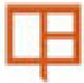

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Work-Family Relations in Transnational Perspective: A View from High-Tech Firms in India and the United States

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This article presents a transnational analysis of work-family relations. Comparing three high-tech firms in India and the United States, we find that employees in each country establish different work-family boundaries. While those in the United States tend to prefer an integration of work and family realms through permeable boundaries, employees in India more often support a separation between work and family spheres through solid boundaries. Our analysis employs a "contextual" view of boundary formation. We argue that work-family relations observed in these U.S. and Indian firms reflect two important factors: 1) varying social contracts between workers, the state, and the private sector, which provide different types of support for families; and 2) varying trends in the persistence or reversal of historical, societal work-family divisions, which create pressures and opportunities either to insulate the household from the workplace, or to merge them together. In contrast to prevailing cultural explanations in the work-family literature that focus on culture or development, we argue for an approach that incorporates global power and inequality. We conclude by discussing implications for transnational debates about work-family.

To many observers, the realms of work and family in the United States appear to be converging (Darrah, English-Lueck, and Freeman 2001; Hochschild 1997; Nippert-Eng 1996). As demands of family life and the workplace increasingly compete, activities within these historically distinct institutions often overlap, and have the effect of blurring, if not obliterating, customary boundaries and distinctions. Trends towards globalization suggest that this process may be transnational. These developments prompt several compelling questions. If labor patterns are converging globally (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990), will this merging of work and family happen in other contries as well? If large corporations are becoming increasingly global, will (or should) their international branches establish work-family arrangements and policies that reflect current developments from their home countries, in our case those of the United States (see also Florida and Keeney 1991 on Japanses firms)? In short, are U.S. work-family patterns the inevitable model for the rest of the world?

This article addresses these questions through a transnational analysis of work-family relations. While the growing literature in this field provides an increasingly nuanced under-

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standing of work-family dynamics, we remain dissatisfied with the theoretical and empirical orientations in the field for three reasons. First, work-family research tends to focus on Western and Northern societies, virtually ignoring Southern countries. Most transnational studies focus on the United States, Europe, and highly-industrialized Asian societies like Japan. While these studies note that work-family relations may differ among Western countries (Bailyn 1993), they neglect the wide range of global variation (Ishii-Kuntz 1994). Excluding Asia, Africa, and Latin America from analysis impedes the development of broad-based theoretical insights into the possible globalization of domesticity, labor, power, and inequality.

Second, we find the understandings of the socio-historical *context* in the work-family literature to be insufficiently developed (Barnett 1998; Bowen and Pittman 1995; Rudd 2000). Many studies reduce complex relations to a list of variables, reifying and freezing them for quantification rather than treating them as situated, emergent, socially-diffused practices. Other studies—understandably daunted by the task of narrowing the list of possible explanatory factors—focus on internal organizational features and ignore broad questions of context altogether (e.g., Perlow 2001).

Third, explanations of transnational work-family patterns are often unidimensional and/or oversimplified. Relying upon constructs like "culture" or "technological development," research often focuses too narrowly on particular values and norms (e.g., Hofstede 1991), or very restricted technological concerns (e.g., Bell 1973) to explain work-family dynamics. While we agree that shared norms and technological development have an impact on relations between work and family, these explanations are insufficient by themselves. Such accounts overlook socio-historically located trends and institutions in which ideologies and technologies are embedded, as well as the systems of power and inequality that shape their enactment and implementation. In addition, these explanations neglect the dynamics of hierarchical relations between countries, which may shape work-family relations in their own right. To address these shortcomings in the literature, this article analyzes data from the United States and India to elucidate work-family relations transnationally.

Towards a Contextual Approach to Work-Family Relations

The realms of home and family are often conceptually distinguished from the worlds of paid labor and the workplace (see Gubrium and Holstein 1990, 1997; Holstein and Gubrium 1995). As separate spheres of activities and interests, work and family can be conceptualized territorially and functionally. This article focuses on the physical spaces of the household and workplace—the tasks, objects, and symbols associated with maintaining the separate domains of work and family (i.e., caring for the family versus profit-seeking activities for an outside employer).[1] We presume that workplaces and households pose different demands for individual members. As individuals manage competing demands, they, in turn, actively construct boundaries that separate work and family life. Thus, work and family are managed as separate realms defined by boundary-making and maintaining processes (see Bailyn 1993; Clark 2000; Epstein 1989; Nippert-Eng 1996; Perlow 1998).

Our analysis of work-family relations is based on an ethnographic study of employees at one of three "high-tech" firms—a U.S. company in Silicon Valley, California (AmCo), a subsidiary of that company in New Delhi, India (TransCo), and a local company in New Delhi, India (IndCo). Even though these employees work for similar companies with similar demands for long work hours, they manage relations between work life and home life in different ways. The U.S. high-tech employees often merge work life and family life to satisfy simultaneously competing demands, while the Indian employees tend to separate work and family.

1. We use the term "work" to refer to wage-earning jobs outside the household. However, this is not intended to diminish the importance of other sorts of labor, such as unpaid labor in the household.

Christena Nippert-Eng (1996) has argued that work-family relations can be viewed as positions on a continuum. As ideal types, the realms of work and family comprise completely *separate* or segmented worlds.[2] They represent two mutually exclusive categories with no conceptual, physical, or temporal overlap between realms. At the other end of the continuum, work and family are completely *integrated.* There are no distinctions between what belongs to "home" or to "work"; work and family blend seamlessly. In practice, however, real-life situations seldom approach the extremes of the continuum. Instead, work and family are neither totally separate, nor completely integrated. In dealing with these amorphous realms as practical concerns, persons are constantly engaging and constructing boundaries that designate the parameters of work and family within the context of everyday life.

