Why Executives Lose Their Balance

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Introduction

It is common for successful and high-performing executives to find themselves devoting the bulk of their time and energy to their careers, and very little to family or personal life. Executives worry about the possible costs of this imbalance to their families, and they regret having to pay this price for the sake of work and career. Yet it is a rare executive who takes action and creates a more even balance in his life.

This paper is about why this happens—why executives' lives get out of balance. To explain this, we will touch on many issues: We will address what people who become executives want out of their lives, what makes them feel happy and good about themselves. We will address the extraordinary commitment to achievement and success expected of these individuals, and the tremendous rewards and satisfactions they derive for meeting these expectations. And we will address how the rewards to be gotten from family and personal life can come to look paltry in comparison.

Furthermore, we will explore deeper forces underlying the loss of balance: inner needs and fears which push an executive toward the world of mastery and away from intimacy. We will look at how the values and pressures of organizations and society reflect and intensify these inner forces. Finally, we will show how imbalance can actually *inhibit* an executive's effectiveness on the job, as well as overall well-being.

This paper is intended for a range of audiences. It is for students of managerial behavior who are interested in the links between personality, life structure, and work. It is for human resource managers or executive development specialists who want to understand executives in order to help them enhance their work effectiveness or personal life satisfaction. And perhaps most importantly, it is for executives, who may see themselves reflected in these pages and gain a new perspective on how to get what they want from their work and their lives.

THE TIME-AND-ENERGY IMBALANCE

Executives who are effective in their jobs and successful in their careers often report an unhappy side effect: Their lives get "out of balance," with most of their energy devoted to work, and little left for family and leisure. These executives stay at the office into the evening, travel frequently, entertain clients over dinner, and take full briefcases home for the weekend. Even when they are not "working," work often occupies executives' minds. The executive may be physically present at the family dinner table, for example, while his mind is miles away—back in the conference room where he earlier that day presented his division's new product strategy to the Board. Or, the executive may go on vacation with his family, but drag along an extra suitcase full of books and magazines on management to be read poolside.

What's wrong with a life structure focused on work? Some people are content with, even prefer, a work-centered lifestyle. And an individual certainly has the right to make career success his top priority. Indeed, if those work-oriented executives expressed contentment with such a pattern, we would have no business advising them to do otherwise (putting aside for the moment the problem of how their families feel about it). But typically we find that managers don't want to live like this: they really want to do a better job of balancing work and family. Anecdotal evidence comes from the Center for Creative Leadership's management development programs. When a group of managers hears that I do research in the area of work-family balance, many invariably make a beeline for me during breaks, saying half-jokingly that they surely hope that the workshop will address that issue. Furthermore, in individual counseling sessions with these managers and others, more often than not the issues of greatest worry to them have to do with personal life—their marriages, their children, their health, their lifestyles and values.

The dilemma, though, is this: Although managers seem troubled about the imbalance, results from an earlier study (Kofodimos, 1984) indicate that they rarely intend to change the way they allocate their time and energy. Often they say that, given

the chance to do it over, they would structure their lives in the same way. Other researchers have discovered this contradiction, noting that although managers may express discontent with, and a wish to improve, their work-absorbed lifestyles, they rarely make any changes (Evans & Bartolome, 1981).

If indeed managers care a great deal about their personal lives and are concerned about the impact of their work absorption on personal life, then why is it so difficult for them to act on that concern and create more balance in their lives?

The framework I developed in answer to this question is based on data from a long-term research program called the Executive Development Project, conducted at CCL from 1982 to 1988. In this project, we conducted intensive case studies of about 20 executives, investigating their work, personal lives, and life histories. For each executive we collected data (by means of interviews, questionnaires, and/or psychological instruments) from co-workers and family members as well as from the executives themselves. In return for such in-depth access to their lives, we provided the executives with feedback and developmental counseling.

The sample consists exclusively of men. Therefore, when our discussion pertains to the implications of our own research findings, we can only speak with authority about male executives and will use the male pronoun. We expect that while female executives face some issues similar to those of males, they face other issues which are quite different.

The examples that I will use are drawn from actual cases, but all names and details have been disguised. For a fuller description of our methodology, see Kaplan, Kofodimos, and Drath (1987).

The Focus on Work

One obvious reason for an imbalance in work and family is that organizations expect, demand, and reward the focusing of a manager's energy on work. This is particularly true during the early years of his career when he is being watched and tested by the organization. These are seen as the "make or break" years; early career experiences and achievements can determine whether or not

the individual gets aboard the fast track to future advancement and success (Bailyn, 1970).

Managers at this early stage often justify their extra-hard work as temporary, saying that it will allow them to reach a position where they can relax a bit. But the pressures continue: Long work hours, repeated relocation, and frequent travel are treated throughout the manager's career as proof of commitment and loyalty. A recent *Fortune* article notes, "Companies view willingness to get up and go as a sign of dedication. Consequently, travel assignments are often received as badges of merit" (Nulty, 1988, p. 88).

Conversely, reluctance to make these tradeoffs is thought to reflect lack of dedication. We often hear managers state their companies' informal wisdom in terms such as this: "In this company, you can refuse one transfer but not two." After two, the transfer opportunities simply stop coming and, worse yet, the individual is labeled a non-player in the fast-track organizational game. We worked with one plateaued executive whose refusal to accept a promotion to another state (because he did not want to uproot his high-school-aged children) was generally seen by his co-workers as the major reason he had been relegated to a dead-end job.

Hard work is encouraged not only by the organizational reward system, but also by the values and norms of other members of the organization. For example, a co-worker of one of our executives said admiringly, "I'd call Roger on Friday night and say, 'We've got to work this weekend.' I'd even call him on vacation. He never complained." Another co-worker said,

> Roger Wood is the hardest-working guy I've ever seen, very
> impressive. I don't know how he does it. I wish I had his energy.
> He does an unbelievable amount of work. Works till six, comes in
> on Saturday, works at home. He's the kind of guy who comes
> home from a business trip at five p.m. and comes here and does
> two hours of work.

Observers and "experts" on organizations also exhort this focus on work. As social critics Schaef and Fassel (1988, p. 24) comment, the "obsession with work is promoted as desirable in the excellent company," even by popular management gurus such as Tom Peters.

If the manager does accept the implicit contract for life on the fast track, he is likely to reap the rewards of his hard work and dedication. These rewards—praise, respect, power, money, the sense of accomplishment—provide incentive to spend even more energy on the work activities being rewarded. And with advancement and increasing responsibility, the pressures only mount.

When we met Michael Bono he was Vice President of Research and Development in a large manufacturing company. Michael had a long history of unsuccessfully fighting imbalance. In graduate school, with a wife and new baby, he had "worked all the hours that you could imagine for three years." He continued this pace in his first job, but "with only two weeks of vacation—and I never used all of it—I burned myself out after a couple of years." So he changed companies, only to find that his new bosses "did the same thing to me again, dumped on me every major problem they had. I was working all hours." He put up with it, though, because these were high-visibility problems, and the reputation he gained by contributing to their solution propelled him from Team Leader to Vice President in just under seven years. Here, he thought, he could slow down a bit.

> I certainly plan to spend more time with Cathy and the kids than I have over the last few years. I've wanted to do it more, but I've had to establish myself at the corporate level. I've moved up kind of quickly. It's just turned out that way, but I like to take advantage of opportunities. Now, the business needs me so badly that I have the power to set limits to what I'll do.

A few weeks after he told us this, another area was added to Michael's responsibilities and he had to cancel a European sabbatical he had planned to take with his family in order to attend to his increased responsibilities. Even though Michael had been resolved, once more, to "set limits," organizational demands overpowered his good intentions.

The Spiraling Imbalance

Obviously, the executive's responsiveness to organizational pressures incurs costs in his personal life. More energy put into

work implies less put into family. Researchers have detailed the links between career demands and family experiences. Burke and Weir (1981) found that increased occupational demands have a negative impact on such non-work areas as marital and life satisfaction. Bray, Campbell, and Grant (1974) found that more successful managers are more career-oriented and less family-oriented than those who are less successful; they conclude that success breeds an increased interest in work and a decline in family and leisure interests. Grieff and Munter argue that "the continuous demands of business frequently distract the executive from responding to [the family's] needs, placing those needs somewhere down the executive's list of priorities, whether or not he or she likes to admit it" (1980, p. 148). Another research team found that

> For many people, the workplace, the job, and the organization were the central foci of their lives. Because the organization was so primary in their lives, because they were totally preoccupied with it, they began to lose touch with other aspects of their lives . . . (Schaef & Fassel, 1988, p. 119)

As work expands to dominate the individual's available time and energy, family relationships left unattended are likely to degenerate. And as family relationships weaken and become increasingly unsatisfying for the executive, the rewards of career may become especially appealing in contrast. In fact, the organization may "promise" to the manager benefits which are missing from family life, such as recognition and approval (Schaef & Fassel, 1988, p. 124). The executive then is likely to throw even more energy into work; and as investment in work versus family becomes increasingly lopsided, the two areas will provide increasingly discrepant levels of "payoff in self-esteem" (Faunce & Dubin, 1975). One writer even suggests that the unpleasantness of family life provides the real impetus behind imbalance, and that the organizational pressure to work long hours is merely an "alibi": Managers *choose* to stay away from their families because they have forgotten how to interact at a personal level with spouse and children, and they feel threatened by the prospect of facing discomfort and even rejection when they do go home (Bartolome, 1983).

