

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275699755>

Institutional and Resource Dependence Determinants of Responsiveness Work–Family Issues

Article in *The Academy of Management Journal* · October 1995

DOI: 10.2307/256866

CITATIONS

297

READS

172

2 authors:



Paul Ingram

Columbia University

76 PUBLICATIONS 8,131 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Tal Simons

Erasmus University Rotterdam

19 PUBLICATIONS 1,192 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Identity on the move: The interplay among the creative product, the leader, and the organization in the dynamics of identity work [View project](#)



Organizations and Ideology [View project](#)

INSTITUTIONAL AND RESOURCE DEPENDENCE DETERMINANTS OF RESPONSIVENESS TO WORK-FAMILY ISSUES

PAUL INGRAM
Carnegie Mellon University
TAL SIMONS
Hebrew University

Whether and how organizations choose strategies that address pressures from both their exchange and the institutional environments has recently become a central question in organization theory. We used the National Organizations Study to replicate and extend Goodstein's application of Oliver's framework integrating resource dependence and institutional theories to explain organizational responsiveness to work-family issues. We found that organizations' responsiveness to work-family issues was determined by both the institutional environment and demands for work-family programs from important exchange partners.

Institutional theory has generated an impressive body of theoretical and empirical work explaining organizational form and practice (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Fligstein, 1985; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer, Scott, & Strang, 1987). The key argument has been that organizations are constrained by social rules and follow taken-for-granted conventions that shape their form and practice. Some of the same researchers (e.g., DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991; Scott, 1991), however, have recently criticized institutional theory for the lack of "explicit attention to strategic behaviors that organizations employ in direct response to the institutional processes that affect them" (Oliver, 1991: 145).

Responding to the "oversocialized" explanation presented by institutional theory, Oliver offered a typology of organizations' strategic responses to institutional pressures. The five strategic responses suggested "vary in active agency from passivity to increasingly active resistance: Acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation" (Oliver, 1991: 151). Oliver also offered five predictors of which strategy an organization will adopt: Cause, constituents, content, control, and context. In a recent study, Goodstein (1994) applied Oliver's ideas to explain responsiveness to work-family issues among Washington State organizations.

We are grateful to Mark Fichman for helpful comments on an earlier draft. Tal Simons was a Lady Davis Fellow while working on this project.

In this research, we employed Oliver's (1991) framework and followed Goodstein (1994) in focusing on organizations' responsiveness to work-family issues, using a representative national sample of organizations. Although we closely followed Goodstein with the goal of contributing to cumulative knowledge, this study departs from and extends his in some respects that will be depicted later. In the next section, we briefly review the demographic changes and the ensuing pressures that contemporary organizations face. We then develop the rationale for the study's hypotheses and describe the data, analyses, and results. In the final section we discuss the results and suggest some ideas for future research.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS TO WORK-FAMILY ISSUES

Background

The demographic composition of the U.S. labor force is rapidly changing. Women comprise one of the fastest-growing segments of the labor force: The proportion of women 16 and over who were employed increased from 36 percent to 54 percent between 1960 and 1991, and the proportion of mothers with children under the age of six who worked outside the home increased from less than 19 percent in 1960 to 60 percent by 1991 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1992). The influx of women into the labor force is accompanied by pressures to find alternatives to women's traditional role as homemakers and child-care providers. Both women and men require flexibility to manage their work and family lives (Bailyn, 1993). However, as a result of strong societal norms, it is still mostly women who take on primary responsibility for their children.

Responding to the increasing demands for work-family accommodations has become a major challenge for organizations, one that remains understudied (Baron, Mittman, & Newman, 1991; Goodstein, 1994). Some research on organizational responsiveness to work-family issues can be found in the human resource literature, but the cumulative findings are disappointing. In empirical work, nonrepresentative samples (Lewin & Mitchell, 1991) and poor response rates have been problems. Morgan and Milliken (1992), for example, conducted a survey of 1,000 human resource executives that yielded only 175 usable surveys. Such a response rate is disturbing in research in which the dependent variable is a form of responsiveness. Another problem has been the lack of an overarching theoretical framework (Goodstein, 1994). Without a generalizable theory of contingent response to pressures for work-family programs, the field is left with isolated findings that often seem to contradict each other.

