally inferior, but you can probably arrange the meetings and keep the schedule moving forward. But I don’t care, because I, but if I was full time I think they wouldn’t be so accommodating. They would be more antagonistic than cooperative.”

Sam also describes his part-time schedule as an idiosyncracy he can use to his advantage to move ahead at GasCo:

“Some people would suggest that if you take a part-time position that you’re not dedicated to the company, you’re not willing to work hard, and it would limit your career advancement. I took the approach that there’s two different
ways. Maybe that’s true, in which case I don’t care, I’ve had a fairly good career and my other goals make that risk worthwhile. And then there’s the optimistic approach that I’m doing something that’s relatively ground-breaking for me, like we discussed, and maybe it’ll get me, or people will say my name more often and it will be, and that never hurts, right? So I think it could be seen positively, it could be a positive thing for my career.”

Similarly, Kate describes how she benefits from OilCo’s policy of paying part-time professionals for overtime, a fact which she keeps from her clients:

“And that way your clients think that you’re so dedicated, you’re working. So when you talk to my client, she thinks that I’m so dedicated and hard-labouring. Don’t tell her I’m getting paid!”

The “meaning” of part-time professional work, then – as expressed in these accounts of how part-time professionals defend, justify, or exploit their alternative work arrangements – is malleable, rather than fixed. It is through these social interactions that part-time professionals, and those they work with, make sense of what it means to be a part-time professional working in a particular social context. Similarly, the ways in which professionals manage their work, the boundary between their home and their work(place), and their relationships with others within the organization, serve to constitute “the part time professional”: In Chapter VI, we explore the significance and implications of these different thematic patterns as ways of structuring and enacting part-time professional work.
In introducing this research project, I suggested that the main challenge confronting part-time professionals, and those with whom they work, is to make the role part-time, rather than simply making the job part-time. I speculated that this challenge would be best understood by focusing on the social sensemaking practices through which part-time professional work arrangements are enacted in particular work contexts. I was looking for evidence that the part-time professional represents a breach of the norms surrounding the proper meaning and use of time in specific work contexts, and for evidence of the ways in which part-time professionals (and those they work with) work to repair that breach. What I discovered (and presented in chapters IV and V) were a great number and variety of social practices operating behind the simple terms "creating" and "managing" part-time professional work arrangements (see Tables 4-1 and 5-1). The data suggested that part-time professional work arrangements do not just "happen" - rather, they represent a series of negotiations, accommodations, improvisations, and sensemaking exercises.

In interpreting the data, two points stand out as worthy of particular attention, both of which stem from the same observation: by offering alternative work arrangements for professionals, organizations *invite* role innovation; by playing with the basic feature of the professional role (ever-availability), they invite a new, contemporary definition of what it means to be a professional. However, these organizations fail to provide explicit guidelines for what this new definition might mean in terms of actual behaviours and relationships. The enactment of the actual terms of the arrangement is left up to the part-time professionals and
those with whom they work. In other words, organizational support is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of a part-time professional role. The gritty work of hammering out the practical and symbolic details of the work arrangement falls to the professional and his or her immediate circle of managers and coworkers. In contributing to our understanding of part-time professionals, this observation has two significant consequences. First, it suggests that professionals, their managers and coworkers are working without a prepared script and under locally idiosyncratic conditions. This is sensemaking as Weick (1995) describes it: a literal process of invention, wherein a set of local actors author their own shared understanding of what a part-time role is or should be, rather than simply interpreting organizational guidelines. Second, it suggests that recognizing and processing these local arrangements at the organizational level will pose a challenge: that part-time work arrangements are, and have the potential to remain, ad hoc and idiosyncratic, suggests that future would-be part-time professionals may still be required to write their own scripts. Whether or not this is inevitable is an open question, but I argue here that, if organizations are serious about inviting part-time professionals to carve for themselves a new and sustainable role, they need to provide committed institutional support, and move toward the development of a shared language which recognizes part-time professionals as qualitatively different than their full-time counterparts. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to addressing these points in turn.
Chapter VI: Discussion

Authoring Part-Time Professional Work Arrangements

I'll begin the discussion by summarizing some of the data presented in chapters IV and V, calling to particular attention four features of the interviewees' accounts: most of these descriptions revealed a relative lack of attention to the creation of the part-time position; where explicit negotiation did occur it tended to focus on aspects of the professional's job, rather than the role; efforts to enact the terms of the new position tended to be one-sided (in that the part-time professionals assumed primary responsibility for structuring the arrangements and making them work); and, in contrast to the abbreviated negotiations which accompanied the creation of the position, its ongoing management required active attendance to four different aspects of the new role. The overall implication of these observations is that part-time professionals and those they worked with constructed the contours of their new role as they went along: the emphasis here is very much on the process of sensemaking, rather than interpretation.

A Theoretical Lens for Viewing Part-Time Professional Work

In interpreting these four features of the participants' accounts, I looked for a way of framing the data that would shed more light on the process of role creation: Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) work on organizational socialization provides the useful theoretical lens. Van Maanen and Schein described organizational socialization as "the process by which one is taught and learns 'the ropes' of a particular organizational role": their contention was that work in this area would help to address the absence of attention in the research literature to the ways in which "specific bits of culture" are communicated to organizational members (Van Maanen and Schein 1979, 211-213). As I have framed the impact of part-time
professional work as a cultural challenge, it is useful to approach the interviewees' accounts with this orientation, but while Van Maanen and Schein provide a useful theoretical framework, at some point it will be necessary to turn some aspects of the model on their head to consider the particular question of how the part-time professional role departs from other organizational roles.

Organizational socialization describes the processes through which organizational members learn the culture of an organization – its language, customs, attitudes toward work, etc. While Van Maanen and Schein chose as their starting point the socialization which accompanies the entry of new members into an organization (e.g. Louis 1980), they suggested that socialization occurs throughout the life of an individual's association with a given organization. They depict the organizational member's career as a series of transitions from one organizational role to another, suggesting that, "[f]rom this standpoint, organizational socialization is ubiquitous, persistent, and forever problematic" (Van Maanen and Schein 1979, 213). From this perspective, the transition from a full- to a part-time role within an organization represents an opportunity for organizational socialization, and for viewing the process through which new organizational roles are established.

An organizational role, as Van Maanen and Schein describe it, consists of three parts: a knowledge base (indicating "the range of existing solutions to the given problems encountered regularly on the job"), a strategic base ("the ground rules for the choosing of particular solutions"), and an explicit or implicit mission, purpose or mandate ("grounded in the total organizational mission and the relationships that a particular role has with other roles within and outside the organization"). As members move into new organizational roles, they are socialized as to the role expectations accompanying those roles, with different
kinds of socialization efforts more or less likely to encourage the new member to behave differently toward those role expectations. Van Maanen and Schein hypothesized that employees moving into a given organizational role were more likely to adopt a custodial orientation toward their new role (by respecting the role as traditionally defined and enacted) when socialization was collective, formal, sequential, fixed, and serial (with newcomers following in the footsteps of recent predecessors or role models). They are more likely to engage in role innovation ("seek[ing] to alter its knowledge base, strategic practices, or historically developed established ends") when socialization is individual, informal, random, variable, and disjunctive (when no immediate role models are provided) (p.229).