Work-Family Boundaries

Boundaries, of course, can be more or less rigid. They can be constructed and maintained as solid barriers, elastic borders, or permeable dividers between spheres of activity (Clark 2000). Nippert-Eng (1996) argues that highly permeable boundaries are associated with an *integration* of spheres, while solid boundaries are associated with *separate* spheres. The traditional "nine-to-five" office job, where one works exclusively in a designated workplace during business hours and reserves nights and weekends for family life at home, represents the prototypic separation of work and family. Alternatively, a home-based business (like catering, group childcare, or webpage design), where one works and lives in the same place, exemplifies the integration of work and family; such boundaries are hardly distinct.

Constituent elements of work and family may "cross over" between realms, penetrating boundaries and integrating spheres. For instance, a person may attend a lunch meeting at work, and afterward bring the catering leftovers home to recycle as meals for children's lunchboxes. Or, tracing movement in the opposite direction, an employee may bring family photos, microwave ovens, and other personal effects to the office to make it more "homelike" (Darrah et al. 2001). Such permeability may operate in both directions, or may be restricted to one direction (e.g., work may be taken home at night and on weekends, but personal effects are not allowed in the workplace). In either case, the permeability of boundaries, like the separation or integration of spheres, is a practical feature of everyday work-family relations.

Work-family literature currently fails to describe where and when particular kinds of boundaries might arise, especially in transnational context. In response, this article offers a detailed view of the separation and/or merger of work and family *transnationally.* Many studies find evidence of considerable work-family integration in the United States, especially in "high-tech" and "high-commitment" firms (Darrah et al. 2001; English-Lueck 2002; Hochschild 1997; Meiksins and Whalley 2001; Nippert-Eng 1996; Perlow 1998).[3] This study addresses the question of whether this tendency to erase work-family distinctions is expanding transnationally, to Indian high-tech firms.

Socio-historical Context

An assessment of the erosion of work-family distinctions is connected in part to the broader socio-historical context in which these firms operate. Socio-historical context

2. This analysis is indebted to the work of Nippert-Eng (1996) for its conceptual models. Nippert-Eng (1996) uses the terms *segmented* and *separate* more-or-less interchangeably, while, in this article, I employ the term *separate* to avoid confusion that might be induced by the multiple meanings of the word *segmented*, especially connotations that suggest the breaking of a whole into parts.

3. Debate over the pervasiveness of work-family integration in the United States centers on whether *all kinds* of workers and families face the same pressure to integrate spheres, and whether these individuals are doing so "voluntarily" versus "coercively." While we do not have the space to engage in this debate, our claims about the high degree of integration at AmCo are based on our copious fieldwork data (which we are not able to present here), and numerous ethnographies of similar high-tech firms and families living in Silicon Valley that have yielded similar conclusions (cited in the text).

comprises more than culture or politics alone. It may be composed of many interrelated components, including (but not limited to) social and historical trends, economic conditions, ideological commitments, and pervasive or local social institutions. Our analysis identifies two features of socio-historical context that influence work-family relations among AmCo, IndCo, and TransCo workers: social contracts and historically shifting relations between work-family spheres. Because the relation between individuals, institutions, and their contexts is mutually constitutive, it is impossible to separate one from the other. Our approach, then, is to treat work-family boundaries as both embedded in, and constitutive of, the wider institutional environment.

A Social Contract Favoring Work Over Family. Work-related "social contracts" extract concessions from employees in exchange for provisions or benefits from corporations and governments (Rubin 1996). In the United States, this social contract commonly invokes greater access to jobs, but weaker family-related benefits, relative to Southern nations like India. Although provisions for family support have expanded over the last century, culminating in the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (Wiatrowski 1990), current state benefits in the United States are meager—especially material ones. Globally, many national governments provide better support and subsidies for childcare, health care, and parental leave (Haas, Hwang, and Russell 2000; Lewis, Izraeli, and Hootsmans 1992; Lewis and Lewis 1996). In contrast, the U.S. state, through its indifference to these issues, has shifted responsibility for family benefits to employers (Gonyea and Googins 1996). The result is a set of U.S. family-related policies that "ensure that workers continue to give priority to work over family" (Lambert 1993). Furthermore, the social contract in the United States erodes worker power. Only about 14 percent of the labor force is unionized, and federal restrictions on union tactics have undermined workers' abilities to organize effectively for family support policy.

The tradeoff, of course, is that U.S. workers benefit from comparatively large labor markets, as well as more stable, better paying jobs. Global economic and political power helps Northern nations insulate their labor markets and protect jobs in ways that Southern nations cannot. Indeed, even with the vagaries of downsizing and layoffs (Schor 1992), unemployment rates in the United States are far lower than those of India (5 percent versus 20 percent) and per capita incomes are far greater (at $21,500 versus $465 respectively) (UNDP 1999).

In sum, the social contract in the United States promotes the merging of work and family. Conversely, the social contract in India—which provides greater institutional support for families—helps to maintain separate work and domestic spheres and facilitate solid boundaries for IndCo and TransCo employees.

Historically Shifting Work-Family Relations. Patterns of work-family relations are also influenced by broader historical and social trends in the separation/integration of work and family. Throughout the pre-industrial era, households were sites of both production and reproduction, and thus were highly integrated (Cowan 1983). However, as production moved to the public realm with the rise of industrial capitalism, separate spheres of work and family emerged, along with the taken-for-granted boundary between the workplace and the household (Zaretsky 1976). Within the last few decades, this boundary has begun to erode for urban middle-class families in the United States (especially compared to those in India). This erosion is evident in several recent developments.