Hypotheses

Like Goodstein (1994), we hypothesized about institutional pressure for work-family programs using the five predictors of institutional response suggested by Oliver (1991)—cause, constituents, content, control,

and context. We also considered the power that organizations have relative to their institutional environments, and the technical benefits of work-family programs. More specifically, we replicated Goodstein's work in a different empirical setting and extended it by looking at women in management positions as reflecting women's power, by looking at an organization's consideration of other organizations' practices, and by explicitly framing organizations' capacity to resist institutional pressures as "countervailing power." Further, we extended Goodstein's measure of responsiveness to work-family issues by capturing some of the more symbolic aspects of organizational responses.

Cause. According to Oliver, the "cause of institutional pressure refers to the rationale, set of expectations, or intended objectives that underlie external pressures for conformity" (1991: 161). There is a growing normative expectation that U.S. organizations should help their employees manage work-family issues (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987). Organizations can enhance their legitimacy and social fitness by responding to the salient social concern that work-family tensions be resolved.

Not all organizations are equally subject to normative pressure and the need for legitimacy. Large organizations are more visible and receive more attention from regulators, the media, and the public, and they are therefore held to higher standards of institutional compliance than smaller organizations (Goodstein, 1994; Powell, 1991). Large organizations have also been found to be more responsive to work-family issues (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987; Morgan & Milliken, 1992).

Hypothesis 1: The greater the size of an organization, the greater its level of responsiveness to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Constituents. Constituents are the actors who exert institutional pressure on organizations. Often particular groups demand institutional compliance from an organization (Oliver, 1991). Organizations' female employees are a constituency that has been identified as important in driving responsiveness to work-family problems (Goodstein, 1994; Kamerman & Kahn, 1987; Milliken, Dutton, & Beyer, 1990). Organizations that have a high proportion of female workers are more dependent on the constituency that traditionally makes the strongest demands for work-family accommodations and should therefore be more responsive (Goodstein, 1994).

Hypothesis 2a: The greater the proportion of an organization's employees who are women, the greater its level of responsiveness to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

A possible mitigation to the effectiveness of female employees as a constituency is the fact that they often have less power in organizations than their male counterparts (Kanter, 1977). Not only are there cultural stereotypes that undermine the power of women in organizations, but of-

ten organizations that have a high proportion of female employees employ them in frontline, low-skill jobs (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987). These facts suggest that organizations' dependence on women may be small relative to their numbers. The proportion of women in management positions may better capture the dependence of the organization on women (Blum, Fields, & Goodman, 1994; Shenhav & Haberfeld, 1992).

Hypothesis 2b: The greater the proportion of an organization's managers who are women, the greater its responsiveness to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Content. Oliver (1991) argued that compliance with an institutional pressure may be increased when the content of that pressure is congruent with an organization's existing goals and policies. For work-family issues, this congruence should be particularly strong for public sector organizations. Public sector organizations are responsive to social welfare concerns because of their goal of delivering social service and because they are not held to exclusively economic standards of performance (Oliver, 1991). Public sector organizations were early innovators in work-family accommodations and continue to promote work-family initiatives (Goodstein, 1994; Kamerman & Kahn, 1987).

Hypothesis 3: Public sector organizations will be more responsive than private sector organizations to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Control. Control refers to the mechanisms through which institutional rules are enforced. Without legal coercion, institutional control operates through organizational fields, which are sets of organizations that constitute a recognized area of institutional life, such as an industry (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The legitimacy of norms and practices within an organizational field increases with the degree of their diffusion in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). Early adopters provide an example for other organizations to imitate (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989). As diffusion continues, the propriety of norms and practices becomes widely accepted, and organizations face greater pressure to adopt them to maintain legitimacy (Oliver, 1991). Organizations that fail to meet the level of work-family responsiveness of their organizational field suffer damage to their reputations and may experience difficulties in such areas as recruiting employees (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987; Morgan & Miliken, 1992).