Van Maanen and Schein's theory is relevant to this study for several reasons. Their ideas about socialization draw our attention to a more conscious understanding of the organizational implications of different ways of socializing employees into new organizational roles, which is useful in interpreting and understanding the ways in which part-time professional work arrangements are enacted. As well, they approached the topic of role socialization from the perspective that it be best "considered largely in terms of how an individual actually behaves in the new organizational role, not in terms of how an individual may or may not feel toward the new role" (p.217). This is consistent with my orientation toward studying the social processes and interactions through which part-time professionals, and those they work with, structure these alternative work arrangements, and the practical behaviours through which these arrangements are enacted. And finally, they remind us that there are circumstances where organizations may desire role innovation – that there are times when it is organizationally and individually adaptive to change the expectations associated with a given role (Schein 1980). While Van Maanen and Schein argue that "new members
must be taught to see the organizational world as do their more experienced colleagues if the
traditions of the organization are to survive” (p.211), they add a caveat:

Organizations are created and sustained by people often for other people and are also embedded deeply within a larger and continually changing environment. They invent as well as provide the means by which individual and collective needs are fulfilled. Whereas learning the organizational culture may always be immediately *adjustive* for an individual in that such learning will reduce the tension associated with entering an unfamiliar situation, such learning, in the long run, may not always be adaptive, since certain cultural forms may persist long after they have ceased to be of individual value.” (p.212-213).

This caveat serves two useful functions, so far as the present study is concerned. Along with reminding us that there are occasions when it is individually and organizationally sensible to revise the expectations associated with a given role, it serves as a reminder that *individuals* working within organizations create and sustain these role expectations. This is not a functionalist theory of organizational socialization, but rather one driven by the symbolic interactionist approach, which locates change in the behaviour of organizational members (Van Maanen and Schein 1979, 216; see also Strauss 1959). Both of these observations will serve as useful reference points when it comes to interpreting the interview data.

**Adjusting the Lens: Socialization in Light of Ambiguous Role Expectations**

However, while Van Maanen and Schein offer a useful framework for interpreting the accounts of the part-time professionals I interviewed, the fit with their socialization theory is not an entirely comfortable one. Their theory implies an organizationally defined role into which employees move; the challenge with part-time professionals is that they *don’t* seem to move into a clearly defined role. A visible indication of this was the fact that the professionals I interviewed had converted full-time jobs into part-time positions, rather than
moving into positions already designated part-time. And as we saw in the accounts of how professionals moved into these positions, the process — if it extended beyond a simple conversion of the professional's status in accordance with HR policy — was very much focused around making sure that the job could be done on a reduced schedule, rather than considering the role expectations which might accompany a part-time position. Indeed, a number of the professionals I spoke with went to some lengths to stress during the conversion process that their move to part-time status would have no significant effect on their availability to the organization, or on the type of role they would play within it. This point will be elaborated on at some length below.

A second point of departure from the Van Maanen and Schein model is the suggestion that socialization is delivered to the new role member by other organizational members who know "the code" (strategies, content, values) associated with the "given" organizational role. In the case of the part-time professionals I studied, the process was more likely to be driven by the professionals themselves (sometimes in conjunction with those they work closely with) than by "insiders." This was most clearly evident in the accounts of those professionals who either drove the process from the beginning (i.e. going to some lengths to lay the groundwork, create the position, and establish clear expectations up front) and those who were "pushed" into taking responsibility for structuring their part-time arrangements (when they came up against reluctant managers or the limitations of their organization's maternity/part-time policies). "Socialization" looked like nothing so much as part-time professionals and their immediate coworkers and managers shaping the new role as best they could, or "making it up as they went along," while at the same time socializing others in the organization to accept and incorporate this newly constituted role.
Chapter VI: Discussion

The interpretation of the data, then, begins with a framework which orients us to the social dynamics through which organizational roles are enacted and preserved, while at the same time raising some questions as to the ways in which part-time professionals may challenge some of the key assumptions associated with more institutionalized roles.

Making Sense of the Data

Working through the process as a linear progression, the development of part-time professional work arrangements begins with the creation of a part-time position. In the cases of the part-time professionals I interviewed, this process began from scratch—they converted full-time positions into part-time positions, rather than moving into an existing part-time job. This set up a dynamic from the beginning in which the professionals were working to define the meaning and practical significance of part-time professional work, rather than depending upon previously institutionalized understandings of what it meant. Descriptions of this process were themselves found to contain elements of three levels, or stages, of effort: laying the groundwork, creating the position, and setting expectations. However, many of these accounts of the creation process were largely unelaborated, suggesting that the creation of the part-time professional position/role was, in a number of these cases, a rather cursory affair. This was particularly true of the accounts of those professionals who moved into positions with relative ease, ascribing the simplicity of the conversion to an organizational requirement that they be brought back from Maternity leave into a part-time role, or to a supportive manager who championed the transition.

A second group of professionals described a rather more convoluted transition to part-time status. Like some of the others, they anticipated that the organization's
commitment to women returning from Maternity leave would be enough to structure the
terms of their move to a part-time position, but ultimately took personal responsibility for the
process after discovering that the organizational policies were inadequate to coordinate their
return to work on a reduced schedule. Rachel, from OilCo, serves as an example of this kind
of process. Surprised by the negative reaction of her manager to her proposed part-time
arrangement, she characterized what she had expected to be a straightforward meeting to
determine the particulars of her part-time arrangement as a kind of degradation ritual
(Gephart 1978). Instead of simply converting her position to part-time, which she had
anticipated, her manager called upon her to develop a business case for her proposed move.
Rachel ended up going straight to the employee manual, deciding that the same rules which
structured *other* organizational roles would structure hers too, and then "trying to fill in white
space" to make the proposal look more comprehensive than she felt it needed to be. Called
upon to author her own work arrangement, Rachel did so by drawing on the kind of job-
related issues (benefits, vacation time, pay) which seemed the most obvious implications of
the switch.

Finally, a number of the professionals I spoke with took personal responsibility for
structuring their move to part-time from the very beginning of the process. It is perhaps not
coincidental that this approach was favoured by those professionals who didn't fall neatly
into the "women returning from maternity leave" category. While professionals such as
Sarah and Rachel may have been ultimately discouraged by the inadequacy of their
companies' maternity leave guidelines, they *began* their move to part-time in full expectation
that those policies would guide their transition. Others were less sure from the beginning
that they could rely on organizational guidelines to create for them a part-time position. Sam
is a good example in this regard. His account of how he created his part-time position
contains all three elements of laying the groundwork, creating the position, and setting
expectations, and suggested that he moved through each of these stages in deliberate, linear
fashion. Whereas some of the other, less elaborated accounts of creating the part-time
position evidenced a rather casual regard for the practical and political implications of the
new work arrangement, Sam made a calculated effort to map out the economic and
productivity-related consequences of his proposed move before approaching his manager,
and made a similar effort to gather political support from clients and co-workers.