First, new forms of work organization have permeated the U.S. landscape. "High commitment" firms now compose more than one-third of U.S. organizations (Osterman 1995). De-industrialization and the transfer of factory labor to the global South have led to the expansion of professional, managerial, and other types of white-collar work where high commitment is requisite. Some argue that the high-commitment trend is characterized by organizational strategies for extracting more time and labor from workers. Organizations use systems of normative control to create emotional bonds that elicit loyalty to the firm (Kunda

1992). Structural inducements like flat hierarchies, job teams, and family-friendly work-based programs also serve to increase employee participation and feelings of commitment and "empowerment" (Smith 1997). In return, however, the high commitment firm expects "voluntary" long hours and a willingness to subordinate other aspects of one's life to the demands of work. Merging work and family spheres accommodates such demands.

Second, households have become increasingly flexible regarding the demands of work. U.S. families have become smaller and less stable over the past century (Wiatrowski 1990). The extended family which shares a single household is on the wane. Even among Northern countries, U.S. households are especially fluid and shifting. Only one-quarter to one-third of U.S. families are composed of a married couple and children, almost half of new marriages end in divorce, and the odds of remarriage are about 80 percent (Coltrane 1996). Some scholars argue that these trends generate a sense of insecurity about the household, especially relative to one's job. For this reason, employees commit more energy and attention to the workplace, which they see as more viable and stable (Hochschild 1997).

Another important change in U.S. households is the accelerated pace of family life. The corporatization of the household—prompted by marketing and consumer industries—encourages routines to become faster and more time-efficient (Hochschild 1997). These changes have been accompanied by a rapid growth of service industries which specialize in the outsourcing of domestic chores like "internet grocery delivery, taxi services [for] the timely delivery of children at activities, and personal assistants who purchase gifts and entertain visiting relatives" (Darrah et al. 2001:44). Whether intentional or not, these consumer industries provide a support structure for individuals to economize time in the household. In turn, this makes households more amenable to work pressure.

Although many of these broader trends also are found in India (especially since the turn of the millennium), they have occurred neither at the same pace nor to the same extent. This leaves the socio-historical context of work-family relations somewhat different for U.S. employees of AmCo when compared to their Indian counterparts at TransCo and IndCo. Employees of the two Indian companies demonstrate visible resistance to the integration of work and family, even though the companies for which they work are similar in many ways to the U.S. firm. As our study shows, Indian workers occupy larger, more interdependent households than do U.S. workers, and work for employers who make fewer demands to work at home. Together, these circumstances mitigate pressures for work-family integration. They represent features of the socio-historical context of urban middle-class India that affect work-family relations for the employees of this study differently than for those in the U.S. context.

The social contract and the reversal of the historical work-family divide, then, combine with other contextual features in India like trends of globalization, legacies of colonialism, and the politics of the Hindu Right to shape spheres of work and family and the boundaries between them. As we show, Indian employees more often construct solid boundaries around separate spheres, while U.S. workers tend to draw flexible, permeable boundaries which integrate work with family life. This difference persists even though the Indian companies we studied are quite similar to their U.S. counterpart in many important ways.

The Cases and Methodology

The high-tech industry provides rich grounds for transnational comparison. India and the United States are both leaders in computer and software development, ranked among the top three in the world for technological and scientific expertise (Sekaran 1992). Accordingly, our analysis is based on case studies of three computer companies chosen for their differing locations and positions in the global economy, but similar size, industry, and market characteristics. First, *AmCo*, a U.S. company located in Silicon Valley, California, is a member of the

Fortune 500. One of the founders of the high-tech industry in Silicon Valley, it has subsidiaries around the world. Next, *TransCo* is one of these AmCo subsidiaries with offices in New Delhi and a factory in Bangalore. TransCo has U.S. ownership, management, and employment policies, but is staffed entirely by Indians (with a few U.S. expatriates). Finally, *IndCo*, the Indian counterpart to AmCo, is owned by Indians and is located in New Delhi. IndCo is a leading high-tech company in India, with subsidiaries worldwide (including in California). All three companies deal in software development and hardware production, and all three represented (at the time of the study) the top tier of their markets. Each employs more than 500 employees, and maintains similar employee gender ratios (at roughly 25 to 30 percent female).

Data were collected from fall 1995 through spring 1996. TransCo was approached first, as a leading computer firm in both India and the United States. Contacts made at this site during fieldwork facilitated access to both of the other firms. The study employs naturalistic ethnographic methods (Gubrium and Holstein 1997), including observational fieldwork at each location by the first author of this article. At each site, the first author studied two work units—the corporate office and a factory. Jobs in the corporate offices involve management, marketing, engineering, accounting, and administration. Jobs in the factories primarily involve circuit board manufacturing and computer assembly. Ultimately, the first author conducted 34 interviews at AmCo, 60 at TransCo, and 51 at IndCo.[4] In addition, the first author also examined company documents like organizational charts and corporate philosophies for discussions of work-family issues. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both workers and managers to assess demographic and educational backgrounds, work experiences, and household characteristics.

Interviewees were told that this was a study about employment in transnational firms. They were not told of the project aims regarding work-family issues, in order to avoid biased responses. Interviews were conducted on site, either in English or in Hindi with the assistance of an interpreter, and lasted about an hour. Sample selection was based on employee lists provided by the human resource department of each firm. Respondents were chosen randomly, although samples were balanced by gender and occupational level.

There are many demographic parallels among the employees in our samples. Most are relatively young, ages 30 to 40. They are also well-educated. Even at the factories, the majority have high school diplomas (75 percent), and many of them hold technical or graduate degrees as well (37–50 percent). Finally, they also share similar domestic situations. More than half are married and have 1 or 2 children (Table 1).