Thus, as personal life becomes more and more impoverished, hard work can easily acquire a secondary value—as an escape from,

and even a substitute for, an unhappy personal life (Rohrlich, 1980). A plant manager in charge of a 24-hour-a-day operation, recently separated from his wife and living in a shoebox apartment, found Saturday nights home alone so depressing that he would spend the entire night, eight o'clock Saturday night until eight o'clock Sunday morning, at the plant, catching up on mail and supervising the graveyard shift.

Some managers like to comfort themselves by blaming their long work hours on a bad marriage, when evidence exists that the marital problems were compounded, or even created, by the managers' inattentiveness to the family and marital relationship. A manager who was recently divorced recalls,

> One reason I got involved in a lot of activities was that I got a lot of positive feedback from them. . . . The reason I spent so much time outside the home was that I felt my time was valued and input rewarded, and I didn't feel that at home.

In contrast, his ex-wife's interpretation of events is that he had always worked this hard. Even when they were first married and he was in graduate school, he spent Thanksgiving Day in the library. According to her, his increasing absence after a recent promotion was the catalyst that surfaced their marriage difficulties.

> This job, he really wanted it. His investment outside the office became so small. He'd schedule time for concerts and plays, then call at the last minute, 'Sorry, I have a retirement party to go to.' It was so frustrating, but I had to accept that he was happiest doing it and I took on his responsibilities at home in addition to my own. Eventually I no longer relied on him to be around. . . . But when he came home, he'd feel excluded. He was angry at me and the kids because he felt we'd excluded him.

Regardless of the ultimate cause, for many managers the workplace becomes more appealing than the family for meeting relationship and leisure needs. This is facilitated by the nature of the executive's job. Activities such as playing golf with clients, socializing with colleagues, discussing work over a drink, or attending meetings in exotic locations may satisfy desires for affiliation, recreation, or excitement, and thus provide the illusion of a rich

personal life. One writer discusses the phenomenon of "travel-holism": Its victims may be seduced by the thrill of being on the go, staying in luxurious hotels and eating lavish meals; or they may "have trouble achieving intimacy and prefer the more casual encounters of a journey. Others want to avoid problems at home" (Nulty, 1988, p. 84).

Office romances are often the result of work becoming the primary source of personal relationships. One executive explained the deterioration of his marriage and subsequent romantic involvement with a co-worker:

> People I have a good relationship with are interested in what I do,
> and they like the same things as I do. . . . I've realized that I'm
> not willing to do without shared interests and values. I want to
> be able to come home from a trip and talk about what happened
> and have it be understood.

Imbalance may reach a marked level in executives' lives before they even acknowledge its presence; they tend to deny or minimize the imbalance. Frequently we hear executives claim that they value their families and have learned to circumscribe their hours at work, only to hear from their friends and family that they have done just the opposite. A personal friend of Michael Bono's (who, as we know, claimed to have set limits on his dedication to work) told us,

> As Michael's gone up the ladder, he's tended to assimilate himself
> into his work to the exclusion of everything else. He has little
> time in his life for anything but the company. I hardly ever see
> him socially anymore. I don't know what he does for relaxation.
> He's quit gardening, he's left our jazz band. I worry about him.

Sometimes these executives don't hear their friends' feedback and concern. One hard-working executive, Dean Humbold, when approached by a co-worker concerned about his personal life, replied, "There's nothing wrong with my personal life! I'm just never there." Another co-worker of Dean's told us,

> I hope he's happy from a family standpoint. He gives too much to
> the job, it would be horrible if he were to lose something person-
> ally. . . . I've talked with him about this. He's never expressed

> concern. He'll miss a son's birthday because we're out of town,
> but he doesn't show a lot of remorse other than he missed it, it's a
> fact of life.

Two years later, Dean Humbold was divorced.

When executives do acknowledge the imbalance, they may justify it in terms of organizational pressures or the need to provide for their families, put children through school, and so on. However, Abraham and Rhoda Korman (1980) claim that while executives may reassure themselves that they achieved their career success for the sake of their families, the truth is usually that they did it for their own needs for achievement, power, and esteem.

One thing that does sometimes shock managers into facing the imbalance in their lives and its deleterious consequences is a major crisis. This crisis may come in the form of a marriage breakup, children's emotional difficulties, or personal health problems such as an early heart attack. These events cause executives to realize what they stand to lose as a consequence of their overwhelming focus on work, and they frequently try to attend more to family (Kofodimos, 1984).

The Love of Work

Why are executives so reluctant to recognize the imbalance? Why does it have to take a crisis for them to see that it exists? One reason is that they really do care about their families and want to avoid the pain of confronting the family problems to which they may have contributed. Another reason may be that these executives do not want to give up the rewards of their hard work. They would like to "have it all"—the pleasures of both a successful career and a satisfying personal life—but if a choice between the two were forced, they might be unwilling to give up the gratifications of work. One executive, whose overarching dedication to work led to the breakup of his marriage, said,

> I don't want to get into another marriage-type relationship in the
> foreseeable future. I know I spend a lot of time working and I
> don't think I'm going to change, and I know it's difficult for a lot
> of people to live with. If I do get into a serious relationship,

> they'll have to be interested in what I do because they'll have to
> live with it as well as with me.

Many executives accommodate to organizational pressures, not because they are forced to but because they love their work. As one executive told us, "Work is fun and *should* be fun." Different managers may be especially motivated by different aspects of their work: solving a problem, contributing to knowledge, making money, gaining power, respect, recognition, or achievement. One executive said,

> I have no other interests. I love money. The recognition of doing
> a good job. Promotions. The chance to do it better than a prede-
> cessor. I like getting ahead because it means doing something
> right, contributing to my family, feeling good about myself,
> changing the things that need to be changed, having power and
> authority, the challenge.

Michael Bono especially likes top managers' approbation for the results he gets, and the prestige of his position. A co-worker comments, "Michael has struggled like hell to get where he is. He'll do anything to maintain the rewards of being an executive, even though he says he doesn't know whether he wants to be one." The girlfriend of another executive says, "Bill is really driven by want-ing affirmation that he is sharp and capable in business, even though he claims that personal relationships and family are most important."

To really enjoy and love one's work is indeed an enviable circumstance. That is not the problem: The problem is loving work so much that it is the only thing the manager wants to do, even at the cost of other areas of his life, including his family and even his health. What is it about the satisfaction of success in work that transcends the potential satisfaction of success in personal life?

THE INNER IMBALANCE

We believe that underlying executives' enjoyment of their work are important inner needs that are satisfied by hard work and career success. For example, work is a vehicle for creative expression and personal growth. As such, work can be

> the primary medium in which [one's] dreams for the future are defined, and the vehicle he uses to pursue those dreams. At best, [one's] occupation permits the fulfillment of basic values and life goals. (Levinson, et al., 1978, p. 45)

Dean Humbold considers his work, running a major division of a Fortune 500 company, a "calling." He adds,

> I feel I'm doing the right thing spending my time, energy, and emotion on work. I'm doing something worthwhile, for the greatest public good. It's really consistent with my Christian values. What I do at work is interesting and important, it's what I enjoy. . . . I value growth in the sense of learning, doing what I'm capable of. It doesn't have to be related to business, necessarily. It just so happens that it usually is.

Our work, our achievements, are key elements defining our identities. Our work allows us to enact our values, to display and contribute our unique gifts to the world. The individual who feels that he can carry out his life mission or calling through the vehicle of his paid employment is a fortunate individual.

And work allows us to fulfill a very important urge: the drive for mastery (Kofodimos, 1986; Kofodimos, Kaplan & Drath, 1986).