Similarly, there was variation around the extent to which part-time professionals and
those they worked with achieved a shared understanding of the job- and role-related
implications of the reduced schedule. As we saw in Chapter IV, these ranged from quick
verbal understandings as to the anticipated impact of the reduced work schedule on project
deadlines, to written contracts specifying the conditions of the arrangement (in terms of
guaranteeing work coverage, eligibility for benefits, etc.), to (more rarely) face-to-face
discussions with all organizational members likely to be affected by the move to part-time.
What was missing from these accounts was any mention of the role expectations associated
with the part-time position, or, stemming from that, any broad understandings of the career
implications of the part-time position. At OilCo, for example, organizational policies were
meant to define guidelines for bringing professional employees back to work on a part-time
basis after their maternity leaves, but there was little in place in the way of structural support
for helping them manage their career (through lateral or vertical promotions to other part-
time positions).
Simply put, then, there was a high degree of variance around the extent to which the actual creation of the part-time position was ritualized, with all parties attendant to the new arrangement in agreement as to the symbolic significance of introducing a new role for the part-time professional. The work that went into creating the position was not a straightforward precursor to what would be involved in sustaining the part-time arrangement, where the story was considerably more complex. Here, part-time professionals described managing their arrangements on four different fronts: attending to the work itself; managing the boundary between home time and work time; nurturing or abandoning networks and relationships; and controlling or responding to the discourse surrounding part-time work. In order to make sense of these different areas, I will return to the idea of interaction rituals as a way of organizing organizational time and space. I had originally speculated that the process of enacting a role for the part-time professional could be best approached by conceptualizing the organizational context as a series of interaction rituals, through which collective organizational (or group) identity is affirmed and maintained. Part-time professionals would, I argued, miss key cultural occasions; the challenge, from a cultural perspective, would be to replace these missed rituals with occasions peculiar to, and enactive of, a new organizational role.

First, to the idea of rituals missed. Part-time professionals described being absent from a number of the social occasions in which their coworkers participated. This, in and of itself, is not news: their abbreviated work schedule would suggest that they would, simply by virtue of being away from the organization one or two days a week, miss a corresponding proportion of social occasions. Part-time professionals recounted missing meetings, lunches and coffee breaks, after work events, training opportunities, etc. by omission – due to the
contours of their new schedule, they were often absent from social occasions which fell on their days off. Perhaps more interesting, however, are those rituals which the part-time professionals described missing by commission: that is, the meetings, lunches, coffee breaks, etc. from which they chose to absent themselves on those days when they were in the office. Here, the professionals described making tradeoffs between working efficiently and participating fully in collective rituals. These choices are interesting to consider from the perspective of the various organizational members' different approaches to time. Where meetings and lunches serve as a way of symbolically marking time, or collectively bracketing or punctuating time (Weick, 1995), the professionals' preference for working through such rituals evidences a preoccupation with hoarding time, or saving time. From a sensemaking perspective, meetings and lunches represent periodic comings-together to make sense of organizational events and affirm the collective identity. Where part-time professionals "save" time, they may be missing important ways of "marking" time, and in the process challenge role expectations directly.

The decision to skip meetings or other organizational events may also represent a threat to the traditional "pecking order": the authority to call meetings, along with the authority to cancel them or fail to attend, is dependent upon a member's status in the social group (Schwartzman 1989). By being more selective about which meetings they attend on days when they are in the office, part-time professionals may challenge traditional power relationships; similarly, when meetings are organized around the part-time professional's schedule, this may upset the usual order of things, which is not necessarily an innocuous event. This phenomenon was evident in a final category of rituals missed, which raises the interesting (and, I argue, politicized) question of when absence from a ritual can legitimately
be characterized as an absence by omission or by commission. The issue does not seem to be explained by referring to anything so straightforward as the formal parameters of the professional's part-time schedule, for as we saw in the accounts of the part-time professionals and their managers themselves, professionals may still be held accountable for "deciding" whether to participate in collective rituals which fall on their days away from the office. Christine provides a good illustration of this point. Her schedule at GasCo called for her to work Monday to Wednesday each week, yet her project group's regular meetings were held on Thursdays. As Christine's manager explained it, Christine was included just like any member of the group, but it was up to her to decide whether or not to come in for those meetings. Similar decisions were made by part-time professionals around organizational social events, training opportunities, and other types of formal meetings: though these events fell on days when the part-time professional was scheduled to be away from the office, numerous part-time professionals — and those they worked with — nonetheless described the decision of whether or not to attend the event as "up to the part-time professional." Again, it falls to the part-time professional and, to a greater or lesser extent, their managers, to determine whether the professional should "bend" to the organization's schedule, or whether the unique contours of the part-time professional's schedule should be taken into account when scheduling events.

Finally, research around interaction rituals suggests that, where rituals are missed, they need to be replaced, or risk being interpreted as evidence of lack of commitment to and respect of the boundaries of the social group (Collins 1981, 1988). Part-time professionals did substitute for the rituals they missed a series of emergent rituals peculiar to part-time professionals. A number of these new rituals arguably served a tactical purpose, helping the
part-time professionals further their goal of working productively while in the office, so as to guard their designated "home" time. Examples of these would include delegating work to coworkers or subordinates; casting a coworker in a "liaison" role and using him or her as a source of information about meetings missed; and training coworkers to work according to the part-time professionals' schedule. With the substitution of these new rituals, part-time professionals were able to stay abreast of organizational developments while managing their workloads. At the same time, these rituals – many of them one-on-one encounters between the part-time professionals and their coworkers or managers – afforded them the ability to maintain a social presence in the group (and thereby demonstrate their commitment to it).

Still another pattern of emergent rituals tended to be initiated by coworkers or managers, and related a level of discomfort or confusion around the new "role" of the part-time professional: the ongoing teasing around the part-time professional's status is an example of this type of expression. These exchanges appear to have become ritualized, both in the sense that a number of the professionals recounted similar experiences, and in the sense that the various professionals described these as recurring encounters. The different parties learned their scripts, in a sense, and recited their lines when prompted, the coworker calling attention to the part-time professional's "otherness," and the professional working to deflect such labels. So the coworker volleys "must be nice to work part-time," to which the part-time professional counters "it involves an economic sacrifice," or "you could do it yourself if you asked." Through these encounters, part-time professionals and those they work with attempt to frame part-time professional work arrangements as either deviant or very close to "business as usual."
Chapter VI: Discussion

Linking Data To Theory: Part-Time Professionals as Reluctant Innovators

The idea of role has always been a rather slippery concept (e.g. Cicourel 1972), and the question is complicated here by broader question of what role is being innovated against? Does the part-time professional represent a distinct social role, or is it simply a variation of the more traditional role of the "full-time professional"? There was some evidence that part-time professionals were privy to a kind of backward socialization – rather than being socialized into a new role, they were sanctioned for violating previous role expectations (as seen in the descriptions of strategies and interactions associated with "Managing Discourse"). In some instances, the message was blatant – as with OilCo's exclusion of part-time workers from its bonus program, and with the decision at GasCo to have part-time employees share office space. In other cases, the message, though pointed, was more subtle. Rachel's account of her (now ritualized) attempts to educate her coworker about the boundaries of her part-time schedule provides such an example. Rachel describes a typical exchange: "This guy next door, he's kind of a goofball anyway, but he said something about, oh, you're working three days now. And I said [Martin], I've been working three days for two and a half years now! Don't ask me again!" In this instance, Martin's seeming inability to learn Rachel's schedule could be interpreted as a form of informal degradation – the ritualized exchange viewed as a way of reinforcing her "difference", and her frustrated response to him an indication of her perceived need to constantly justify her part-time status.