Given these similarities, what then accounts for the differences in work-family boundaries? The following sections answer this question by comparing the three organizations. Due to space limitations, we provide greater detail on the cases of IndCo and TransCo than AmCo, and refer readers to the surfeit of research on U.S. firms for further background (e.g., Hochschild 1997). First, our comparison focuses on the internal dynamics of households and workplaces, tracing the factors that influence and sometimes pressure employees at IndCo and TransCo to solidify work-family boundaries. We then explore how workers manage these

4. Our data collection procedures have several imperfections. The AmCo human resource department for worldwide operations felt some of our questions were overly sensitive and asked us to make them optional. Most workers at AmCo and TransCo were comfortable with these questions and chose to answer anyway. Nonetheless, some missing data are evident in Tables 1 and 2. Two AmCo workers declined to answer questions regarding marital status and family structure, and seventeen TransCo workers declined to answer questions regarding housework time and activities. While this compromises the findings for these particular questions, we believe the smaller sample size does not dramatically undermine our analysis. Because the TransCo sample is larger to begin with, the reduction in cases actually means that TransCo's sample size more directly resembles that of AmCo. Furthermore, the missing cases arise randomly, and do not suggest a bias based on gender, occupation, age, etc. Finally, we were able to supplement missing data from those particular questions with information gleaned from other parts of the interview schedule. For example, respondents often volunteered information about household experiences when answering other open-ended questions. Still, this gap in our data poses a constraint on our analysis.

Table 1 • *Family and Household Characteristics*

	AmCo[a]			*TransCo*			*IndCo*		
	Total n = *34*	*Women* n = *17*	*Men* n = *17*	*Total* n = *60*	*Women* n = *29*	*Men* n = *31*	*Total* n = *51*	*Women* n = *26*	*Men* n = *25*
Currently married (%)	58	50	65	67	62	71	80	73	88
Spouse works (%)	82	100	67	74	100	59	63	100	32
Average number of children	2	2	2	1	1	1	1.5	1	2
Household structure (%):									
Single family	66	56	81	58	59	58	49	50	48
Joint family	34	44	19	42	41	42	51	50	52

[a] Excludes two respondents at AmCo. See text (note 4) for discussion.

pressures in their boundary strategies. Finally, we outline features of the Indian context that promote the separation of the household and workplace. Our conclusion addresses implications of these findings for a transnational approach to work and family.

Household Pressures for Work-Family Separation

Workers at IndCo and TransCo describe their family lives as less integrated with work than do workers at AmCo. Indian employees portray aspects of their urban environments and large extended families as sources of pressure to separate work life from domestic life. For example, the vagaries of the Indian infrastructure render problematic many aspects of middle-class family life that are taken for granted in the United States, such as the lack of access to even the most basic services like electricity and plumbing. These conditions increase household chores in many ways: the lack of refrigeration results in more frequent shopping trips to the market; the lack of running water leads to more time and energy carrying heavy barrels from outdoor spigots to the house (Blair 1997; Desai 1996). Managing a middle-class household for the Indian workers in our study entails a more extensive range of routine tasks than for our workers in the United States.

For instance, even workers who have refrigerators have difficulty using them because of the poor management of state utilities. Spontaneous power outages are frequent in big cities, and water and electricity are often shut off for hours, if not days. In addition, household tasks are made more difficult by a cumbersome state bureaucracy that pervades public service institutions. At the time of the study, for example, respondents often had to pay their bills in person rather than by mail, and routine activities like reserving train or plane tickets could take hours of standing on line at the depot. A female engineer at IndCo explains, "Air travel is such a pain. You can't book a ticket on the phone. You don't get reservations so easily. It is bad." Therefore, household-related chores require frequent trips and take longer for Indian workers than they would in the United States.

The relative impact these factors have on household strain for workers at IndCo and TransCo is apparent in Tables 1 and 2. First, the Indian employees spend more time on housework (Table 1). While AmCo workers report an average of 10 hours a week on domestic labor, those at TransCo and IndCo report 13 and 18, respectively.[5] Second, Indian workers list

5. Reports of housework time for employees of these companies tend to be conservative for both countries: larger scale studies report an average of 33 hours per week among workers in the United States (Blair 1997) and 37 hours among workers in India (Ramu 1989). It is also noteworthy that, although Indians in our sample report spending more

Table 2 • *Housework: Hours and Types*

	AmCo			*TransCo*[a]			*IndCo*		
	Total n = *34*	*Women* n = *17*	*Men* n = *17*	*Total* n = *60*	*Women* n = *29*	*Men* n = *31*	*Total* n = *51*	*Women* n = *26*	*Men* n = *25*
Time spent on housework (Mean hours per week)	10	12	8	13	17	9	18	24	10
Most common types of housework[b] (Percent of total household chores)									
Cooking	26	31	21	28	33	22	23	40	5
Cleaning	50	47	52	30	39	22	21	37	7
Childcare	7	6	7	12	11	12	20	17	23
Gardening	8	10	7	2	0	3	4	0	7
Socializing	0	0	0	2	3	0	5	2	7
Miscellaneous: pets, repairs	5	0	10	5	3	7	5	2	7
Outside chores: shopping, bank, bills, water retrieval	5	6	3	22	11	34	23	2	44
Total number of household chores listed *n* =	61	32	29	77	36	41	91	48	43

[a] Excludes seventeen respondents at TransCo. See text (note 4) for discussion.
[b] Based on an open-ended question asking respondents to list their regular housework activities, the columns here represent the percent of all chores listed by all employees in each organization.

additional activities not mentioned at AmCo (Table 2). While cooking, cleaning, and childcare may be common at all three companies, other chores (like the "outside" tasks of water collection and bill paying) are mentioned mostly by IndCo and TransCo employees.