Hypothesis 4: The greater the proportion of other organizations within an organization's industry adopting work-family policies and programs, the greater its level of responsiveness to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Context. Regardless of the extent of institutional compliance in a field, some organizational fields are better able to evoke compliance than others. When organizations in a field are highly interconnected, the degree of institutional pressure is also high (DiMaggio & Powell; 1983, Oliver, 1991). Things such as relational density, history, and trade associations may cause organizations to be more or less introspective or aware of other organizations' policies and practices. Attentiveness to other organizations' policies and practices allows a focal organization to compare itself to the standards of the organizational field and make necessary adjustments.

Hypothesis 5: The more attentive an organization is to the practices of other organizations, the greater its level of responsiveness to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Countervailing power. One of the ways organizations respond to the demands of constituents is to use countervailing sources of power (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). If the dependence of organizations on constituents is balanced with dependence of the constituents on the organization, the likelihood of resistance to pressures for institutional conformity increases. Kamerman and Kahn (1987: 257) pointed out that organizations are less responsive to the work-family demands of employees when the employees making those demands face a high unemployment rate.

Hypothesis 6: Organizations in industries with high unemployment rates for women will be less responsive to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Benefits from work-family responsiveness. The adoption of practices by organizations is not influenced by external pressures alone. Practices also have implications for the internal technical operations of organizations (Meyer, Scott, & Deal, 1983). For some organizations, work-family programs do much to solve the internal problems of organization and production (Gonyea & Googins, 1992). Organizations that have greater problems than others when parents miss work because of problems with their children receive a greater benefit from work-family programs.

Hypothesis 7: Organizations that have greater problems when employees with young children miss work will be more responsive to institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues.

Specific compliance/resistance strategies. Finally, following Oliver (1991) and Goodstein (1994), we hypothesized that organizations will choose strategies for institutional response by weighing institutional pressures against the ability to use countervailing power and the extent of the expected technical benefit of work-family responsiveness. We considered four of the five response strategies Oliver suggested; we did not have data with which to examine the fifth strategy, manipulation. The four strate-

gies, ordered from most compliant to most resistant to institutional pressure, are acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, and defiance.

Organizations should acquiesce to institutional pressure for work-family responsiveness when that pressure is high, when their countervailing power is low, and when there are technical benefits to be gained from work-family programs. The next most compliant strategy, compromise, may arise when organizations are "confronted with conflicting institutional demands or with inconsistencies between institutional expectations and internal organizational objectives" (Oliver, 1991: 153). Organizations that face significant institutional pressure but that have high countervailing power or anticipate few technical benefits from providing work-family programs should follow a compromise strategy. Avoidance, which is a more extreme form of institutional resistance, is expected of organizations that face institutional pressure that is somewhat weak, have high countervailing power, and expect few technical benefits from work-family programs. Finally, the most extreme resistance strategy, defiance, will only be used by organizations that face very weak institutional pressures and have high countervailing power and low expectations of technical benefits from work-family programs.

Hypothesis 8: Organizations will be most likely to pursue an acquiescence strategy when institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues are strong, countervailing power is low, and benefits from providing work-family programs are high.

Hypothesis 9: Organizations will be most likely to pursue a compromise strategy when institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues are strong, while countervailing power is high or benefits from providing work-family programs are low.

Hypothesis 10: Organizations will be most likely to pursue an avoidance strategy when institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues are somewhat weak, countervailing power is high, and benefits from providing work-family programs are low.

Hypothesis 11: Organizations will be most likely to pursue a defiance strategy when institutional pressures for employer involvement in work-family issues are very weak, countervailing power is high, and benefits from providing work-family programs are low.