The Drive for Mastery

Mastery is the experience of maturing a capacity, realizing an ability, and exercising that ability (Mullahy, 1952). One theorist suggests that the striving for mastery is a primal and basic human instinct (Hendrick, 1943). This striving is an attempt to gain a sense of basic human worth. Attaining mastery has several posi-

tive consequences, including feelings of pleasure, joy, and enhanced self-esteem. One theorist suggests that "the exercise of an ability is inherently pleasure-giving" (Mullahy, 1952, p. 35). Another says,

> The organism is basically an active creature, and can best feel warm about itself as it senses the pleasures of exercising its . . . powers. . . . Our highest satisfactions can only derive from solid achievement, from testing ourselves against the world and proving our powers to it. (Becker, 1969, p. 12)

To one degree or another, every person seeks mastery, and since work involves developing and exercising skills and capacities, it is a primary source of mastery. For some people, however, the striving for mastery is a more central driving force than for others. We find that the executives we have worked with have a particularly strong "need to master." (So, we might imagine, do many surgeons, judges, and politicians, among others.) We refer to this strong, dominant, striving for mastery as "expansiveness" (Kaplan, 1989). This striving provides the impetus which, in combination with talent, leads people to seek and achieve high executive positions. Once they reach such a position, the striving for mastery helps them to do the things that they do well—such as set goals and standards, mobilize large groups of people, exercise power and influence in the service of organizational objectives, and make logical and thoughtful decisions.

The lure of mastery is a powerful one. Human beings turn toward experiences that enhance self-esteem much as sunflowers turn toward the sun. So it often happens that an individual who has experienced the benefits and satisfactions of mastery increasingly defines his identity and his life purpose in terms of the mastery drive. He spends increasing amounts of time on a quest for the satisfaction that comes with mastery, consequently placing primary focus on career and work experiences (which are reliable sources of the mastery experience) while neglecting his personal life (which is a less reliable source of the experience of mastery).

Striving for mastery also accounts for a more subtle form of imbalance. Such striving is more than merely a *goal* of one's activity; it is also a *process*, an approach toward life and the world, through which a capacity is developed and the goal of mastery is

attained. In this approach, the individual relies on intellect and rationality, takes an active posture, focuses on the future, sets and achieves goals and standards, seeks productivity, develops skill, seeks power, exerts discipline over self and others, maintains distance from others, and values individuality. The individual for whom striving for mastery has become central (the "expansive" person) is likely to take this approach not only in his job but also in other areas, including personal life. Rohrlich (1980) has noted the dominance of this mastery-oriented approach in executives; he refers to it as the "working orientation." According to Rohrlich, many executives use the working orientation with ease and frequency, seeming to "never stop working, even when they are away from the job" (p. 20).

The problem with overreliance on a mastery-oriented approach is that it creates difficulty with areas outside of work such as intimate relationships and leisure pursuits. It can also lead to health problems (such as high blood pressure) which may be compounded by unrelieved stress and lack of exercise. The spouse of one executive said, "Joe never relaxes. He makes a to-do list every day, even Sunday, and everything on that list has to get done. He never lets up on himself." Rollo May speaks of a captain of industry who tried to

> transfer into interpersonal relationships . . . the same kind of power that had become so effective in manipulating railroad cars. . . . The man of willpower, manipulating himself, did not permit himself to see why he could not manipulate others in the same way. (1973, p. 277)

In a similar vein, Karl Menninger describes a man who turned

> even his play into drudgery. He had to work at everything and work hard. It was his ruling passion to master things. In the matter of golf, for example, I was told that he practiced the use of the mashie for ten hours a day for twenty-one days without a break. . . . He bought five hundred golf balls and stood in one spot and worked away patiently until he had perfected the stroke. (1942, p. 148)

Indeed, the "working orientation" has its place in the family: the family has tasks to be accomplished and goals to be met. Yet, a fulfilling family and personal life involves other dimensions as well—building and maintaining intimate and harmonious relationships, being sensitive to others' needs and feelings, and enjoying frivolity and relaxation. Dean Humbold's ex-wife said, "When Dean came home from work, it was like he'd landed on Mars. It was difficult to shed his coat of authority. But home is where your intimate relationships are. You can't be with intimates in the same role as at the office."

It is important to temper the striving for mastery with dimensions not related to mastery, not only for the sake of a happy family, but also for the sake of one's own health and well-being. One executive we worked with spent 14-hour days at his job, and family members worried that he would "work himself to an early grave." But they worried even more that, during the small bit of time he spent at home, he would "practically kill himself" doing projects such as renovating their old house.

The Avoidance of Intimacy

Executives' striving for mastery in all aspects of their lives reflects not just a drive *toward* the experience of mastery, but also a drive *away* from an alternative form of experience which we call "intimacy," and which Rohrlich (1980) calls "the loving orientation." The "intimacy-oriented" approach entails a focus on process rather than outcome, reflection rather than action, the present rather than the future, the emotions rather than the intellect. Executives avoid the intimacy approach, we believe, because they are uncomfortable with the experience and expression of emotion, the vulnerability and dependency involved in being intimate, the confrontation with one's inner self which can occur when one is idle (Stern, 1965). Executives' preference for co-workers as friends may be one manifestation of this avoidance. It is natural for camaraderie to develop, and friendships to form, in the place where the individual spends most of his waking hours, with the people with whom he spends those hours. Typically, though, these "friendships" are confined to

intellectual exchange and interaction between work roles; often the executive does not even see these "friends" outside the workplace, except perhaps at company functions. Dean Humbold told us, "Usually closeness is a by-product of working closely. (Working with people is the easiest way to get close to them?) Yes." But the co-workers with whom he feels close, themselves report opinions similar to this one: "I've never really gotten to know Dean personally."

Rohrlich states that for the individual whose friendships are completely centered in the workplace, "superficial, formalized relationships on the job are all the intimacy [he] can usually take" (1980, p. 182). Dean Humbold's ex-wife commented,

> In the office he was very much in control, he was removed from intimate emotional relationships. It's the one area where he functions superbly. He doesn't have to worry about hurting anyone's feelings. He handles superficial working relationships really well, where they don't demand deep emotional give-and-take. . . . He thrived in the office, he wrapped his whole life there, it was a neat package. He didn't have to go beyond the office for anything.

The focus on workplace relationships thus allows the individual to circumvent the intimacy that might be expected in a relationship outside the workplace.

Individuals focused on mastery do indeed have feelings, needs for love and nurturance, fears of rejection and loss of esteem—but we find that they hide these needs and fears from themselves and others. Michael Bono said to us that he preferred not to introspect because "When I do, it feels like I've lifted a trapdoor with things swimming around underneath. I'd rather focus my attention on constructive things like helping mankind."

So we see that working can serve not only the constructive purpose of striving for mastery, but also the defensive purpose of avoiding intimacy. Working focuses attention onto "safe" areas such as future goals, productive activities, rational thoughts and analyses.

> Keeping busy is a way of coping with intimacy. The busier the person is, the less time he has to reflect on his own feelings, the less time for intimacy with his partner. He never discusses how fearful he is of feeling helplessly dependent on the other person. Only his speed and intensity suggest that he is running from something. . . . Some men deny their dependency needs by not talking to their wives, not bringing home their feelings about solving their business problems. . . . If an executive completely denies his spouse access to his relationship with his work, he makes it impossible for the partner to help. (Levinson, 1975, pp. 225-228)

> Activity [can serve] as a substitute for awareness. . . . Many people keep busy all the time as a way of covering up anxiety; their activism is a way of running from themselves. They get a pseudo and temporary sense of aliveness by being in a hurry, as though something is going on if they are but moving, and as though being busy is a proof of one's importance. (May, 1973, p. 117)

The role of work as a defense mechanism is especially visible in life crises. Although we find that crisis, or at least pain or discomfort, seems necessary for re-evaluation of one's life, it is not sufficient. We find that some executives who are going through crises such as divorce and separation from children actually become more intensely involved in their work. Rather than finding an opportunity to restructure their lifestyles, they become vociferous in their affirmation of work and their denial of guilt and regret.

Ironically, it is qualities of the intimacy side, such as empathy, which could provide the executive with tools for dealing with relationship problems stemming from his focus on work. For example, we have seen resentment build in such relationships, leading to declining communication and eventually separation and divorce. Typically, these couples become polarized: In one case, the executive's wife resented him because he was away working all the time; he resented her because she was uninterested and unsupportive of his career, and "all she cared about was the kids." The resentment and tension increased as their ability to talk about problems decreased. They ended up unable to talk about anything without an explosion, so they simply stopped talking. They made a geographic move for his promotion, which she did not want to make,

without discussing it either before or after the fact. Neither of them had any idea how to intervene into their conflict situation. They eventually went for counseling, but as the husband put it, "It would take an enormous amount of work to get back to a position where we have anything in common."