Large family networks also promote a separation of work and family. TransCo and IndCo workers live in bigger households than those at AmCo (Table 1). They are more likely to be married: 80 percent of IndCo employees have spouses compared to 58 percent at AmCo. They are also more likely to live in joint households, that is, with relatives other than spouses and children. While 51 percent of workers at IndCo and 42 percent at TransCo live in such households, only 34 percent at AmCo live in joint households.[6] Furthermore, joint families in the U.S. sample are much smaller than those in India; AmCo workers live with a maximum of five other people, whereas IndCo workers report as many as sixteen.

Joint family living for IndCo and TransCo workers leads to more housework. Even with more hands to help out, large families require more chores. For instance, women at IndCo and TransCo more frequently list cooking and childcare than those at AmCo (Table 2), even though they report similar numbers of their own children (Table 1). Indian workers in the

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time on housework than the Americans, upper-middle class workers also have an edge when it comes to domestic service. Managers and other upper middle class employees at IndCo and TransCo very often have live-in servants, such as cooks, gardeners, nannies, and chauffeurs; even some factory workers in our sample reported hiring a daily dishwasher. In contrast, AmCo employees hire housekeepers much less frequently. Even with all this help, housework time among Indian employees is still greater, indicating their extra burden.

6. One group represents an exception to this pattern: AmCo women. They have a high number of joint families, falling between those of TransCo and IndCo. These employees are largely older women who provide care for grandchildren during the day or full-time.

sample may also have children who are younger. Although we lack comprehensive data on children's ages, we know that at least 30 percent of TransCo workers have children under the age of three or on the way, while AmCo workers describe adult or school-age children.

In addition to having large families *within* the household, IndCo and TransCo workers have larger extended family networks as well (Sekaran 1992). In turn, "socializing"—attending family functions like weddings, birth celebrations, and funerals, and hosting relatives at home—is a chore listed mostly by Indian workers in the sample (Table 2). While *business* socializing (like having bosses over for dinner) is typical of AmCo family routines (Di Leonardo 1987), *extended family* socializing is more often a significant dimension of household life at IndCo and TransCo. A male business manager at IndCo explains how these family functions outrank other household chores: "Small things I have time to ignore: like going to a parent's meeting at school, shopping, and a small party. [But] we have a commitment to major social appointments. I definitely attend some weddings in the family or for relatives, and those particularly relating to children. That I don't ignore." Finally, IndCo and TransCo workers assume substantial financial obligations for their extended family networks as well. A manager at the TransCo factory explains that many of her employees "cannot afford things or cannot live like others because they live with parents or have to take care of the schooling of their sisters."

Of course, large families also benefit IndCo and TransCo employees. They help in practical ways, such as with childcare. While most AmCo workers use daycare centers for small children, 60 percent of IndCo workers rely on their families, if not on nannies (see Note 5). Large households also help ease emotional burdens. A male clerk at the IndCo factory declares, "No, I do not have any problems. I have a joint family. Our problems are shared." In contrast, AmCo families report problems because their families are small, isolated, and sometimes headed by one parent (Sharma 1986). Furthermore, AmCo workers more often live in dual-earner households (67 percent, versus 59 percent at TransCo and 32 percent at IndCo; see Table 1), where neither partner is at home full time. Thus, both types of households have benefits and drawbacks in relation to family members' work lives.

Still, Indian households in our sample are less receptive to workplace demands than are those of AmCo. For the most part, AmCo households compress family functions and/or interweave them with work activities. As a female scientist describes,

> Sometimes it feels like I am running all day to try to get done what I have here [at the office], and what I have to do at home. Last week I needed to go home early to wait for an appliance repair person. But I have a computer at home, I have a modem and dial in to work. As soon as I got home I dialed in, because if I don't catch up with my e-mail I can have 300 hundred messages in a day. I absolutely have to keep up. So when I went home, I worked on that.

Yet, instead of "running all day" to integrate work and family, IndCo and TransCo workers are much more likely to reserve and extend time for family. Thus, they express a different type of pressure: "When I go back home, I can't work" (TransCo male branch manager). This means that there are significant limitations for the Indian employees to place a high priority on work. For instance, a female TransCo executive discontinued nighttime MBA courses that would help towards a promotion at work because of an ailing mother-in-law. Another woman executive at IndCo declined an overseas assignment due to obligations to her extended family.

Cumulatively, then, Indian family life exerts a number of pressures on employed family members to separate their work lives from their family lives. Employees tend to bow to the greater demands of domestic life and treat the workplace and the household as distinct spheres of activity and interest, even if there are workplace costs for the employees. At the same time, features of the workplace also pressure employees to keep work-related matters separate from family, as we shall describe in the next section.

Workplace Pressures for Work-Family Separation

Factors in the workplace also contribute to work-family separation at IndCo and TransCo. Whereas AmCo workers experience strong pressure from their firm to prioritize work over family and to take work home, Indian employees receive a different signal: to leave work at the office door. This pattern is especially noteworthy since workers in our Indian samples are asked to work long hours, just like their U.S. counterparts. In fact, the Indian-based employees report working *more hours* per week in the office than do AmCo employees. Yet unlike the "high-commitment" scenario common at AmCo, Indian employees report *less interest* in working long hours. This section describes how "bureaucratic" controls at IndCo and TransCo are central to this outcome. First we examine how they contribute to a containment of work within the office, thereby preventing the movement of work across workplace-household boundaries. Second, we consider how bureaucratic controls facilitate a reward system that discourages workers from prioritizing work over family. These workplace factors combine to exert pressure on Indian workers to maintain separate and distinct spheres of work and family life.