DATA AND ANALYSES

The data for these analyses come from the 1991 National Organizations Study (NOS) (Kalleberg, Knoke, Marsden, & Spaeth, 1993). The NOS

represents an ambitious attempt to collect data on a national probability sample of work establishments (Spaeth & O'Rourke, 1994). The sample was generated using "hypernetwork" sampling: Respondents to the National Opinion Research Center 1991 General Social Survey (GSS) were asked to give the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the establishments that employed them and their spouses. The Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) of the University of Illinois then conducted telephone interviews with personnel officials at the work establishments thus identified. The telephone interviews were based on a questionnaire that asked about characteristics, practices, and policies of the establishments. Those data were supplemented by aggregate data from a number of sources, including the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, on the counties and industries in which the establishments operated. Ultimately, 727 of 1,127 (64.5%) of the establishments contacted by the Survey Research Laboratory provided usable data. Spaeth and O'Rourke (1994) tested the National Organizations Study for comparability to two random surveys, the GSS and the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. They found that on key variables reflecting representativeness, the NOS compared well to those surveys, indicating that there was no significant sample selection bias for the NOS. Because the 1991 GSS used area-cluster sampling, 39 organizations were duplicates (Knoke & Kalleberg, 1994), leaving 688 unique establishments.

Measurements

The dependent variable, responsiveness to work-family issues, was coded into four groups. The code was "3" if an organization acquiesced, "2" if it compromised, "1" if it avoided, and "0" if it defied institutional pressure. To generate these codes, we considered three classes of benefits and types within each class. Organizations were noted as offering dependent care services if they had an on-site day care facility, subsidized day care away from the workplace, or provided assistance to employees with aging parents. Organizations were noted as offering flexible workplace options if they allowed employees to use flextime or to work at home or if they provided paid paternity leave. The third class of benefits included what might be called cheap responses—benefits that do not require the same degree of financial expenditure or other organizational investment as the benefits in the other two categories. We included in this class providing information about child care in the community or giving unpaid paternity leave. Kahn and Kamerman pointed out that organizations have used providing information about child care as a "cheap form of 'image building' and of announcing a policy of 'family responsiveness'" (1987: 197). Unpaid paternity leave was included in this category because it obviously is less generous than paid paternity leave and is increasingly likely to be legally required (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987).

We treated organizations as following an *acquiescence* strategy when

they had at least one benefit in each of the two expensive benefit categories, dependent care services and flexible workplace options. Such organizations expressed the greatest degree of compliance with pressures for work-family accommodations because they not only accepted significant expense, but also provided a range of benefits that gave employees an important flexibility of choice (Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991). Organizations used *compromise* when they offered at least one benefit from one of the expensive categories and at least one cheap response. By offering only one type of expensive benefit, these organizations made a limited effort to comply with pressure for work-family programs. By offering an additional cheap response, they acknowledged the existence of additional work-family pressures that their substantive benefit packages did not satisfy. Organizations that offered only benefits from the cheap response category were treated as practicing *avoidance*. These organizations fit Oliver's (1991: 154) description of avoidance as disguising nonconformity with "window dressing." This category also included organizations that offered only one category of expensive benefit and no cheap response. Finally, organizations followed a strategy of *defiance* when they offered no work-family benefits at all. Table 1 shows the distribution of organizations by size and industry in the four strategic response categories.

Cause was measured with the natural logarithm of the number of employees in an organization. *Constituents* was defined in two ways to test Hypotheses 2a and 2b, respectively: as the percentage of an organization's employees who were women and as the percentage of an organization's managers who were women. *Content* was a dichotomous variable coded "1" if an organization was in the public sector. *Control* was measured with three variables assessing the degree of work-family program diffusion in a focal organization's organizational field. We used the percentage of organizations that acquiesced in (1) the organization's industry, (2) the organization's census region, and (3) the intersection of the organization's census region and industry. Goodstein (1994) used the same measurement of control to differentiate industry and regional differences from the impact of diffusion. In a cross-sectional study such as this one, the percentage of adopters in a region or industry may simply represent sectoral differences. A finding that the percentage of adopters in the intersection of industry and region positively influences responsiveness could not be explained by regional or industry differences and thus would support the institutional control argument. *Context* was assessed by the response to a direct question about the degree to which an organization paid attention to practices in other organizations like it when evaluating its performance. *Countervailing power* was the unemployment rate for women in the organization's industry. *Benefits from work-family responsiveness* was assessed via the response to a direct question about the degree to which an organization had problems when employees with young children missed work because child-care services were not available.