So the executive faces two sets of forces contributing to imbalance between work and personal life: the rewards of the job versus the unfulfilling nature of personal life, and the joy of mastery versus the threat of intimacy. Work provides the executive with esteem and affirmation that family and leisure do not, and at the same time work helps the executive to evade the painful dynamics present in family and leisure. We believe that "workaholism," the addiction to work, is rooted in this combination of pressures. Many executives, when they hear the term, reply indignantly, "I'm not a workaholic! I could stop any time. I just don't *choose* to stop, because I love to work!" It is true that a person who works hard and loves his work is not necessarily a work addict. Some people work hard, love their work, and are happy that way (Machlowitz, 1980). But work addicts, like any other kind of addict, are likely to deny their addiction, claiming (and believing) that they work hard because they enjoy it. Because of this denial, we cannot identify work addicts on the basis of their self-descriptions. But we *can* tell a work addict by his or her behavior. The workaholic "cannot do without the excitement of work [even] when such excitement is not appropriate or consciously desirable" (Rohrlich, 1980, pp. 165-166). The work addict, while saying he works because he enjoys it and could stop any time, will work even when it costs him his health, well-being, and relationships with friends and family. Not working provokes anxiety and discomfort. One executive told us,

> I never feel I've done enough. When I have a backlog of stuff, I'd rather do that than have fun. . . . I like having a lot to do! If I have work and I'm not doing it, I get anxious. If I'm not doing something useful, I feel guilty. I fear that I'm basically lazy. I get anxious if I'm not overscheduled. I feel more comfortable having too much to do. It feels horrible to waste time. . . . I panic when I find myself with ten minutes free.

This man's friends worried, "He's like a machine!" "When will he stop?" "How much can he take before he burns out?"

Roger Wood, admired by co-workers for his capacity for hard work, had a friend who worried about him.

> I don't see how he keeps it up. . . . I worry about his health. He tends to be sickly. . . . If he goes on with the intense schedule, it strikes me he could kill himself on the job. . . . Could he slow down? No, it's not in his makeup.

Childhood Origins of the Striving for Mastery and Avoidance of Intimacy

How can the striving for mastery and avoidance of intimacy be so compelling? Where do the pressures originate? The striving for mastery and avoidance of intimacy are so strong because in certain circumstances (which we will describe) they can come to serve a natural and universal human impulse, namely the wish for self-esteem. Self-esteem is exactly what the term implies—esteem for oneself. Healthy self-esteem comes from accepting and respecting oneself as one really is. But for most of us, to some extent, self-esteem also comes from living up to our "ideals" for ourselves. We will suggest that for expansive people, which many executives are, mastery fulfills these ideals for self while intimacy threatens it.

This phenomenon comes about as a result of two influences: life history (especially childhood), and cultural pressures, including the values and emphases of the work organization. As we will see, these influences lead people who seek and attain executive position to have some of the attributes of what psychologists call "narcissism." (For a discussion of narcissism in powerful people see Kernberg, 1979.) Narcissism involves a search for self-esteem by loving *not* one's real self, but rather a fictionalized, "idealized" image of oneself, which one must live up to. The nature of executives' ideal images makes striving for mastery the means by which they try to live up to those images.

The explanation begins with the process of child-rearing which is typical in our culture. When parents bring a child into the

world, they invariably hold particular expectations regarding what that child should be like. They continually seek to shape the child's behavior by rewarding evidence of desired qualities with tenderness and affection, and punishing evidence of undesired qualities with anger and anxiety (Miller, 1981). Typically, a child with ambitious and doting parents is rewarded for her talents and achievements—for winning games, coming out tops in class, being the best at whatever she pursues. In contrast, a child of perfectionistic and dominating parents may be criticized for not achieving highly enough, or for being inadequate in some other way to parental expectations.

Whatever the specific expectations, rewards, and punishments, the child learns through this general process that certain behaviors are "good" and others are "bad." For example, good behaviors might include cooperating with peers, doing well in school, and obeying parents; bad behaviors might include fighting, disobeying, and crying. But, most importantly, the child hears a message from parents that is more global than simply which behaviors are considered "good" and which are "bad." The child hears this message: we will love you if you are a "good" child, and reject you if you are a "bad" child. Carl Rogers (1951) refers to this as "conditional love." As a result, the child develops the belief that some aspects of *himself* are "good," and that others are "bad," and that he will get love and esteem from his parents only if he becomes the "good" person they want him to be and excises from himself the "bad" qualities. So he adjusts his behavior and his expression of feelings to conform to what his parents want from him.

Though parents may claim (and believe) that punishing unwanted qualities and instilling new ones in this way is "for the child's own good," such child-rearing practice is often primarily intended to solve the *parents'* own problems, to meet their own needs for the child to become a certain type of person (Miller, 1981). In fact, there are costs for the developing child. As Horney put it,

> People in the environment are too wrapped up in their own neuroses to be able to love the child, or even to conceive of him as the particular individual he is. . . . They may be irritable, overexacting, indulgent, erratic, partial to other siblings, hypocritical, indifferent, etc. . . . As a result, the child . . . [develops] a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness, for which I use the term "basic anxiety." (1950, pp. 18-19)

The child, as part of his early development of self, has a need to be understood and respected by his parents for the "real" self he is, the real inner sensations and feelings he experiences. But expressing some of these feelings leads to parental anger and rejection. Since the child's sense of security depends on his parents' love, and since he feels such suffering when he receives disapproval for being "bad," he learns to hide the "bad." He "develops in such a way that he reveals only what is expected of him, and fuses so completely with what he reveals that . . . one could scarcely have guessed how much more there is to him" (Miller, 1981, p. 12).

The specific nature of this experience varies according to the particular family. For example, Dean Humbold grew up in a religious, middle-class, small-town home where he was the "special" favored child. In his parents' eyes, he could do no wrong. They held high standards for him, which he usually exceeded. His mother recalled Dean as a good boy, "smart and ambitious," who "never did a thing wrong." "We were so happy with him," she recalled, "he never gave us a moment's trouble." When he engaged in occasional youthful escapades, such as getting drunk and wrecking the family car, his parents said not a word, as if the episode hadn't even occurred. Though his parents avoided "pushing" him toward specific directions or achievements, they did expect from him certain moral qualities, such as honesty and integrity, diligence and hard work, and respect for authority, all of which he demonstrated amply. They also expected emotional temperance. They themselves never raised their voices, cried, or hugged and kissed; they never talked with Dean about personal issues. As a result, he learned that achievements and moral rectitude were good, and the expression of emotion and intimacy was to be avoided. Dean came to internalize his parents' moral code and to believe in their wisdom. He sought to maintain their love and approval, and avoid their disappointment, by living up to their expectations of him. "He always wanted to please his father, always wanted everything he did to be perfect," recalls Dean's mother. He was involved in so many school and church activities—the yearbook, band, student government, and so on—that there was no time left to play.

As Dean grew up, he gravitated to situations where he could be "special," the youngest, the most talented, the favorite of his

superiors. He continues to spend all his time in productive, struc-
tured, activity: If his work does not keep him fully occupied, he
finds Boards of Directors or local politics in which to get involved.
He still seeks to meet his parents' expectations for their "good" son,
in order to maintain the feelings of specialness and self-worth
which he got from them when he behaved in accordance with these
expectations. He assumes that those early-learned good qualities
and behaviors will be expected and rewarded by the significant
others in his life, and that if he shows what were considered to be
the bad qualities he will face others' rejection or loss of esteem. He
feels pressure to "perform" in most situations.

> I don't like to get behind in my work—I feel I haven't done a good
> job, . . . [even though] ninety percent of the time no one notices.
> It's a fear of appearing stupid, unknowledgeable, ill prepared in
> front of others. . . . In college, at the dorm, I read the *Wall Street
> Journal* and the *New York Times* cover-to-cover before breakfast,
> [so that I could] spend breakfast time talking with a friend about
> world events. I enjoyed that. . . . In my past job, my boss was
> very well read about everything. Once or twice he'd ask me my
> opinion and I felt bad that I had none. . . . He asked because he
> respected my opinion and I think he was disappointed that I
> didn't have an opinion.

Dean's story in some ways fits Kohut's (1971) description of
the "self-deceptive" narcissist, who was led by his parents to believe
he was completely lovable and perfect, regardless of his actual
behavior. Consequently, he faces eternal pressure to be perfect in
order to fulfill his parents' hopes. He will always have a shaky
sense of self, though, because down deep he knows he cannot live up
to the self-image of perfection instilled by his parents. This be-
comes even more apparent when he enters the world and is faced
with his real imperfections. Horney's term for this person is "nar-
cissistic": This person is "in love with [his] idealized image. . . .
[This] gives him a seeming abundance of self-confidence which
appears enviable. . . [But he] needs endless confirmation of his
estimate of himself in the form of admiration and devotion"
(Horney, 1950, p. 195).