Restrictions on Work Time and Place

Bureaucratic control systems often demand long work hours through rules and regulations (Baron, Jennings, and Dobbin 1988; Edwards 1979). This system contrasts with normative control, which uses loyalty to the firm and feelings of job fulfillment (i.e., "norms") to compel employees to work long hours. Managers at TransCo and, especially, IndCo rely primarily on bureaucratic control. They keep work inside the workplace so it can be easily monitored, and so productivity can be measured by units of time spent "on the job" or at a desk. A TransCo employee notes: "In Indian companies, how management works, the way they view the employee, is absolutely different [than U.S. companies]. They would say you have to sign the attendance register every day. There is obviously no flexibility. You are expected to work at least ten hours a day in the office." Rules about work time are strict; daily attendance and morning arrival times are carefully monitored. An IndCo executive observes: "I have to be here at 9:00 a.m. I have to. Supposing I go home at 8:00 p.m. one night. I don't have the flexibility to come in the morning at 10:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. If I have to come late, then I have to tell my boss. Otherwise, they will put a cross on the register that the person is not there." Bureaucratic systems enforce such rules through material penalties. IndCo workers are only allowed two late arrivals a month, after which a half day's pay is deducted from their wages. Workers are also required to work in the office two Saturdays a month.

This work arrangement contrasts sharply with AmCo, where one employee says: "We don't punch a time clock, and if you're done, they don't expect you to work eight hours exactly. Some days I work ten hours, sometimes I work seven." A female marketing manager concurs: "They are more aware over here [at AmCo] regarding flexibility, especially in timing. If you say you need to do some work at home—office work at home—and ask, 'Can I come late in the morning?' That is flexible. You have all the various options to do that." While all three firms give somewhat less latitude to their factory employees than to corporate personnel (because production work is organized by shifts), the Indian firms are more rigid in their scheduling. AmCo managers alternate day and night shifts during periods of speed-up, whereas IndCo and TransCo managers combine them so that operators are working around the clock.

The end result of bureaucratic control and its strict rules about scheduling is a longer day in the office for the Indian employees (Table 3). While AmCo workers report an average of 9.4 hours per day, TransCo workers report 10.1 hours, and IndCo workers report 10.6 hours. Indeed, despite recent reports of long work schedules in the United States, it is *not* the U.S. workers in our study who spend the most hours in the office.

Table 3 • *Office Work: Time and Place*

	AmCo (n = 34)			*TransCo (n = 60)*			*IndCo (n = 51)*		
	Total	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*
Work time									
Mean hours in the office per day	9.4	9.6	9.2	10.1	9.9	10.2	10.6	11.6	9.6
Work location									
In the field:									
Have field assignments (%)	62	50	73	70	59	81	43	27	60
Farthest distance traveled for field assignments (%):									
Within the city	16	20	12	53	67	38	28	29	27
Nationally	51	40	63	35	27	43	62	71	53
Abroad	33	40	25	13	7	19	10	0	20
Total[a]	100	100	100	101	101	100	100	100	100
At home:[b]									
Nights and weekends (%)	39	53	24	22	21	22	17	11	24

[a] Some percentages exceed 100 due to rounding.
[b] Excludes factory operators, who are not allowed to take work home.

In addition to strict scheduling rules, the Indian firms have more rules about work *places*. As a point of contrast, AmCo employees have many field assignments: they travel regularly to meet vendors, suppliers, customers, and to visit other AmCo divisions. Managers also schedule company meetings off-site, as regular long-distance "retreats." Yet extensive travel is rare at IndCo and TransCo. As shown in Table 3, IndCo employees report fieldwork almost 20 percent less often than do those at AmCo. Not only do AmCo employees travel more frequently, but also greater distances, the majority being "inside the country" or "abroad" (84 percent). At IndCo, most of those who travel stay close to home, either "within the city" or "within the country" (90 percent). TransCo has a large number of workers who travel, but also the greatest share of those who move within the smallest geographic range, "inside the city" (53 percent).

Similarly, AmCo employees do more work at home.[7] Thirty-nine percent of the non-production employees at AmCo report working at home on nights or weekends (Table 3), where they typically spend several hours catching up on phone calls and e-mail, or reading and writing reports.[8] This parallels other studies of U.S. workplaces (e.g., Hochschild 1997; Women of Silicon Valley 2001). However, at IndCo and TransCo, rules about when and where employees may work are strict. Only 22 percent of non-production employees at TransCo and 17 percent at IndCo report working at home, making this trend almost two times less likely than at AmCo. A female secretary explains: "In this organization, if you have been given a job, you have to finish the job in the office. It doesn't matter what time you come, but the job will have to be done. That means more than eight hours. Also, because I am not able to finish the job on Fridays, I have to come on Saturdays." In fact, workers sometimes find themselves sitting idle just to fill the time, as a female senior executive explains: "I have to stay after 5:30 p.m. irrespective of whether my work finishes by 2:00, 4:00, or 5:00 p.m. I

7. This does not refer to "tele-commuting" or "flexplace" policies which apply to regular business hours, but rather taking work home *after* office hours, whether at night or on weekends.

8. Although none of the production workers in our samples were given work to take home, this is a fairly common occurrence in Silicon Valley. For instance, electronics workers assemble computer components in their households at night as piece-rate work, which Hossfeld (1990) refers to as a "triple shift" for working-class women.

would have to sit here and do nothing. And I wish I could have gone home because there are times we are staying here til 8:00 p.m."

In these ways, bureaucratic policies at IndCo and TransCo keep tasks inside the office. With rules against working in non-traditional locations (including the household) and at non-traditional times, Indian employees in our sample have fewer opportunities to merge work and family spheres. Work-family boundaries are strictly maintained.