TABLE 1
Distribution of Organizations

Organizational Characteristics	Percentage	Strategic Response			
		Acquiescence	Compromise	Avoidance	Defiance
Size					
0-49	49.8	14.6	36.2	32.9	16.3
50-249	24.1	29.5	41.6	24.7	4.2
250 +	26.0	45.2	35.8	17.3	1.7
Industry					
All industries	100	26.2	37.3	26.9	9.6
Agriculture	7.1	12.2	28.6	30.6	28.6
Manufacturing	16.7	20.0	37.4	36.5	6.1
Transportation	9.0	32.3	35.5	25.8	6.4
Wholesale	2.5	29.4	23.5	41.2	5.9
Retail	12.5	9.3	59.3	24.4	7.0
Business service	13.8	20.0	39.0	26.3	14.7
Personal service	3.8	11.5	11.5	50.0	26.9
Professional	26.7	38.0	34.2	23.4	4.4
Public sector	7.8	48.2	37.0	5.6	9.2

Models and Results

Table 2 presents an ordered probit model. We used this model because the dependent variable was discrete and ordered. An ordinary-least-squares model would fail to account for the discrete nature of the variable, and multinomial logit or probit analysis would ignore its ordered nature (Greene, 1990). The ordered probit model allowed estimation of the probability that an organization fell into a certain response category as a function of the independent variables. Because the response categories were ordered, positive coefficients could be interpreted as increasing the likelihood that the organization was responsive to work-family issues. We used this model to test Hypotheses 1–7.

As Hypothesis 1 predicts, larger organizations are more responsive to work-family issues ($b = .213$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 2a, predicting that the proportion of female employees increases responsiveness, is not supported. However, Hypothesis 2b, predicting that the proportion of female

TABLE 2
Results of Ordered Probit Analyses

Variables	Model 1	
	<i>b</i>	s.e.
Cause		
Organizational size	.213**	.02
Constituents		
Percentage of female employees	-.063	.16
Percentage of female managers	.214†	.15
Content		
Public sector	.482**	.19
Control		
Same industry–same region diffusion	.637*	.34
All industries–same region diffusion	-.758	.81
Same industry–all regions diffusion	-.340	.58
Context		
Pay attention to other organizations	.202**	.06
Countervailing power		
Female unemployment in industry	-.076**	.03
Benefit of work-family		
Problem from parents missing work	.063	.07
Constant	.571	.33
α_1^a	1.15	
α_2	2.31	
χ^2	198.59**	

^a α_1 shows the break point between the first and second categories; α_2 shows the break point between the second and third.

† $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

managers increases responsiveness, is supported ($b = .214, p < .10$). This pattern indicates that female employees are not a powerful enough constituency to affect organizations' work-family responses, but female managers are. Hypothesis 3, which predicts higher responsiveness for public sector organizations, is also supported ($b = .482, p < .01$), indicating that organizations with goals consistent with institutional pressure are more likely to respond. Hypothesis 4 is also supported. The proportion of organizations that acquiesce in a focal organization's region-industry increases responsiveness ($b = .637, p < .05$). As described above, the industry and region diffusion measures (which are not significant) control for alternative explanations of industry or regional differences. As Hypothesis 5 predicts, organizations that pay more attention to other organizations are more responsive to work-family pressures ($b = .202, p < .01$). The countervailing power hypothesis, Hypothesis 6, is also supported—organizations in industries with high unemployment rates for women are less likely to respond to work-family pressures ($b = -.076, p < .01$). The only hypothesis that failed completely was Hypothesis 7. Organizations that face greater problems when parents miss work were no more likely to respond to work-family pressures. This finding suggests that technical considerations are not important in explaining work-family responsiveness. Goodstein (1994) found that perceived benefits from child care increased responsiveness, but two other studies on work-family responsiveness failed to find support for the relevance of technical considerations (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987; Morgan & Milliken, 1992).