There was evidence of socialization, then, in the form of gentle digs and asides which reinforce the part-time professional's "difference." What was striking, however, was how reluctant part-time professionals were to acknowledge this difference, and to frame their new role as an innovation. These part-time workers had, as we have seen, no immediate role
models, and were essentially writing their own scripts, conditions which the Van Maanen and Schein model predicts would lead to innovation. However, one of the surprising findings of the study was how many of the part-time professionals interviewed seemed to prefer to adopt a more custodial stance toward the professional’s role, or focused on content innovation – changing how the work gets done – rather than what Van Maanen and Schein define as the more radical role innovation – challenging the traditional values and mission associated with the role.

Before expanding on the ways in which part-time professionals seemed reluctant to embrace the role of innovator, I will introduce a notable exception to this pattern. Mark’s account of how he managed his move to and management of his part-time position is aberrant in that, where other professionals minimized the differences between them and their full-time counterparts, he exaggerated them. From the outset, Mark positioned his move to a two-day-a-week schedule as a dramatic reframing of his organizational role, calling attention to himself as a "part-time pioneer" (because he was a man asking for an arrangement more traditionally associated with women). As a way of laying the groundwork for his transition to a reduced schedule, he investigated opportunities elsewhere, ultimately presenting his managers with what he termed a "nonnegotiable" proposal that he scale back to two days a week in order to care for his young son while at the same time working part-time toward an MBA degree. During this meeting with his managers, Mark outlined his own values around parenting and continuing education, until, as he put it, his project manager understood "that there was nothing OilCo could say that would change my mind because it wasn't monetary and it wasn't job content related. It was outside of what OilCo could influence."
Chapter VI: Discussion

Mark's account of how he framed his move to a part-time schedule as a personal choice to make parenting and education primary represents a clear repositioning, away from his organizational role and toward his role as a father and as a student. In effect, Mark substituted one recognized role for another: as long as he was working part-time, he would be a father and student first, professional second. Mark used this new role to define the terms of his work arrangement; after his highly elaborated creation ritual, he was notably assertive about managing the different aspects of his new work schedule. He made it clear that, so far as he was concerned, managing any work that spilled over to coworkers as a result of his reduced schedule was a management responsibility; he was up-front about being unable and unwilling to come into the office on his designated days off without advance notice; he made it clear that, while he would make an effort to maintain social relationships at work, he would miss the kind of day-to-day, informal feedback that could advance his career, but that he was prepared to accept that for the next little while; and he made a point of being open with all affected by his new arrangement about the fact that he intended to concentrate for the next several years on being a father to his son, and on achieving his MBA. That Mark's "new role" was well-understood by others in the organization was confirmed by the number of his coworkers and managers who told me that they admired what he was doing, by spending this time at home with his son, and that they respected his priorities.

Mark's account is introduced first to emphasize the distance between his strategy and those of the other part-time professionals. In contrast to Mark, other part-time professionals were surprised by or rejected the idea that their move to a shortened work week would require a fundamental reinterpretation of their organizational role. Sam stands in contrast to
Mark in this respect: like Mark, he is a man who moved into a work arrangement typically associated with women. Also like Mark, Sam put a lot of effort into developing a story to explain his shift: however, whereas Mark explained to his managers that he was in essence moving from being a professional to being a father over the duration of his part-time work arrangement, Sam went to some lengths to frame his move as only an incremental change in his traditional, professional role. This rejection of the idea that a part-time schedule would require a fundamental shift in their organizational role was also seen in the efforts of other part-time professionals who strove to minimize the perceived differences between them and their full-time counterparts. Whereas Mark explained his part-time status as a reflection of his commitment to his child and his education, others explained theirs as either an economic sacrifice or as "nothing special" – an arrangement that anyone could have if they asked for it.

There are good reasons why many of the part-time professionals were more reluctant innovators than was Mark, for there are several circumstances which suggest that Mark's would not be a workable model for other part-time professionals. First, Mark set a definite time frame around how long he expected to be part-time: only for the next two to three years, until he'd finished his degree and his son had started prekindergarten. Second, he made it clear that, during this time, he intended to subordinate his professional career to his family's needs and his own educational goals. His wife would continue to work full-time during this period, and he would assume the role of the primary parent. And finally, Mark's part-time position was, from the outset framed as something special, because he was a man moving into a work arrangement more traditionally associated with young mothers, and because his managers valued his work highly and wanted to keep him with the organization. That his period as a part-time employee represented a brief sabbatical or time-out was also reflected
in his two-day-a-week work schedule, which was described by a number of his co-workers as being almost untenable over the long term.

Mark's experience raises some intriguing questions about gender and part-time work. Reflecting the traditional assumption that part-time work is a women's option (Dey 1989; Duffy and Pupo 1992), a number of professionals working with Mark at OilCo shared with me their belief that it "took guts" for Mark to approach his managers with a proposal for part-time work. Whereas part-time work was seen as "what women do after they have a baby", it was considered a dramatic step for Mark (and as we have seen, Mark himself called attention to the novelty of his arrangement). A number of these professionals also explained, however, that whereas it may have been considered risky for Mark to request a part-time arrangement, the fact that he is now working part-time actually adds somewhat to his status within the organization: he is seen to be both a committed professional and a committed father. Mark himself also acknowledge this phenomenon, as did Sam: both men explained that it was considered to be something special for them to be working part-time. Interestingly, none of the women that I interviewed described benefiting from the same kind of calculus. (Though a number of the part-time professional women I interviewed did suggest that now that a high-profile man was working part-time – Mark in the case of OilCo, and Sam at GasCo – they hoped the option would gain more legitimacy with others in the organization.)

Going back to Mark's experience with moving to part-time work, it is understandable that other professionals would be less willing to draw attention to the ways in which they differed from full-time professional employees, or to call attention to the demands being placed on them as parents. Unlike Mark, many of these other professionals had not placed
clear parameters around how long they expected to work part-time – in fact, many confided that they could not imagine themselves ever returning to work on a full-time basis again. At the same time, while they recognized that there was a certain stigma attached to being part-time, they were nonetheless committed to sustaining their professional careers. These professionals worked hard to keep their family life separate from their work life, and to protect work time from the intrusions of family time, as seen in the numerous accounts of how "home" time was kept out of "work" time. (It is perhaps not coincidental that those professionals who did describe allowing personal or family concerns to intrude into work time also described themselves as being "ever-available" to the organization.) It is reasonable enough, then, that rather than calling attention to their roles as mothers (or, in Sam's case, father), they turned their attention instead to deflecting any suggestions that they might be different than their full-time counterparts – as seen in Rachel's use of the Employee Handbook to draft a proposal for part-time work that would see her treated just like any other employee, or in Sam's efforts to convince his manager that his move to part-time represented only an incremental change.

Creating Cover Stories

In this regard, many of these accounts of how professionals framed their move to part-time status contain echoes of Meryl Louis' (1996) reflection on how she managed her own role innovation, in the context of approaching an academic sabbatical as an opportunity for spiritual renewal. Guided by a set of personal values rather than organizationally-established (institutionalized) expectations, Louis treated her sabbatical year as a kind of spiritual journey. She remained at home, but spent the year pursuing her spiritual goals, and limiting
her accessibility to university colleagues. As Louis describes it, she ended up developing what she called a "cover story" to explain to her university colleagues what she hoped to accomplish with her sabbatical, and why she was working to maintain clear boundaries around her availability to the university:

If I made intelligible my purpose and process, colleagues could shift their expectations of me or at least make sense of my nonresponse to requests consistent with my nonsabbatical roles. However, it took me some time to realize what was needed. Before I did, it was not uncommon for me to feel misunderstood, put-upon, and occasionally quite alienated from my colleagues. But once I did, the cover story helped me secure boundaries around my endeavor, alleviating the concerns of others, helping others appreciate my need for boundaries and see how they might be helpful." (Louis 1996, 459-60).