Fewer Normative Rewards and Benefits

Rewards systems are the second organizational factor contributing to solid boundaries at IndCo and TransCo. To begin with, there is less material payoff at IndCo and TransCo for employees to assume extra workloads. Monthly wages at the Indian-based firms are one-sixth to one-tenth of those at AmCo: on average, $352 at IndCo and $547 at TransCo, versus $3,766 at AmCo (Table 4). These Indian wages are higher than other local industries and government jobs, yet still substantially lower than those of AmCo where the jobs are almost exactly the same. In addition, while AmCo managers often use normative incentives to motivate long hours and loyalty to the firm, IndCo and TransCo managers use seniority-based career ladders, which reduce performance pressures, and a pragmatic corporate philosophy, which finds less need to make job satisfaction part of the reward structure.

Other organizational features, like promotion policies, deter extra workloads as well. While career ladders at AmCo are based on performance, those at IndCo and TransCo are based on seniority. This policy eliminates the need for workers to display "extra effort" as proof of commitment to the firm. Two features of bureaucratic control ensure this system: decoupling productivity from pay raises, and removing the lag time between promotions and raises. A TransCo manager explains how this policy orientation differs from that of his own U.S. parent company:

> If we promote somebody in the States, you don't necessarily get a raise at all for a year. People have to see that when they put in the extra effort, their contribution pays off—and not that it just does not make any difference [whereas at TransCo] years of experience determines what level you get brought in at. If we promote somebody, they go a big jump.

The fact that job security is a perk of seniority-based raises and promotions helps explain why Indian-based employees put up with strict bureaucratic controls.

Finally, another organizational difference between the firms is the use of symbolic and nonmaterial rewards to motivate extra work. IndCo, for instance, lacks the "empowerment"

Table 4 • ***Average Monthly Salary by Job Level and Gender***

	AmCo			*TransCo*[a]			*IndCo*[a]		
Job Level	*Total* n = *31*	*Women* n = *15*	*Men* n = *16*	*Total* n = *56*	*Women* n = *29*	*Men* n = *27*	*Total* n = *48*	*Women* n = *24*	*Men* n = *24*
All levels	$3,766	$3,500	$4,017	$547	$372	$729	$352	$253	$455
Manager	$4,720	$3,867	$6,000	$1,076	$625	$1,230	$731	$557	$811
Executive, Sales, Engineer	$5,449	$5,338	$5,523	$513	$431	$612	$316	$333	$296
Admin., Secretary[b]	$4,583	$4,583	—	$349	$349	—	$164	$199	$136
Operator, Technician	$2,273	$2,137	$2,391	$90	$60	$107	$90	$90	$91

[a] Wages at IndCo and TransCo have been converted from rupees, at a rate of 34.5 rupees per dollar (applicable to the year of the interview).

[b] Blank entries indicate a lack of respondents in the sample for this category.

strategies of corporate governance that AmCo uses as a compensation for overtime and extra work. Instead of having flat hierarchies, decentralization, open communication, and team work arrangements (Smith 1997), IndCo is described by a female product manager in this way: "My observation here is that it's more like autocracy. People at the senior level, they give instructions and you are supposed to follow. It's not a participative relationship." With features like top-down decision-making, hierarchical relationships, and close monitoring of workers (Edwards 1979), managerial power at IndCo is readily apparent and unapologetic. The organizational philosophy has little pretense of creating a "supportive environment" for employees.

Moreover, IndCo and TransCo lack the social and entertainment activities that encourage workers to treat "work as home" (Hochschild 1997). AmCo goes to great lengths to make the office environment less like work and more like fun. The company provides ping-pong tables, basketball courts, and sports matches, even at the factory. "Play" is an integral part of the work experience: a factory supervisor explains that "you hear a lot of talk and laughter" on the production line. At the corporate office, there is a similar atmosphere: "When we are learning together and playing together, and our communications open up, it makes a work/ business relationship as well as a friendship."

Alternatively, bureaucratic policies at IndCo discourage an "outlook of the company [towards] employee welfare and internal satisfaction," as a male customer support manager explains. "Employee welfare means having some recreation so that you can let off the steam somewhere, or other curricular activities—these are typically missing in the Indian companies." Without such rewards, workers at the Indian-based firms have a more pragmatic view of their jobs. An export production manager in the TransCo factory put it this way: "I visited the U.S. once, and my feeling is that the culture in the U.S. is like this—you don't have to work hard for something. You don't have to work that hard to live. But here in India, you have to work hard to live." In general, employees of the Indian firms understand work in a less romantic way, and are less likely to view work as a source of personal fulfillment, than are AmCo employees. In sum, bureaucratic control undermines the work-as-priority ethic at IndCo and TransCo, and encourages employees to separate work from family.

Managing Work and Family Pressures

Taken together, the previous sections reveal how institutions of the workplace and household operate collectively and interactively to generate boundary pressure for workers. At AmCo, elements of both the workplace and household promote work-family integration. In contrast, employees at TransCo and IndCo experience pressures to separate work and family, both at work and at home. At AmCo, the pressure is somewhat more likely to emanate from the workplace bureaucracy; the firm literally exports work beyond standard business hours and locations. Employees' households generally absorb the overflow. Conversely, IndCo and TransCo workers experience greater pressure from their household demands, given the context of larger Indian families and less predictable urban environments. The workplace indirectly accommodates pressures from the family sphere by limiting work to fixed hours within the office.

Ironically, the sources of boundary pressure come from, and move in, opposite directions in each case. Yet, because households and workplaces largely act as a system, the implications for work-family boundaries are unambiguous in each context. Elements of both the workplace and household promote work-family *integration* at AmCo, while the same institutions promote work-family *separation* at TransCo and IndCo.