Table 3 presents the results of four logit models, one for each strategic response to institutional pressure. Logit models predict the likelihood of one category of a dichotomous variable, in this case the likelihood of using the strategic response. The four models test Hypotheses 8–11. Model 2 supports Hypothesis 8. Organizations are more likely to acquiesce if they face high institutional pressure and have low countervailing power. That is, organizations are likely to acquiesce when they are large, have high proportions of female managers, are in the public sector, are in industry-regions with many organizations that acquiesce, pay attention to other organizations, and have low countervailing power because of low female unemployment in their industry. The only variable that does not work as expected is the benefit of work-family responsiveness.

Model 3 tests the likelihood of organizations using the compromise strategy and provides partial support for Hypothesis 9. Organizations that face institutional pressure—here, large organizations and those that pay attention to other organizations—are more likely to compromise. Also as predicted, organizations with high countervailing power (those in industries with high female unemployment) are more likely to compromise. However, organizations that receive higher benefits from work-family responses are more likely to compromise, which is the opposite of the Hypothesis 9 prediction. This finding is particularly interesting since the benefit variable was insignificant in both models 1 and 2. It suggests a limited but present

TABLE 3
Results of Logit Analyses

Variables	Strategic Response							
	Model 2: Acquiescence		Model 3: Compromise		Model 4: Avoidance		Model 5: Defiance	
	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.
Cause								
Organizational size	0.32**	.05	0.07*	.04	-0.21**	.05	-0.51**	.09
Constituents								
Percentage of female employees	-0.18	.41	0.15	.33	0.39	.36	-0.36	.54
Percentage of female managers	0.52†	.36	-0.07	.29	-0.53*	.32	-0.17	.49
Content								
Public sector	0.89**	.38	0.22	.35	-2.20**	.64	0.99	.67
Control								
Same industry-same region diffusion	1.15†	.75	0.04	.66	-0.90	.81	-0.65	1.20
All industries-same region diffusion	-2.20	1.70	1.68	1.50	-1.90	1.60	3.33	2.60
Same industry-all regions diffusion	-0.38	1.30	-0.94	1.10	2.26*	1.20	-2.20	1.90
Context								
Pay attention to other organizations	0.28*	.15	0.20†	.12	-0.30*	.13	-0.29†	.21
Countervailing power								
Female unemployment in industry	-0.26**	.07	0.07†	.05	0.12*	.06	-0.04	.09
Benefit of work-family								
Problem from parents missing work	-0.04	.17	0.26†	.14	-0.08	.16	-0.26	.30
Constant	-1.50*	.79	-2.30**	0.67	0.14	.72	0.35	1.10
χ^2	116.23**		21.97*		62.72**		89.33**	
Number of organizations using strategy	180		257		185		66	

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

effect of technical issues on decisions regarding work-family responsiveness.

Model 4 tests the likelihood of the strategy of avoidance. The results support Hypothesis 10. Here, the coefficients of the institutional pressure variables are generally opposite to those of models 2 and 3 in sign, indicating that strong institutional pressure decreases the likelihood of avoidance. Avoidance is used by small organizations, those with few female managers, those not in the public sector, and those that do not pay attention to other organizations. As expected, countervailing power increases the likelihood of avoidance. The industry-region variable is not significant, and the industry diffusion variable is significant, suggesting that industry features affect avoidance but institutional control does not.

Model 5 tests the likelihood of a strategy of defiance and weakly supports Hypothesis 11. Institutional pressure decreases the likelihood of defiance, but only two of the institutional pressure variables are significant. Small organizations and organizations that do not pay attention to others are more likely to use defiance. The irrelevance of the other variables for predicting defiance may be due to the relative importance of size. The large negative coefficient for size and the size of organizations using defiance shown in Table 1 indicate that institutional defiance is seldom used by any but small organizations.

DISCUSSION

This study is a test of Oliver's (1991) framework. The findings support the idea that organizations do, under specific circumstances, respond in a calculated manner to institutional pressure. The study also promotes understanding of an important substantive problem, organizations' responsiveness to work-family issues. Further, it is a replication and extension of an earlier study (Goodstein, 1994) allowing confidence in the generalizability of the combined results. Replication is both scarcer and more important in nonexperimental research than in experimental research (Cohen, 1989).