Louis' account is a description of her growing understanding of the need to place her sabbatical role into an organizationally legitimate framework, so that she could render her new role comprehensible to her colleagues. By framing their part-time roles as simply a minor variation on the full-time theme, and deflecting suggestions that the difference between them and their full-time counterparts is more considerable than this, the part-time professionals did the same thing as Meryl Louis had done. However, the complex accounts of the work that went into sustaining these part-time arrangements suggest that part-time professional work arrangements really represent far more than an incremental change. The problem with the cover story, then, is that it is not really true: by framing the part-time professional position as only a slight departure from the full-time role, part-time professionals and those they work with conceal the backstage efforts that go into getting the work done, managing the boundary between "work" time and home time, keeping up with (or dropping out of) social networks, and managing the discourse around what part-time status "means." Part-time professionals may be reluctant innovators, but their new work
roles require innovation nonetheless: their cover stories may conceal the backstage work that
goes into sustaining their work arrangements, but that work is still necessary.

**Linking Data to Theory: Part Time Professional Work Arrangements as Sensemaking**

It is entirely plausible to suggest that professionals and managers enter into part-time
work arrangements with the assumption that it will still be possible to take a great deal for
granted within the context of the new work arrangement. On the face of it, the most
immediate challenge posed by a three- or four-day work week is a practical one: how to
ensure that the work gets done within a reduced time period? This would explain the
preoccupation with settling the practical details of how the job will be accomplished, rather
than considering the more ambiguous topic of role expectations. However, as the accounts
of how they managed the arrangement reveal, part-time professionals and those they work
with found themselves bumping up against difficulties which they had not anticipated, as the
part-time arrangement took form: Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the part-time
professional is included in department events? How important is inclusion, and at what point
might it compromise either the group's flexibility or the part-time professional's own
schedule? To what extent should part-time professionals be obligated to spend their time in
meetings during the days that they are in the office, and when is it appropriate for the
professional to beg off such occasions using their abbreviated schedule as an excuse to use
work time more efficiently? And can (or should) the part-time professional continue to
relate to group members as they did before, or should differences be brought into the open
and named?
All of these occasions represent opportunities for sensemaking, which "...begins with the basic question, is it still possible to take things for granted? And if the answer is no, if it becomes impossible to continue with automatic information processing, then the question becomes, why is this so? And, what next?" (Weick 1995, 14). Part-time professionals and those they work with engage in such sensemaking exercises when they respond to these ongoing challenges. In the accounts of the professionals themselves, we see that they draw on a certain political and organizational savvy to manage these choices. They need to be aware of the ropes to know and the ropes to skip in order to delegate responsibilities, draw on the respect they had already gained from clients and coworkers to train them to work to the professional's new schedule, and to determine which rituals they could safely ignore and which they should continue to respect. The overall picture is of professionals maintaining a careful balancing act while working their way through their new work arrangement.

Having argued that part-time professionals and those they work with are "making it up as they go along," I do not want to leave the impression that there is general agreement as to the meaning or import of these decisions about how to relate to each other. As Weick (1995) reminds us, there is plenty of room for satisficing when it comes to sensemaking: what you end up with is a way of coordinating action which does not necessary imply shared meaning. So while the same general themes appear again and again in these interview accounts, the exact ways in which these themes play out are to a large part determined by the particular interactions of the professionals and those they work with, often framed by the cover stories discussed above.
Linking Data to Theory: The Boundary as a Site for Contested Control

Finally, it is worth calling attention to how many of the social practices necessary to create and sustain part-time professional work arrangements involve managing the boundary separating "work" from "home." The area of boundary management has received particular research attention of late in light of recent work by Christena Nippert-Eng (1996) and Leslie Perlow (1997, 1998), which approach the issue of negotiating work-family time from different perspectives. Nippert-Eng focused on the strategies through which people either integrate aspects of their home and work lives, or keep them segmented. She argues that, through everyday choices and practices, we continually work toward some level of integration segmentation, enacting, reinforcing, and modifying our ideas of what is "work" and "home" and how they should relate. This process, through which we concretize the mental territories of home and work into physical ones and learn to transcend as well as preserve these realms, is what [she] call[s] the "boundary work" of home and work (Nippert-Eng 1996, 7).

Whereas Nippert-Eng explores the choices and practices of individuals managing their own work-home boundary, Perlow's interest is in what she terms boundary control: "managers' ability to affect how employees divide their time between their work and nonwork spheres of life" (Perlow, 1998, 329, emphasis added). She maintains that the dual pressures of managers equating professional commitment with time spent at work, and the interdependence demanded by much professional knowledge work, lead to a situation in which knowledge workers (and other professionals) lack the autonomy to "manage" the boundary between work and non-work time. She argues that managers exert control over this boundary through imposing demands (such as meetings, requests, deadlines), monitoring employee behaviour (by standing over, checking up on, and observing employees) and modelling the behaviour they expect of their employees (i.e. working extended and irregular
hours) (Perlow, 1998, 337). Perlow suggests that employees respond to these pressures in one of two ways: either accepting boundary control, or resisting it. Either response, she found, is likely to be affected in turn by the ways in which spouses react to the pressures which their partner's work boundary places upon them (e.g. whether the spouse accepts or resists the domestic responsibilities placed on them by the boundary control).

Alternative work arrangements, Perlow maintains, are one way of helping employees deal with this kind of boundary control (and move toward what Nippert-Eng would term a segmentist, rather than integrationist, approach to home and work). However, she contends that they suffer from the common assumption that managing work-family conflict is an individual-level problem, rather than a more systemic pressure caused by institutionalized expectations around professionalism and ever-availability for work. Consequently, they allow some measure of relief for, for example, the part-time worker, but do nothing to address the underlying assumptions linking career mobility to time spent at work:

These policies help employees manage the demands resulting from boundary control...Yet despite the best of intentions, knowledge workers who take advantage of these policies often suffer in terms of career progress (Shamir and Salomon, 1985; Perin, 1991; Baily, 1993). The problem is that these options enable knowledge workers to resist boundary control, but they do nothing to change managers' perceptions about employees who do resist" (Perlow 1998, 355-56).

However, without addressing the career implications of part-time work schedules, the present study found that alternative work schedules may provide only minimal assistance in helping professionals manage the demands resulting from boundary control. It suggests that what part-time professional work schedules do is bring the work-home boundary into sharp relief (by introducing an unconventional "dividing line" distinct from that of full-time workers), but that this dividing line comes with no absolute rules about how and when it may
be crossed. As the accounts of the study participants demonstrate, it still falls to part-time professionals and others in their local work context to determine when and how the contours of the part-time schedule should be respected. Some of the professionals did outline strategies for adopting a more segmentist approach to the home/work boundary by, for example, ritualistically marking the transition between work and home with a visit to the gym, or consciously "filling up" their home time so as to make themselves unavailable to work demands. However, there were also examples of the many ways in which work demands slip into home time: the part-time professionals' decisions to deal with loose ends from home so as to maintain a productive rhythm while at work; the necessity of responding from home to other people's crises; and requests (explicit or implicit) that they bend their schedule so as to attend meetings or other organizational events, all represent ways in which the part-time professional's home-work boundary is made permeable. The part-time professional may end up with more "free" time (measured in absolute terms) than their full-time counterparts, and different part-time professionals may be more or less successful at "defending" their free time, but the encroachments upon the home/work boundary are no less real: boundary control is as much an issue for part-time professionals as it is for professionals working full-time.