In contrast to Dean, another executive, Rich Bauer, grew up
in an ethnic, urban working class family with a dominating, critical,

alcoholic, and sometimes physically abusive mother. She had con-
veyed to him that he would become a failure, just as his weak and
ineffectual father had been. In reaction to this prediction, and out
of economic need, he worked from an early age—delivering news-
papers, mowing lawns, any odd jobs he could lay his hands on. "I
never had a childhood," he recalls. Others remember Rich as a
solitary youth, "serious and self-contained," "oddly dignified." His
self-containment was protective; he did not trust others and felt he
could only rely on himself.

Rich has spent his life trying to escape his beginnings and
prove his mother wrong about him. "Underlying all my achieve-
ment was wanting to show her I could do it," he says now. Even
now, he regularly sends his mother his press clippings. But despite
his tremendous career success, he is never satisfied and continues
to push himself. "He sees everything as a test of his manhood and
his mettle," said a friend. His work is his source of self-worth as
well as a refuge from pain. When his son was having drug prob-
lems, Rich threw himself even further into his work. He cares very
much about his family, wants his kids to have the youth he never
did—but he himself was awkward with them when they were small,
and thus spent little time with them. It was as though never hav-
ing been a child himself, he could not be comfortable with children.
His children, now grown, wish for their father that he could let go
and have fun. But he can never work hard enough to gain his
mother's approval and thus his own self-acceptance. For Rich,
mastery through career success represents an attempt to vindicate
himself, to gain a measure of self-esteem to cancel out the rejection
and powerlessness he still feels from his early years. Also, in an
attempt to negate his early vulnerability, he has constructed a
protective mask, seemingly invulnerable and self-sufficient, which
allows him to appear unhurt by lack of love and approval. His
protective mask carries over into his work style and has earned him
a reputation as an organizational "hatchet man": He is sent into
situations when someone hard-as-nails is needed to do whatever it
takes to whip the unit into shape.

According to Kohut (1971), Rich displays the pattern of a
"reactive" narcissist. Such a child wants to display his emerging
capabilities and be admired for them, but his parents don't admire

them. They are "insufficiently empathic," may even be downright brutal, derisive, or negligent (Horney, 1950). The child spends his life searching for external validation and recognition which he needs in order to feel self-esteem, in order to overcome the "bad" person he was made to feel he was. He always feels inadequate, but he creates an outward self-image of egotism as a defense against feeling unloved. Horney refers to this person as a "vindictive" type.

> The feeling of not being lovable can be a source of profound distress. The [vindictive person] tries to do away with such distress in a simple and radical way; he convinces himself that he just is not lovable and does not care. So he no longer is anxious to please. . . . The hardening of feelings, originally a necessity for survival, allows for an unhampered growth of the drive for a triumphant mastery of life. (Horney, 1950, pp. 202-3)

The Search for the Ideal Self

We have provided two examples which demonstrate the range of family circumstances that can produce a person driven by the striving for mastery. The specific messages and experiences vary greatly, but the strategies which children devise for coping with parental pressures (and, later in life, pressures from teachers and other authorities) have a common intent: to gain self-esteem by creating a desired image of self which includes the "good" (strong, rational, invulnerable) elements and excludes the "bad" (emotional, dependent, vulnerable). The desired image is an "ideal" self (Horney, 1950) or "persona" (Jung, 1959) which the child not only seeks to *display* to the world, but also to *believe* that he is (Jourard, 1964; Miller, 1981). The characteristics defined as "bad" (the "dark" side, or "shadow" [Jung, 1959]) become denied, distorted, repressed from consciousness, as if wishing them gone were enough to make them vanish. But the child's inner reality cannot be changed simply by mandate; the dark side of his real self will continue to exist, inconsistent with the persona outside, rarely recognized or expressed but nevertheless exerting its influence. We know that the dark side is there because at unpredictable moments—perhaps in times of stress or extreme emotion—it pops up, unbidden, into consciousness or behavior.

In Fred Morrison we can see evidence of the existence of a dark side. When we met Fred he was quite impressive: He was ambitious, goal-directed, confident, honorable, calm and emotionally even, respectful of authority but independent. Many co-workers shared this view and, when asked about Fred's weaknesses, could think of none. As we got to know Fred better, we found that there was more to him than this heroic picture. Seemingly inconsistent qualities appeared and were at first baffling: emotional volatility, insecurity, dishonesty, rebelliousness and dependency. Fred himself failed to acknowledge the contradictory aspects of his personality, though we had undeniable evidence of such behaviors. For example, in contrast to his typical confidence and goal-directedness, he had dropped out of college temporarily, unbeknownst to his family, after a year of poor performance and career indecision, ridden a motorcycle, worked in a warehouse, and drank a lot. In his current job he occasionally threw temper tantrums and publicly humiliated his subordinates—behavior not at all in keeping with his typical steady demeanor. In spite of the value he placed on integrity, he had recently conducted a secret extramarital affair with his secretary.

It is no wonder that Fred denied the existence of his dark side, because when any chink appeared in the idealized portrait of himself, the entire image was shattered and he felt only worthlessness and self-hatred. Fred's wife commented, "He is disgusted with himself if he feels he's not one hundred percent."

> Gifted [people] who have been praised for their talents and
> achievements . . . [do] everything they undertake . . . well and
> often excellently; . . . [but] behind all this lurks depression, the
> feeling of emptiness and self-alienation. These dark feelings will
> come to the fore as soon as the drug of grandiosity fails. (Miller,
> 1981, pp. 5-6)

A person pursuing the ideal image of self maintains the delusion that he actually possesses the qualities of that ideal self, that he is the competent, strong, and respected paragon he "should" be. Since the ideal self is an incomplete picture of oneself, the self-esteem that depends on the possession of these qualities is fragile. Maintaining it requires the use of protective strategies which are

geared towards modifying behavior and perceptions so that one can see oneself, and be seen by others, as living up to the idealized image. Fred Morrison, for example, had convinced himself that, because of the circumstances, the affair with his secretary actually demonstrated integrity.

> The defense mechanisms each of us uses to maintain his own idealistic picture of himself hide from his awareness those aspects of his personality he is unwilling to face. We go to great lengths to hide from both ourselves and others what we feel are our most painful deficiencies and weaknesses. Sometimes we simply deny what we think are our limitations. . . . Sometimes we try to cover our deficiencies by making extra efforts with the talents we have. (Levinson, 1975, p. 81)

The person will translate knowledge of the qualities he "should" have into the perception that he has those qualities; evidence to the contrary will be attributed to outside forces. He will also create what we came to call "phony weaknesses" to cover the real ones, flaws that are consistent with his persona, such as being bad at details, being naive, shy, or absent-minded, so he does not have to admit to his dark side weaknesses—his selfish, cruel, ruthless, angry, or needy feelings and impulses. He will reconstruct his memories of childhood so that it was perfectly happy, and his parents perfectly loving. He will even modify his *feelings* to correspond to how he should feel. The emphasis is not on *being*, but on *appearing* (Horney, 1950).

This is why the individual avoids intimacy—in order to preserve the ideal image. Intimacy might allow the feelings and experiences of the inner dark side to seep through to consciousness—feelings such as insecurity, dependency, and vulnerability. But intimacy is dangerous not only because it forces an individual to confront his *own* dark side. It is also dangerous because it might allow *others* to discover that dark side (and consequently reject him). Thus, the individual comes to prefer relationships centered in the workplace, the perfect setting for the illusory gratification of one's ideals for self. Here, competence and mastery are salient, and intimacy is de-emphasized. While maintaining the illusion of intimacy, the person can gain the respect and admiration of others based on the strong and masterful demeanor he displays on the job,

while the intimate details of his self and his life remain unknown. He gets respect based on his authority and position, and admiration for his intellect and achievements. Dean Humbold came to prefer his workplace relationships over the relationships in his outside life. In his workplace relationships he assumed a demeanor of self-sufficiency, happiness, amiability, and stability. Others saw him as having his life in order, as not needing their support or help (even though his marriage was falling apart at the time). A co-worker said,

> How does he really handle this big job and also keep up his family life? He's so in charge of himself. There must be times he sits and worries. He's not really open about what bothers him. He likes to give the impression nothing does bother him. I can't believe that. But he's never let his guard down with me. Dean bucks up others, not vice versa.

Even an old friend said, "I was shocked when Dean and his wife separated. There was no reason to believe they didn't have a great relationship." Dean admitted, "I valued the *appearance* of a good marriage."