We find strong support in this study for Oliver's (1991) conceptualization of the factors that affect organizations' degree of compliance with institutional pressure (Hypotheses 1-7). Although our results are quite similar to Goodstein's (1994) results, there are some noteworthy differences. First, the assertion that organizations respond to pressures consistent with their goals, or at least pressures that are not diametric to their goals, is empirically substantiated here. Goodstein, however, found no support for the prediction that public sector organizations would be more responsive to work-family pressures, and his findings are surprising in light of both previous observations about the diffusion of work-family programs (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987) and Oliver's (1991) theoretical argument.

Second, we refined Goodstein's (1994) treatment of constituents by including female managers as an additional operational definition of constituents. Our finding that the proportion of female managers, and not the

proportion of female employees as a whole, increased work-family responsiveness is informative both for institutional theory and the human resource literature. Understanding institutional pressure for work-family programs is facilitated by a recognition that the traditional champions of such programs, women, often lack power in organizations.

Third, strong support of organizations' impetus to secure legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) is presented here by the strong effect that size (Powell, 1991) and attention to other organizations' practices (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983) have on the degree of responsiveness to work-family issues. Although Goodstein (1994) found support for organizations' visibility (i.e., size) positively affecting responsiveness to work-family pressures, his data did not reveal the effect of organizations' interconnectedness on their conformity. We suspect that our sample is better suited to testing such an effect because it is a representative national sample.

Lastly, we highlighted the importance of the concept of countervailing power (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) by framing the proportion of female unemployment in an industry as such. Thus, in the future, researchers may be more cognizant of various factors affecting the power of constituents to influence organizations. This awareness will make it possible to rely on theoretical direction when choosing variables that otherwise are considered control variables.

Goodstein's (1994) and this study's results correspond further on the findings regarding the diffusion of practices across organizational fields, and both apply the same rigorous test by considering the interaction of the industry and geographical region of the focal organization. This correspondence supports not only Oliver's (1991) proposition but also one of institutional theory's main ideas, that the legitimacy of norms and practices within an organizational field increases with the degree of their diffusion in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). More research, however, is needed on the effect technical considerations, vis-à-vis institutional determinants, have on responsiveness to work-family issues. In both this and Goodstein's study, the results on this issue are mixed. Furthermore, in both cases technical considerations are based on the perceptions of organizational actors rather than direct measures of the cost and the benefits of providing child care and other practices aimed at addressing work-family issues. Since institutions affect the perceptions of decision makers (Oliver, 1991), future studies of the joint effect of institutional pressure and technical concerns on organizations would benefit from objective measures of the technical dimension.

We diverged from Goodstein's measurement of the response strategies by taking into account the issue of equivalence of practices. By considering "cheap responses," we were able to capture what can be labeled "symbolic compliance" and better differentiate between the compromise and avoidance strategies, something that Goodstein's measurement could not achieve (Goodstein, 1994: 365).

For the most part, as mentioned earlier, the results of the second set of analyses support the predictions contained in Hypotheses 8 to 11 on the strategy of institutional response used. However, like Goodstein (1994), we were not as successful at predicting the exact strategy of institutional response as we were at predicting the extent of institutional compliance. The combined results here and in Goodstein suggest that more influences must be considered to improve precision in predicting strategic responses to institutional pressures. We speculate that idiosyncrasies of organizing capability, such as history, leadership, and internal politics, influence an organization's choice of response strategy. Such factors generate inertia that can result in maintaining a response strategy despite environmental pressure to change it. Consideration of these factors along with the institutional and resource dependent pressures discussed by Oliver (1991) would improve understanding of organizations' strategic response strategy at any point in time. Although this study and Goodstein both analyzed organizational responsiveness to work-family issues, Oliver's (1991) framework is general and could explain responsiveness to other types of institutional pressure.