**A New Role For Part-Time Professionals?**

All of the above leads into the second issue to be discussed in this chapter: are part-time professional work arrangements doomed to be forever locally idiosyncratic? Or is there potential for organizational learning and the eventual creation of a recognizable role for the part-time professional, one which does not demand them either pretending to be just like a
full-time professional (only slightly less so), or identifying themselves as a parent first and professional second? I began this thesis with the straightforward assertion that the primary challenge to creating sustainable part-time professional work arrangements rests with making the role part-time, rather than simply focusing on the job. The research interviews presented a more complex picture, with part-time professionals reluctant to call particular attention to their unique role, while working with immediate managers and coworkers to fashion – sometimes awkwardly, and rarely explicitly – arrangements that struck them as mutually agreeable. These arrangements tended, for the most part, to be framed as incremental changes to the existing, full-time position, and represented local and idiosyncratic sensemaking exercises, rather than a more uniform interpretation of what being part-time meant.

Whether the part-time professionals I studied are paving a path for future part-time professionals to follow remains an open question, for two reasons. First, as the accounts of the study participants revealed, the part-time professionals drew on what they already knew about the culture of their organizational group, and their role within it, to enact for themselves a workable part-time arrangement. Whether others can learn from this behaviour is questionable – improvisation, as Weick argues, is most likely to be borne of prior experience and knowledge, and learning from the improvisations of others requires intimate knowledge of the underlying melody, or logic (Weick 1998). Without a preexisting awareness of the culture, its temporal rhythms and the value it places on different rituals, it would be very difficult for future part-time professionals entering the same groups or organizations to recreate the experiences of their predecessors.
A second obstacle to learning from the experiences of part-time professionals who have gone before is the extent to which so much of the work that goes into sustaining these arrangements is hidden. Joyce Fletcher (1998) has recently written about relational work, and the ways in which it "gets disappeared" within both organizational settings and organizational research. Her argument is that relational practice – the skillful use of empathy, mutuality, reciprocity and a sensitivity to emotional contexts to foster personal connections – is rendered invisible by practitioners and researchers quick to dismiss this work as either idiosyncratic or else feminine, more appropriate to the private sphere than to the public sphere. As a result, organizations miss the opportunity for systemic change – as Fletcher puts it, relational work gets absorbed into the system without the system changing.

A parallel argument could be made for the work that goes into creating and sustaining part-time professional work arrangements. This work is rendered invisible in a number of ways. First, it is noticeable by its absence in the research literature which, as argued in Chapter II, has tended to treat part-time status as simply a demographic variable. By ignoring the social sensemaking processes through which part-time professional work arrangements are enacted, academics fail to understand the complexity associated with the "given" demographic category (Fletcher 1998; Nkomo 1992).

The work that goes into creating and sustaining these arrangements is lacking, too, in the accounts of part-time professionals themselves, who, in recounting to me the ways in which they created and sustained their work arrangements, tended to dismiss or minimize the work that went into managing these arrangements "behind the scenes." Only when going over the accounts in total did the patterns and processes which comprise the long list anchoring chapters IV and V become evident, and make apparent the extent of what the part-
A similar phenomenon is apparent in the accounts of the managers of part-time professionals. So, for example, when Kate's manager praises her for making a success of her arrangement "because it means she doesn't come asking me for help, she simply accommodates changes to her schedule," he is in effect not only stating that responsibility for managing the arrangement does, and should, lie with Kate herself, but he is also dismissing, or rendering invisible, the effort that she exerts to make her arrangement "a success." All of the boundary management that goes into "accommodating changes to her schedule" is effectively discounted and ignored. Similarly, when Mark's manager explains that she will leave voice mail messages for part-time professionals on their days off, and that it is up to them to decide whether or not to respond to them, she distances herself from the way her behaviour encourages those professionals to bend their schedules to organizational demands.

I do not want to suggest that these local accommodations are not functional for those parties attendant to them. By framing their part-time schedules as only incrementally different from full-time arrangements — and therefore not a threat to local values and assumptions — part-time professionals and their managers are able to "sell" an arrangement which might otherwise provoke a negative reaction (Pfeffer 1992). Nor do I want to suggest that the part-time professionals themselves consider their different accommodations to organizational demands onerous or unfair: for the most part, the professionals I spoke with were grateful for and respectful of the terms of their work arrangements.

The problem with "disappearing" the individual and collective effort that goes into creating and sustaining part-time professional work arrangements lies with the broader
implications for systemic change. If part-time professional work is meant to represent a
response to the demographic and social changes which are making traditional understandings
of what professionalism means untenable, then the fact that this backstage work is
"disappeared" presents a significant problem. Fletcher's (1998) observation that different
ways of working with and relating to people can be absorbed into the organizational system
without the system changing bear reiterating here: instead of a coordinated commitment to
challenging professional role expectations, part-time professional work arrangements
represent a series of idiosyncratic negotiations, with professionals themselves bearing
disproportionate responsibility for initiating changes.

To effect significant and widespread change would take a firm commitment from
organizations and institutions committed to creating part-time work arrangements which do
not simply echo the expectations associated with full-time work arrangements. This would
demand that the work which goes into creating and sustaining these arrangements be brought
to the forefront, that it be framed as a significant innovation up front, rather than leaving it to
managers and professionals to make it up as they go along. However, this would require
significant institutional support: it is too much to ask individual professionals to bear the
responsibility for creating systemic change (Kanter 1977).

A second conclusion is that a language is needed with which to describe the role of
the part-time professional. It is probably not a coincidence that the most visible example of a
truly part-time professional role came from Mark, who effectively substituted his role as
parent for his role as professional to spearhead his transition to part-time. Other
professionals were loathe to make this substitution, yet we lack a shared language to describe
a professional whose commitment to their work is less than full. Consider, for instance, the
following example from Morgan and Tucker's (1991, 166) account of the problems a large U.S. banking institution had in overcoming negative stereotypes about part-time professionals. Said one of the executives involved in the bank's part-time program: "Some people felt that if you were part-time you were just not there. Now I'm one of those people that no matter how many days I work I'm very dedicated. I'm thinking about my job at night. I work on weekends. I'm still NCNB's person, but I'm taking more time to be with my kids. So we changed the name [from part time] to Select Time." Implicit to this statement is the idea that professionals – part-time or otherwise – express their dedication through hours spent working, or thinking about work. As a way of moving beyond this constraining assumption, without simply substituting a parent's role for a professional role, we need a language which will help to challenge those assumptions directly, and gradually help to develop a new way of thinking and talking about the balance which part-time professionals strive to achieve between the private and public realms.
A brief summary of the study will provide a useful launching point for a discussion of some of its limitations, and a consideration of where this project might lead, in terms of both future research and practical implications for managers and part-time professionals. I began this study with the assumption that, unless the topic of part-time professionals was approached in light of socio-historical assumptions about what professionalism means, the challenges associated with creating and sustaining these alternative work arrangements would be obscured and misunderstood. At the same time, I argued, organizations, and teams or groups within them, develop their own rhythms and social patterns which the intrusion of a part-time schedule may disrupt. From this perspective, the part-time professional represents a potential cultural challenge to the local group. The problem would be literally one of making space for the part-time professional; my interest was in the practices through which part-time professionals and those they worked with enacted a part-time professional role in the context of the local organizational culture.