In addition, a person striving for his ideal self will, having been alienated from his own feelings and wishes, come to experience others' wishes as his own—as he did with his parents' wishes (Miller, 1981). As an adult, he will subordinate his own needs to the needs of the organization, will value loyalty and obedience, and will focus on morality and the performance of duty. Thus he develops a value system which makes suppression of one's own feelings (in the service of one's duty) a virtue.

In sum, striving for mastery and avoiding intimacy provide the criteria by which our executives structure their lives in favor of work. The intent of these processes is partially protective: they serve to support an illusory image of self. Work functions as "character armor,"

> The arming of the personality so that it can maneuver in a threatening world. . . . The shoring-up or damming-up of the individual's fragile sense of self-value, in order to keep that self-value safe from undermining by events and persons. In other words, character armor really refers to the whole life style that a

person assumes, in order to live and act with a certain security.
. . . In order to have some kind of centered control over his acts,
the individual sets limits on his range of action, on the spectrum
of his thought and feeling. . . . You artificially inflate a small area
of the world, give it a higher value in the horizon of your percep-
tion and action. And you do this because it represents an area
that you can firmly hold on to, that you can skillfully manipulate,
that you can use easily to justify yourself—your actions, your
sense of self, your options in the world. (Becker, 1969, pp. 83-85)

How Organizations Reinforce the Striving for Mastery and Avoidance Intimacy

Childhood experience, powerful as it is, only provides the
groundwork for the lifelong striving for mastery and avoidance of
intimacy. These phenomena are reinforced throughout the
individual's life first by schools and later by work organizations, by
virtually all the institutions of our culture. This phenomenon is
particularly salient for males, as the traditional male pattern of
socialization is a mastery-oriented one (see, for example,
Freudenberger, 1987).

We have seen that organizations reward the focus of a
manager's energy on work. They also reinforce the underlying
personality dynamics. Psychoanalyst Michael Maccoby describes
organizations as "psychostructures," which by their nature shape
the personalities and behaviors (the combination of which he calls
"character structure") of their members in two ways. First, people
with certain desired character structures are selected to work in
organizations because they fit work requirements of a particular
role. Second, for the people who have been selected, traits and
attitudes that are useful to their work are reinforced and strength-
ened, while other characteristics that are unnecessary or impede
the work are suppressed, unused, and thus weakened. The
strengthened characteristics are "qualities of the head"—intellect,
technical ability, planning, problem solving, teamwork. The under-
developed characteristics, in contrast, are "qualities of the heart"—
emotions and capacities such as "compassion, generosity, and ideal-
ism" (Maccoby, 1976, p. 175). The organization reinforces the

"head"-dominated individual because he fits the requirements of the organization's tasks and roles and consequently he predominates in the organization. The head-dominated person is energized by the challenge of organizational life and fused with his organizational role. He is emotionally detached, cut off from uncomfortable feelings and thoughts that would conflict with his conscious orientation toward the world—his confidence, enthusiasm, and enjoyment of challenge. To compete and win, he must be detached from compassion for the losers. To devote himself to career success, he must be detached from loneliness, guilt, or regret regarding what he has given up in his personal life. To sell himself, he must be detached from the fear or anxiety of making a mistake or looking foolish (Maccoby, 1984).

Thus, the executive who strives for mastery and avoids intimacy is exactly what the organization wants. Reputable management experts, too, promote this managerial ideal. Recent writings (see, for example, Bennis and Nanus, 1985) argue that successful executives minimize or overlook their failures and weaknesses, maintain an optimistic and positive attitude, and focus confidently on their strengths. Though this may indeed be true of the manager who progresses in today's corporation, these authors appear to make the assumption that organizational success should be of primary importance, and that the *costs* of such success for human development need not be assessed. In a recent *Esquire* editorial, retired editor-in-chief Philip Moffitt bemoaned this phenomenon, which he referred to as the "cult of excellence." In this cult, short-term success is the determinant of what is excellent; the attributes leading to short-term success are thereby attributes of "excellence." Moffitt argues that the value system espoused by this kind of thinking encourages "short-term obsessional behavior," and contributes to executive burnout. "Self-esteem (and perceived virtue) is getting too tied up in demonstrable success," he notes (1985, pp. 43-44).

Because organizations reward and shape individual character to fit work requirements, and because the value placed on organizational success is so deeply embedded in our culture, people who want to be successful may feel an inner conflict (LaBier, 1986). On one hand, they want to adopt the mastery-type values, attitudes, and behavior necessary for successful career development. On the

other hand, they do not want to one-sidedly develop their "heads" at the expense of their "hearts"; they also want personal fulfillment from their work lives. Those who choose career success feel a sense of self-betrayal as they subordinate their own needs and values to those of the organization. In order to gain approval, power—whatever aspect of career success is important to them—they compromise themselves. Michael Bono mused that he sometimes lost touch with who he was by, for example, supporting policies he did not agree with. He felt as if he had donned a "porcupine's coat"—a hard, prickly shell under which he hid when undertaking distasteful duties.

Schaef and Fassel would argue that this occurs because the modern organization is an "addictive system" which "supports and promotes workaholism" (1988, p. 130). People are so dependent on their "fix" from the addictive system—a fix of career success, identification with mission, sense of belonging, or whatever it is that they need—that they are likely to make these kinds of betrayals and compromises, to give up their values and beliefs. Even more scathingly, psychoanalyst Arno Gruen (1988) argues that contemporary society's ideology of power, control, and rationality dehumanizes its members and causes them to lose access to their basic human and humanitarian urges, to betray themselves, to be driven by obedience and conformity rather than by their own hearts and inner voices.

ADDRESSING THE IMBALANCE

What would it take to intervene into the dynamics of imbalance? How would a manager who wants to be less driven and more balanced go about it? And what changes would need to be made in organizational and cultural practices and norms? There will be no easy answer, no recipe for success. The solution will have to emerge from the complex dimensions of the imbalance problem (illustrated in Figure 1, p. 34). To summarize the problem: An executive's life is likely to get "out of balance." He spends the bulk of his time and energy on work because it is externally rewarded and intrinsically satisfying. He also finds that hard work and career success gratify his need for mastery and help fulfill his ideals for himself, while personal life does not contribute as directly or predictably to mastery, and in fact by its intimacy-oriented nature can even threaten his ideals for himself. Thus, the individual focuses on working and mastery, and avoids personal life and intimacy. This creates problems not only for personal life but also for the executive's development as a human being.

Typically, a manager trying to achieve balance addresses only the first, the behavioral, level of imbalance: He makes an effort to devote more time and energy to family and leisure. But what he is likely to do with this increased amount of time is to apply the mastery orientation to family and leisure. He has not changed his assessment of the greater rewards to be gained by mastery as opposed to intimacy, and thus will continue to seek mastery even when trying to enjoy leisure. He is likely to feel guilty, uncomfortable, and wasteful when not working. For example, one executive now allows himself to watch football games on television on Sunday afternoon, but he has to read business magazines at the same time. Another executive takes his briefcase along to his son's soccer games.

Similarly, managers often apply mastery-oriented attitudes and work behavior to their children. One manager faithfully preserves Saturday morning for his daughters aged eight and twelve—but they spend that time in a goal-setting session. Another executive, a systematic and perfectionistic boss at work, would at home