REFERENCES

- Bailyn L. 1993. *Breaking the mold: Women, men and time in the new corporate world*. New York: Free Press.
- Baron, J. N., Mittman, B. S., & Newman, A. E. 1991. Targets of opportunity: Organizational and environmental determinants of gender integration within the California Civil Service, 1979–1985. *American Journal of Sociology*, 96: 1362–1401.
- Blum, T. C., Fields, D. L., & Goodman, J. S. Organization-level determinants of women in management. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37: 241–268.
- Cohen, B. P. 1989. *Developing sociological knowledge: Theory and method*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- DiMaggio, P. J. 1988. Interest and agency in institutional theory. In L. G. Zucker (Ed.), *Institutional patterns and organizations: Culture and environment*: 3–21. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48: 147–160.
- Fligstein, N. 1985. The spread of the multidivisional form among large firms, 1919–1979. *American Sociological Review*, 50: 377–391.
- Galaskiewicz, J., & Wasserman, S. 1989. Mimetic processes within an interorganizational field: An empirical test. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34: 454–479.
- Gonyea, J. G., & Googins, B. K. 1992. Linking the worlds of work and family: Beyond the productivity trap. *Human Resource Management*, 31: 209–226.
- Goodstein, J. D. 1994. Institutional pressures and strategic responsiveness: Employer involvement in work-family issues. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37: 350–382.
- Greene, W. H. 1990. *Econometric analysis*. New York: MacMillan.

- Jamieson, D., & O'Mara, J. 1991. *Managing workforce 2000*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kahn, A. J., & Kamerman, S. B. 1987. *Child care: Facing the hard choices*. Dover, MA: Auburn House.
- Kalleberg, A. L., Knoke, D., Marsden, P. V., & Spaeth, J. L. 1993. *The 1991 National Organization Survey* [Machine-readable data file]. Ann Arbor, MI: Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Kamerman, S. B., & Kahn, A. J. 1987. *The responsive workplace*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kanter, R. M. 1977. *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Knoke, D., & Kalleberg, A. L. 1994. Job training in U.S. organizations. *American Sociological Review*, 59: 537-546.
- Lewin, D., & Mitchell, D. J. B. 1991. *Alternate approaches to workplace flexibility in the U.S.A.* Paper presented at the International Industrial Relations Association meeting, Naples, Italy.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. 1977. Institutional organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83: 340-363.
- Meyer, J. W., Scott, W. R., & Deal, T. R. 1983. Institutional and technical sources of organizational structure: Explaining the structure of educational organizations. In J. W. Meyer & W. R. Scott (Eds.), *Organizational environments: Ritual and rationality*: 45-70. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Meyer, J. W., Scott, R., & Strang, D. 1987. Centralization, fragmentation and school district complexity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 32: 186-201.
- Milliken, F. J., Dutton, J. E., & Beyer, J. M. 1990. Understanding organizational adaptation to change: The case of work-family issues. *Human Resource Planning*, 13: 91-107.
- Morgan, H., & Milliken, F. J. 1992. Keys to action: Understanding differences in organizations' responsiveness to work-and-family issues. *Human Resource Management*, 31: 227-248.
- Oliver, C. 1991. Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 16: 145-179.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. 1978. *The external control of organizations*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Powell, W. W. 1991. Expanding the scope of institutional analysis. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*: 183-203. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Scott, W. R. 1991. Unpacking institutional arguments. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutional in organizational analysis*: 162-182. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shenhav, Y., & Habermeld, Y. 1992. Organizational demography and inequality. *Social Forces*, 71: 123-143.
- Spaeth, J. L., & O'Rourke, D. P. 1994. Designing and implementing the National Organizations Study. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 37: 872-890.
- Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. 1983. Institutional sources of change in organizational structure: The diffusion of civil service reform, 1880-1930. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23: 22-39.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. 1992. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1992: The National Data Book*. Washington, DC.

Paul Ingram received his Ph.D. degree in organizational behavior from Cornell University. He is an assistant professor of industrial administration at the Graduate School of Industrial Administration, Carnegie Mellon University. His research interests include cooperation and competition between organizations, the impact of ideology on organizational forms, and the economics of organization.

Tal Simons received her Ph.D. degree from Cornell University. She is an assistant professor at the Jerusalem School of Business Administration, Hebrew University. Her current research interests include institutional models of organizations, the diffusion of innovations, interorganizational learning, and population level changes in organizational forms.