The study began with a sensitivity, therefore, to the socio-historical pressures working against the viability of part-time professional work, and an openness to exploring the practical ways by which professionals and those they worked with overcame these constraints in particular work contexts. The focus was not how part-time professionals and those they work with feel about part-time professional work arrangements, but rather what they actually do to create and sustain these arrangements. In-depth interviews with part-time professionals, their managers and their coworkers in four organizations revealed a broad
range of such social practices associated with creating and sustaining part-time professional work arrangements. The creation of the part-time position was, as we saw in Chapter IV, relatively underdeveloped as compared to the work that went into sustaining the arrangements (Chapter V). The data suggested that sustaining the arrangement meant managing it on four different fronts: accomplishing the work itself within a reduced schedule; managing the boundary which separates work from home (and which remained a contested site for control); attending to the professional's position within the social network; and managing the broader discourse around the symbolic meaning of professionalism (as manifest in jokes, the allocation of office space, or the seeming complexity associated with learning the part-time professional's new work schedule).

In discussing the data in Chapter VI, I suggested that, by offering part-time professional work arrangement, organizations invite role innovation. Ever-availability is such an identifying characteristic of "the professional" that entertaining the possibility of a reduced professional time commitment is itself an invitation to broader role redefinition. However, organizational support is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the successful creation of part-time professional work arrangements. The data suggested that enacting the actual arrangements fell to the professionals themselves, their managers, and their coworkers, and that when it came to making sense of these arrangements, they were working without a script. The concept of interaction rituals was introduced as a way of assessing the ways in which the particular impact of part-time professional work schedules might be felt. This meant interpreting the different social practices oriented toward managing these four different fronts as a series of "traditional" rituals missed and emergent rituals peculiar to part-time professionals. I suggested that when it came to rituals missed, attributing the part-
time professionals' absence to omission or to commission was not a straightforward matter – part of the political complexity associated with navigating the border between work and home entailed allocating responsibility for maintaining a firm boundary.

I concluded Chapter VI with two observations. The first was that, left to their own devices, the majority of the part-time professionals interviewed could best be characterized as reluctant innovators. Rather than calling attention to the uniqueness of their role, they tended to minimize differences between them and their full-time counterparts. However, the sheer amount of effort that goes into creating and sustaining these arrangements suggests that this "cover story" masks a great deal. Part-time professionals may gain support for their arrangement by framing it as only incrementally different from the full-time role (Pfeffer 1992), but at a cost: they will receive little in the way of recognition and support for their backstage efforts to support the new arrangement. Finally, I suggested that much of the work that does go into creating these arrangements tends to "get disappeared" for another reason – it is ignored by researchers and it is overlooked by managers. Consequently, the answer to the bigger question of whether or not these reluctant pioneers are in fact creating a unique role for part-time professionals would seem to be no. Instead, they are creating a series of ad hoc and idiosyncratic arrangements which will not lead to broader organizational learning. While these arrangements may be functional from the perspective of the individual part-time professionals and those they work with, they do not represent a meaningful and collective response to the pressures confronting many of today's professionals, who are trying to juggle many seemingly incompatible roles. The creation of a genuinely distinct and shared understanding of what the concept of part-time professionalism might mean will require that the traditional equation of professionalism with ever-availability for work be
addressed directly. I suggest that, in the absence of firmer institutional support and a language which does not force a choice between professional or parent, significant inroads will not be achieved.

Limitations of the Study

Before turning to the theoretical and practical implications of this study, its limitations are considered. This study was based on in-depth interviews with a limited sample of part-time professionals and those they work with at four organizations, during a particular period of time. As such, there are factors that limit its generalizability. First, the research was not longitudinal: while the interviews were in-depth, I met with each interviewee only once, and relied on their ability to reflect on and accurately describe the practices that went into creating and sustaining their part-time positions. While I am confident that this approach generated a useful series of first- and second-order concepts that describe the common experiences of the part-time professionals I interviewed, and forms the basis for future research in this area, I also appreciate that a longitudinal, ethnographic approach might provide a richer, more contextually grounded perspective on the ways in which professionals manage their part-time arrangements as they work their way through the process. Longitudinal, ethnographic research in this area would be a useful follow-up to this study.

The fact that the majority of the part-time professionals I interviewed were women poses another potential limitation. I did not approach this topic as a gender-driven study, and make no claims as to the specific implications of these findings for part-time professional men or women. However, there is good evidence that women continue to bear particular
pressure when it comes to balancing competing and often incompatible roles (e.g. Gersick, Bartunek and Dutton, forthcoming; Marshall, 1997); given that a disproportionate percentage of part-time professionals are women, there is certainly room for more overtly feminist research in this area.

I did not collect contextual information to describe and interpret the different cultures at each of these organizations. This precludes commentary on contextual influences on the creating of part-time professional arrangements. By the same token, the organizational contexts in which my interviewees worked were relatively similar. All were engineering-driven professional organizations with a preponderance of professionals working in similar capacities (accounting, computer programming, systems development, etc.) This raises interesting questions about what kind of strategies and social practices might be found in other kinds of professional organizations, for example, or in lawyers' offices. These different types of organizations are likely to have different constraints, operating assumptions, values, etc. which would have consequent implications for the ease or difficulty with which part-time professional roles could be enacted. While this study brought to the surface useful themes through which to locate the challenges associated with part-time professional work arrangements, future research should pay particular attention to how specific cultural constraints affect these thematic categories.

Theoretical Implications and Future Research Ideas

The goal of this dissertation was relatively straightforward: to focus on the particular social sense making practices which constitute the part-time professional in local work cultures. Having arrived at some understanding of the complexity associated with creating
and sustaining these work arrangements, a useful next step might be to expand on the insights provided by paying theoretical attention to interaction rituals as a way of creating and sustaining culture and role expectations (Collins 1981, 1988; Friedman 1989; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989). This project has developed an initial listing of the social practices and rituals through which part-time professional work is created and sustained in organizational contexts: a useful next step would be to build on this list to develop a typology for classifying and studying such rituals along a number of different dimensions (such as, for example, degree of elaboration; level of formality; etc.). Developing coding categories to identify and measure such dimensions would allow the researcher to use a survey instrument or a more focused ethnographic study to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the form these rituals take, and the particular ways through which organizational culture is affirmed and sustained.

A second implication for researchers concerns the conceptualization of time in the study of alternative work arrangements. Simple measures of involvement based on clock time are insufficient to understand the complexity of the rhythms of working life: it would be useful to focus on the rhythm of a work context's interaction rituals and workers' involvement in those rituals as a means of understanding the implications of part-time, flex time, tele-commuting and other new patterns of work. Whether employees are in the office for 20, 40 or 60 hours per week may be less important to their organizational effectiveness and careers than is their ability to participate in key rituals that affirm their membership status and commitment. Thus, researchers interested in the new forms of organizing (Daft and Lewin 1993) and their effects on employees should pay closer attention to the social patterns and rhythms of particular organizational cultures, and for the ways in which these
cultures embrace or reject part-time professionals. This research should pay particular attention to the politics of the process – to the ways in which the temporal rhythms in organizations serve to privilege particular groups, or discourage alternative conceptualizations of how public-private balance might be achieved.