TIME AND ENERGY   ORIENTATION/PROCESS   INNER SELF/GOAL

Costs for
Career
and
Personal
Life

Focus on
work
↕
Neglect of
personal life

Striving for
mastery
↕
Avoidance of
intimacy
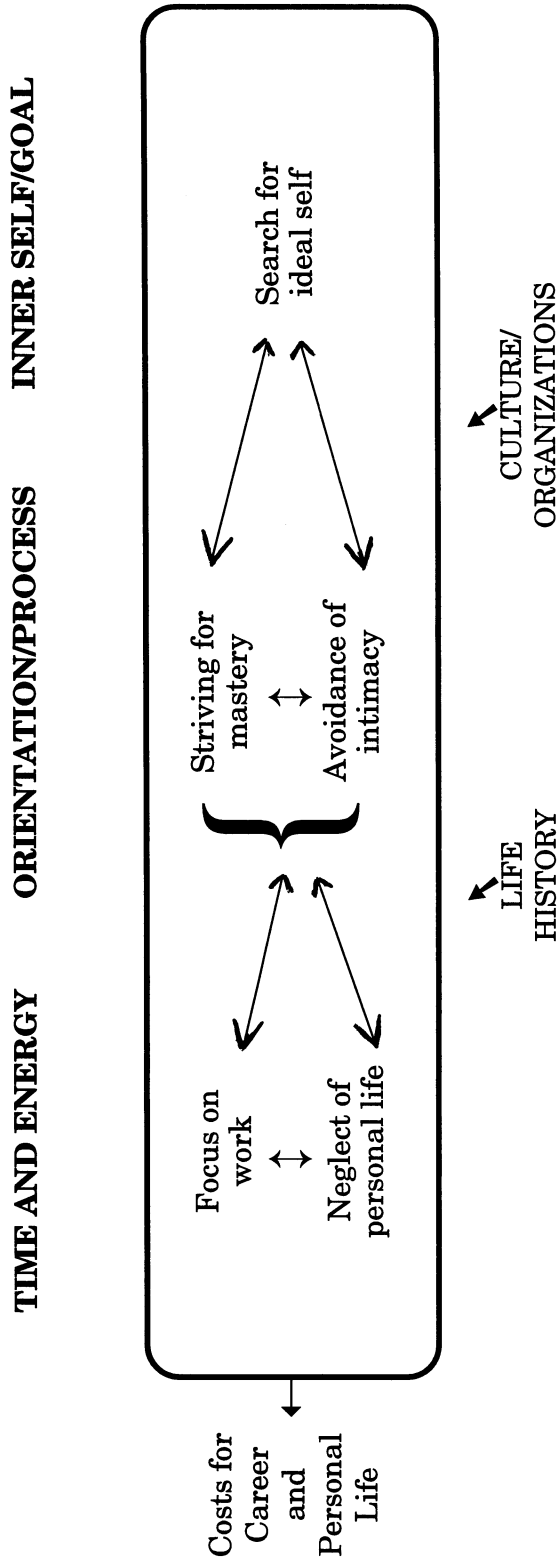
Search for
ideal self

LIFE
HISTORY
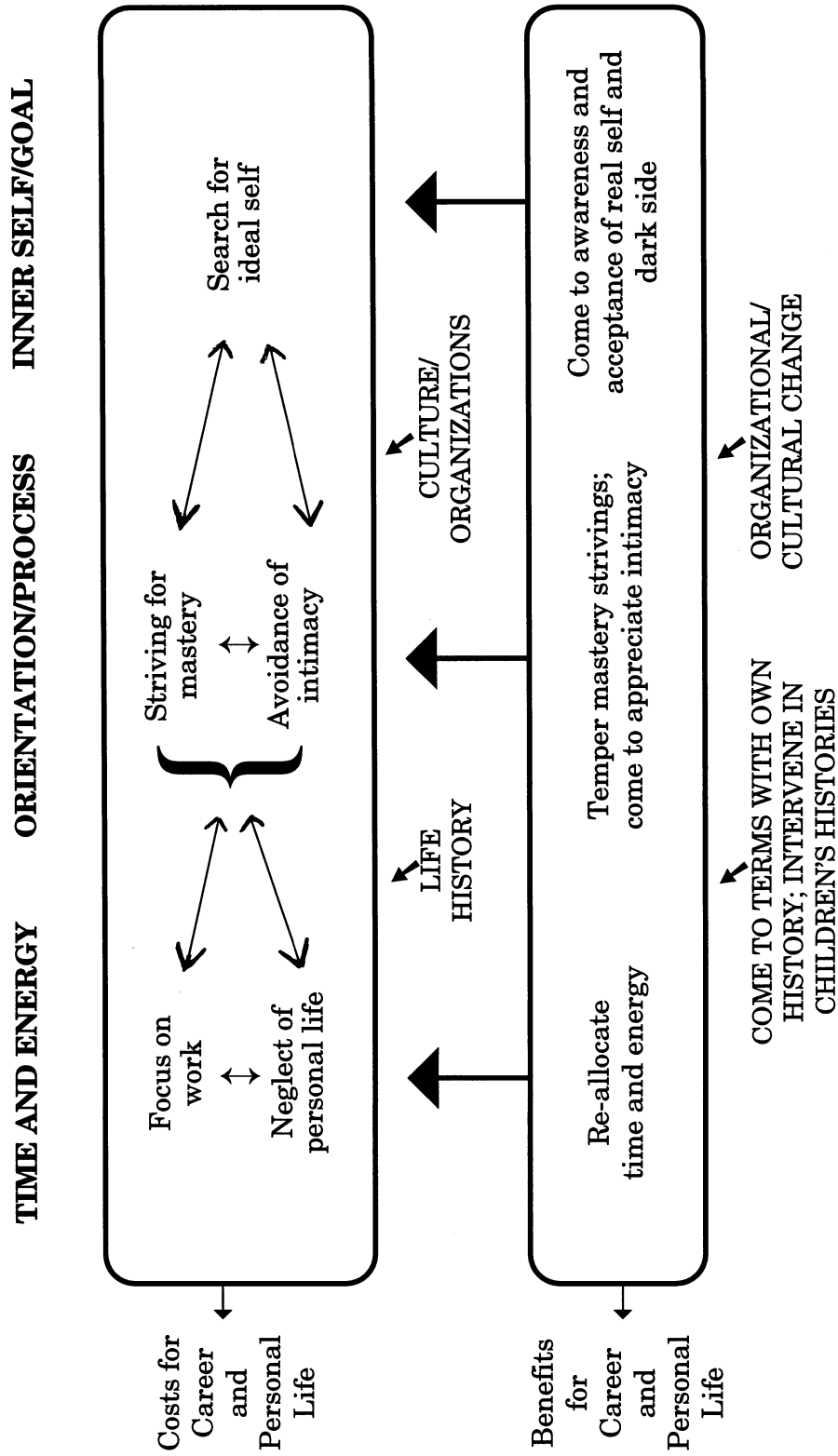
CULTURE/
ORGANIZATIONS

Figure 1. Levels of Imbalance

"organize every party," said his daughter. "He'd make up schedules of the events and make sure people were where they were supposed to be." At this same executive's dinner table, "Everyone had to account for their day. You couldn't say you did nothing." Yet another executive, according to his son, "doesn't know how to stop being a manager. He organizes all our chores." Examples abound of managers' attempts to apply the mastery approach to their marriages, to hobbies, and to their own health and fitness.

In short, when managers try to balance their work lives and their personal lives by equalizing the amount of time and energy they devote to each, they are attacking only part of the problem. Striving for mastery carries over into their personal lives: they "manage" their children by means of standards for achievement and reward and control systems; they rely on intellectual and analytical approaches to family issues; they approach leisure activities with perfectionistic and goal-oriented expectations; and they remain emotionally distant from their families.

This approach to improving family life is likely to be unfulfilling and short-lived since the manager will be frustrated in his attempt to gain the rewards of mastery from the chaotic and emotional setting that is family life; he will figure out that work is a much easier place to pursue the satisfactions of mastery. The reallocation of time and energy can, however, be a useful element of balance if the manager does not try to be too "masterful" about it: he might, for example, set aside unstructured time with his family or give himself permission to goof off and play in his own favorite way. (For a discussion of concrete strategies for balancing time and energy, see Eyre and Eyre, 1987.)

A more lasting approach to balance would require addressing the deeper levels involved in imbalance (see Figure 2, p. 36). This approach recognizes that underlying one's life structure is personality, and underlying the imbalance in life structure is the imbalanced relationship between certain needs and dimensions of personality.

Addressing imbalance at the most basic level would involve moderating the drive for mastery and encouraging the desire for intimacy. Many other theorists have suggested dualistic principles resembling the mastery/intimacy polarity, with a similar tension

TIME AND ENERGY   ORIENTATION/PROCESS   INNER SELF/GOAL

Focus on work ↔ Neglect of personal life

Striving for mastery ↔ Avoidance of intimacy

Search for ideal self

Costs for Career and Personal Life

LIFE HISTORY

CULTURE/ ORGANIZATIONS

Re-allocate time and energy

Temper mastery strivings; come to appreciate intimacy

Come to awareness and acceptance of real self and dark side

COME TO TERMS WITH OWN HISTORY; INTERVENE IN CHILDREN'S HISTORIES

ORGANIZATIONAL/ CULTURAL CHANGE

Benefits for Career and Personal Life

Figure 2. Levels of Intervention

between the two poles. Bakan (1966) calls them "agency" and "communion"; Jungians such as Scott-Maxwell (1971) refer to them as the "masculine" and "feminine" principles; May (1973) calls them "will" and "love"; and Kegan calls them "individuation" and "relatedness," which he says are

> The two greatest yearnings in human experience. . . . One of these might be called the yearning to be included, to be a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied. The other might be called the yearning to be independent or autonomous, to experience one's distinctness, the self-chosenness of one's directions, one's individual integrity. (1982, p. 107)

In our culture there is an assumption that these yearnings are in conflict. This assumption is reflected by the statement by political philosopher Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1987) that "Many attractive and successful Americans are torn between a desire to win, to star, to make it on their own and a desire for unconditional love and unbreakable attachments." The belief that these two goals are mutually incompatible is unique to Western culture. In contrast, Eastern philosophies hold that such polarities as "yin" and "yang" are incomplete, meaningless, without each other. The tension between the two is necessary, healthy, and constructive.