Another line of investigation might examine the home/work boundary (Perlow, 1998) as a contested site for control. This thesis, and Perlow's recent (1998) work on boundary control, suggests that the "boundary" which symbolically separates "public" from "private" time is very much a social construct. The simple introduction of part-time professional work arrangements will not create an impermeable boundary for the part-time professional: careful attention to that boundary would allow for more critical documentation of the specific ways in which the actions of managers, clients, and coworkers might work to mitigate the organization's support of and commitment to part-time professional work arrangements.

Finally, Hochschild's (1983, 1989) work on what she termed the "economy of gratitude" offers an intriguing starting point for future study. Hochschild argued that with changing role expectations come changes in what different parties to a relationship expect of each other:

A social role – such as that of bride, wife, or mother – is partly a way of describing what feelings people think are owed and are owing. A role establishes a baseline for what feelings seem appropriate to certain series of events. When roles change, so do rules for how to feel and interpret events. A rising divorce rate, a rising remarriage rate, a declining birthrate, a rising number of working women, and a greater legitimation of homosexuality are the outer signs of changing roles. What, when she works outside the home, is a wife? What, when others care for children, is a parent? And what, then, is a child? What, when marriages easily dissolve, is a lover and what is a friend? According to which standard, among all those that are culturally available, do we assess how appropriate our feelings are to a situation? If periods of rapid change induce status anxiety, they also lead to anxiety about what, after all, the feeling rules are" (Hochschild 1983, 74-75).
Hints of this role anxiety were evident in the current research with, for example, professionals explaining that they will work over time to compensate for training opportunities as a way of "giving back" to their organization. Similarly, this appears to be the case when Sarah explains that she is happy with her current manager because she acknowledges Sarah's overtime, and expresses her gratitude for the extra effort. This raises intriguing questions about the tacit assumptions with which different parties approach the part-time relationship. Do some managers, for example, assume that they are giving a "gift" to the part-timer, with the expectation that they will then reciprocate by working that much harder than their full-time colleagues? What do part-time professionals themselves feel they owe or are owed, and how do these expectations affect the development of local part-time work arrangements?

**Implications for Practice**

For managers in organizations that are attempting to provide flexible work arrangements for professional employees, the research describe here suggests two key success factors. First, HR managers committed to the development and implementation of sustainable part-time professional work arrangements should ensure the development of effective work relationships by focusing on the manner in which the part-time professional is integrated into the local work context (Trice and Beyer 1984). Although a typical organizational strategy may be to develop human resource policies that legitimate and regulate new arrangements, these policies may well fail to achieve their goals if they are not matched with careful management in local work contexts—especially in the absence of an
institutionally legitimate language to describe the new role. I have argued that it is in the local work context where part-time professional work will have a direct impact on culture. If human resource policies ignore the importance of these local structures, and local managers rely on either their devices or the part-time professional's initiative to develop norms around part-time professional work arrangements, then efforts to construct sustainable work arrangements may remain ad hoc and idiosyncratic.

The second implication for HR managers is that even if they recognize the criticality of the local work context, they also need to recognize the heterogeneity of such contexts. For part-time professionals to be effective members of a work group, dominant patterns of interaction rituals may need to be reformulated, so that part-timers are able to participate as fully as possible and, just as importantly, be perceived by co-workers as legitimate members of the work group in good standing. This will be particularly important in local work contexts which have developed work cultures that might be seen as close-knit or family-like, but to a part-timer might simply feel closed and incestuous. So, managing the work context to facilitate part-time professional work may require changing the frequency, structure and meaning attached to such rituals as formal and informal meetings, lunches, and dinners. It might also require changing the patterns of direction and supervision in the work group so that part-timers are better able to occupy positions of authority.

At the organizational level, a commitment to creating sustainable part-time professional work arrangements as a way of genuinely addressing the role pressures borne by today's professionals (e.g., Marshall, 1997) would require more committed institutional support. Whereas individual part-time professionals have proved themselves quite capable of fashioning for themselves workable part-time arrangements, these arrangements are
supported by a great deal of backstage work which often goes unacknowledged. As suggested in Chapter VI, part-time professionals may end up with more private time, measured in absolute terms, but they are still required to manage the kind of demanding role expectations confronting their full-time counterparts. To begin to address these role expectations, as a means to creating a distinct role for the part-time professional, organizations must shift responsibility for innovation from the shoulders of individual part-time professionals to the organization and its institutional leaders. This would require an explicit commitment to framing the part-time arrangement as something genuinely distinct, addressing from the very beginning of the process the challenge it poses (as outlined in Tables 4-1 and 4-2), and sharing responsibility for managing these concessions among managers, coworkers, and institutional leaders.

Finally, for part-time professionals, themselves, the most significant implication of this research is that if they wish to succeed in traditional, professional work contexts, they need to be proactive in the face of a host of challenges, both concrete and symbolic. They must negotiate ways in which they can be perceived as legitimate members of the work context, as insiders rather than outsiders or marginal members. They must develop means of delegating authority and accepting direction that do not require ever-availability. They must also arrange their dealings such that they are seen to be conforming with local practices to the level demanded by coworkers. For each of these challenges, part-time professionals have a range of strategies available to them. These principally involve either complying with the demands of the local work context in some way, often through the sacrifice of non-work time, or working to develop new rituals so that the work context might be more amenable to their alternative schedules.
That the final two conclusions are so disparate leads to a concluding comment about a key message of this study. My basic conclusion is that assigning primary responsibility for role innovation to the professionals who occupy part-time positions is a great deal to ask of them. They are invited to be innovative in creating their new position, but they have to do so in the face of many pressures which work against such innovation: institutionalized beliefs about what professionalism means; the lack of a shared language with which to describe the part-time professional; and the reality that what looks like the straightforward conversion of one job to part-time will also require significant adjustments to the ways in which others within the organization work. A central recommendation to the part-time professional, then, is that they enter this relationship with their eyes open, doing all that they can to frame a relationship which will serve their own interests up front, without calling undue attention to the unique challenges posed by their work arrangement. However, while this approach may prove adaptive for the individual part-time professional, it comes with a downside: the organization learns little from the locally idiosyncratic arrangements, and systemic change is unlikely. In order for genuine, organizational-level learning to occur, it will be necessary to penetrate the cover story, to acknowledge the backstage work which goes into creating and sustaining these arrangement, and to make some hard decisions about where responsibility for this work should be borne (Perlow 1998). I have suggested above that this will only be likely in the face of genuine commitment from the organization.

Finally, I suggest that this research highlights a need for academics to approach the topics of time and professionalism more critically. There may be good reasons why part-time professionals choose to keep this backstage work invisible, and there may be understandable reasons why managers choose to do the same. However, there is no reason
why academics should continue to pretend that "part-time" is simply a demographic variable. Academics are in a unique position to "get outside the imminence of the experience" (Jermier 1998; cf. Jay 1996): by bringing to the surface the work that goes into making such arrangements sustainable, and the ways in which organizational expectations may work against such arrangements, we shed light on this process of change and may, in the process, provide professionals and managers with questions they can use to help themselves (Schein 1999).
REFERENCES


References


References