But let's not forget the deepest level of imbalance. In order to strive for both mastery and intimacy, one must accept and value one's real self, foibles and all, rather than continuing to seek the idealized image. Striving for mastery is only incompatible with intimacy when mastery is illusory, based on the ideal image, and thus needs to be buffered from the intimacy which threatens to expose the dark side. Thus, in order to allow intimacy into one's life, one must allow the suppressed aspects of self back into consciousness. One is likely then to discover that these dark-side elements are really not so terrifying when faced, and that indeed they can be given constructive expression. George Leonard (1988) writes that a large proportion of our potential energy gets trapped in our dark sides, to which we can't have access if we keep the dark side dark. But if, for example, we can become aware of the anger hidden on our dark side, we can turn it into furious work on a pet

project. Vaillant (1977), similarly, describes how inner emotions and energies are more constructively used when "sublimated" into productive activity (as in turning anger into aggressively tackling a task) than when "denied."

In this view of human development, "balance" involves surfacing—regaining—one's real self, achieving a natural unity between persona and dark side. This is a deep endeavor which requires looking at those forces that have shaped our inner imbalance. It requires coming to terms with our history; seeing our parents as they were, human and imperfect; feeling the grief and resentment for what was done to us in our upbringings; and then getting on with life. It also means being able to step back and critically look at the role organizations play in shaping our consciousness. This is not a task one might leap to undertake, but the challenge of such development is likely to come upon us of its own accord, particularly at mid-life. At this time, it is common for individuals to re-evaluate lifestyle, direction, and choices made in the past. Formerly neglected issues such as spirituality and life mission present themselves as questions to be addressed. Formerly neglected aspects of self demand attention: For men at mid-life the more "feminine" side of self emerges, bringing introspectiveness, the need and capacity for nurturance and play (Jung, 1959; O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987; Levinson, et al., 1978). One can skip right through mid-life ignoring these inner messages, but one does so at the peril of continuing growth and development.

One force against this kind of inner development, however, is the force of inertia and past success. Executives have been successful in many respects just the way they are. And to reinforce this success, they have built up a value system that places their strengths and areas of success (work and mastery) in higher priority than their weaknesses and areas of failure (personal life and intimacy). Furthermore, we have seen that organizations reward executives for being just the way they are—that the very characteristics (the components of striving for mastery) which create problems at home are the same characteristics which apparently make executives effective and successful at work. Does this mean that a fulfilling personal life is inconsistent with work effectiveness? If an executive wants to grow in areas that are constructive to career success, will he impede his personal development and harm his

personal life? If he tries to bring into awareness and expression all sides of himself, will his career success be compromised? We don't think so. We do think that if a manager continues to neglect imbalance as long and severely as we see managers neglecting it, then it is likely to erupt in crisis. *Then* the time and energy involved in *repairing* personal life (recovering from a heart attack, going through a divorce, dealing with delinquent children) will surely require some decrease in career investment (Kofodimos, 1984). We think a manager is much better off *preventing* such problems from occurring!

In addition, we find that inner imbalance carries with it some costs for work effectiveness (Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, Drath, & Kofodimos, 1985). The masterful image is not the unalloyed good it is made out to be for the manager. Let's look at some kinds of managerial problems that can ensue from an over-dominant striving for mastery, from the corresponding avoidance of intimacy, and from the underlying quest to be the idealized self.

A manager who is unaware of his own emotional life is likely to be similarly insensitive to the needs and feelings of others, and to the things that drive and motivate them. Thus lacking in empathy and compassion, he is unlikely to receive the benefit of their whole-hearted support and commitment. A manager who is uncomfortable expressing feelings might fail to provide needed positive feedback, encouragement, or appreciation. If a manager denies doubts or vulnerabilities, he might not seek advice or help when it is needed. If he is reluctant to own up to weaknesses or mistakes, he might resist critical feedback, and delay in taking corrective action. If he needs to be perfect and therefore to handle and control every issue facing his unit, he might be unwilling to delegate any responsibility to others. If he is overly demanding of others (as he is of himself), others might be afraid to bring him their problems. If he fears failure, he might be reluctant to take risks, overly slow and analytical in his decision making. Further, a manager driven by the search to become the ideal self might aspire to executive position and, once in that position, make decisions with the intent of obtaining "narcissistic gratification" (Kernberg, 1979, p. 33) rather than with the intent of achieving the organization's tasks and goals. Finally, there is the obvious: If the executive fails to take care of himself, he may end up with high blood pressure, ulcers and heart

disease. If he fails to take any time with his family, he may lose his relationship with one or more members of his family. Such losses may actually disrupt the work that is so important to him.

So, inner imbalance is not without its costs to the very career success that the imbalance was intended to serve. Conversely, inner balance can enhance managerial effectiveness. Inner balance is linked to maturity: Fisher, Merron, and Torbert (1987) found that managers at higher stages of "structural development" tend to manage more effectively, and the authors attribute this to such managers' higher level of attunement to their inner selves. (These people are said also to have overcome the workaholic habits of earlier stages.) Similarly, family therapists Ulrich and Dunne (1986) find that the residual patterns from a manager's childhood can get in the way of work effectiveness; the key to undoing this problem is to become "individuated"—aware and thus independent of messages from childhood.

A manager who is attuned to his own emotions can better understand and appreciate the key role of such emotions in organizational life, and can handle their emergence in himself and others more effectively. He will recognize that people bring their own inner lives, values, and fears to the job and that this influences how they approach their work. He will further recognize that the treatment people receive on the job also has consequences for their work performance. By acknowledging the role of unconscious non-rational processes in human and organizational behavior, these processes can better be brought under conscious influence (Kets de Vries, 1984). For example, the person who has allowed his own emotions to surface will have an increased capacity for compassion and nurturance and a decreased need for personal power; he will be better able to play a mentoring or guiding role with younger people and subordinates; he will take pleasure in others' successes and not need all the glory for himself. He will be able to empathize with others' feelings and needs, to listen to and motivate them. He will understand his own feelings and needs, and will therefore do what is best for the organization, rather than what is best for his own idealized image. Because he is not completely driven by the need for mastery, he will be able to own up to his mistakes, failures, and uncertainties.

It would be unfair—and ineffectual—to put all the pressure on *executives* to change. *Organizations* must change, too. Hall and Richter (1988) claim that one reason organizations are unwilling to address the issue of work-family balance is that executives in decision-making positions are often themselves using work to escape failure in their personal lives. They have a vested interest in keeping the balance issue off the organization's agenda. Those organizations that *have* addressed balance issues, by instituting such policies as flextime, day care, and paternal leave, have demonstrated productivity gains (Hallett, 1987). But, as we have emphasized, the problem is much deeper than the logistics of balancing work and family, and consequently the solution must be much deeper than simply instituting policies supportive of a balanced personal life. For an organization to really address balance would involve system-wide intervention, into organizational values, structures, and processes which reward imbalance and workaholism (Shaef & Fassel, 1988).

We believe that inner and outer balance can and should be consistent with career success and managerial effectiveness, that a manager should be able to have both a successful career and a satisfying personal life. George Vaillant found that managers with successful careers were most likely to have happy personal lives as well. "Lucky at work means lucky at love. Inner happiness, external play, objective vocational success, mature inner defenses, good outward marriage, all correlate highly" (1977, p. 373). Vaillant's data, along with our own evidence and hypotheses, however, contradict the argument of many managers (and some researchers, including Evans and Bartolome, 1981), who claim it is virtually impossible to live balanced lives and thrive in organizations. We hope that by now we have exposed this argument as an "alibi."

We did find one executive in our sample whom we consider "balanced." He founded and owns his own business, with 200 employees and $15 million in sales. He has chosen to moderate the growth of his business in order to treat it like a family (he "takes care" of his employees, counsels them, and loans them money), in order that his employees should remain "happy" in their work. He also decided long ago to make time and closeness with his family (most of whom are also employed in his business) a priority, and to

remain involved and committed to community service. He has been able to maintain inward and outward balance because he has had the latitude to set his own terms, to impose his own desired structure and values on the business. This case makes several statements: Balance can indeed be found if one makes the choice to do so. It may be difficult to do so in the modern corporation. But a manager has the power to choose.

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