Feeling the Pressures

At this point we ask: How do workers react to the pressures emanating from work-family relations? Although there is considerable variation in how employees respond in all the cases, workers at AmCo tend to manage tensions around work-family boundaries in ways that merge the two spheres, while their Indian counterparts maintain stronger, more rigid boundaries that circumscribe the household and separate it from the workplace.

Our interviews asked employees, "What is the most common way you feel tension managing work and family?" Three general themes emerged in each of the firms (Table 5): 1) work tends to interfere with *family life*, 2) work tends to interfere with *personal life*, or 3) family life interferes with *work*. Given these common concerns, the difference between the firms lies in which theme is most prominent. AmCo workers are more concerned with the latter two themes, as 42 percent of their responses highlight intrusions on personal and work lives. In direct contrast, IndCo and TransCo workers rarely mention family intrusions into work life as a problem or source of tension, and, in fact, are much more likely to mention the first theme of work interfering with family.

At AmCo, institutional priorities appear to place work ahead of family. Sometimes employees attribute pressures directly to bosses. As expressed by a female executive at the corporate office, "Lately I have had some urgent projects come up, and I have been requested not to take vacations, and to arrange my plans for the weekends, and to come and get work done. This is the third time in the last three months." Other employees describe a personal motivation to put in "extra" time at work. As a male executive in the corporate office explains, "I am trying to find out what is a good balance between work and home—but I am also trying to prove myself. Although I like to get home on time, I usually spend an extra hour when everyone else has gone home, just to try and get some stuff done. When I go home, it is just to get ready to work for the next day." Even operators at the factory discuss the demands of family on work: "I always try to balance it, but you never get it 100 percent. Sometimes it is hard. You have to balance [chores] at your home *without interfering with your work*" (emphasis added).

In contrast, tensions at the Indian firms focus on households to a greater degree. Indian employees at TransCo and IndCo frequently mention "insufficient time for family, children, and housework" as a source of tension (up to 93 percent of their responses). Although AmCo workers also note these sources of tension, the Indian workers mention them almost twice as often, in some cases. A TransCo general manager explains why:

Table 5 • *Work-Family Tensions: Percent of Employees Feeling Main Impact on Family, Individual, and Work*

	AmCo			*TransCo*			*IndCo*		
	Total	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*Women*	*Men*
Work interferes with family:									
Insufficient time with family and children	34	29	40	63	62	64	62	46	77
Insufficient time for household work	24	29	20	30	38	22	4	7	0
Work interferes with personal life:									
Insufficient time for personal chores	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	20	15
Drains energy	17	13	20	0	0	0	17	27	8
Family life interferes with work:									
Family takes time from office work	25	29	20	7	0	14	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

> There are always sporadic work-life issues. What is very important in my job, and for quite a few colleagues in my department, is that our schedules are not really dictated or decided by us. I wish I could control that, frankly speaking, because sometimes you may miss your daughter's birthday. I have missed it a couple of times in the last five years. I wish I had more control over these kind of things.

Extended family socializing is another part of home life that the Indian employees in our sample sometimes compromise because of work obligations. "I can't go to social functions and marriages because of work," says a male wiring operator at the IndCo factory. They also mention missing time for housework and daily family activities. A female manger at the IndCo factory reflects, "We never thought that it would be that difficult to work both at home and at the office, but only after working I do find that there is not enough time to do justice to your family. We reach home by 7:00 p.m., and sleep by 11:00 p.m. In that time, you have to do cooking, you have to eat, and you have to manage for the next day also."

These insights into managing work and family reflect the countervailing institutional pressures in the work sites we studied. While AmCo employees are more likely to prioritize work, those at IndCo and TransCo are more likely to express family-centered concerns about the interference of work with family.

Boundary Strategies

The experience of tensions leads to well-formulated strategies for managing work-family boundaries. At AmCo, workers frequently integrate work and family activities. Sometimes this means blending *work into home-life*, as a female facilities specialist states: "I work later in the evenings about three days a week, for a three-week duration; then I might have a normal week, and then it starts up again. I bring work home too, for about three hours: I might be here [in the office] for two hours, and then take an additional hour to go home and have some dinner, and then work an extra hour at home. So, it'd be a kind of combination. Then on the weekends, I come in too." Similarly, a female product manager describes, "I work at night since I don't like to work real early in the morning. So if I work late, I work from home. [My coworkers] do understand so nobody has said anything to me." Workers also use their flexible schedules to enhance their personal comfort during work or to increase efficiency. A female manufacturing development engineer explains, "[I go in on] either Saturday or Sunday when I have to catch up on stuff. It is quiet here and I know that I can get it done."

AmCo employees also blend *home into work* by making the office a pseudo family zone. Many AmCo employees integrate leisure activities into the office environment instead of keeping them at home. A male corporate employee explains, "I am usually here on weekends whether it is for [athletic] workouts or if it is for catching up with work. I have a bike here and I come here to work out. Sometimes I spend all weekend here." Employees sometimes bring their families to the office, and although the company does not currently provide daycare, a woman in the corporate office wishes they did so she could spend more time with her infants at work: "With childcare on site, you can go pick up your kids on time, and bring them over to your office."

Moreover, the types of family activities brought to the office are not just the enjoyable ones. A female scientist describes how she uses corporate programs to help manage conflicts in her household: "They have brown bag lunches that are specifically about things that are important to women who are working and have children. You [can] listen to someone speak about behavior problems with children in the ages of 5 to 10. And I've gone to those because of my grandchildren." To a degree, then, AmCo workers practice a "reversal" of work and home spheres (Hochschild 1997). AmCo workers are thus more likely to integrate the two spheres, and create permeable boundaries: "work" can be done anywhere, including the home, and some "home" activities can be done at work.

In contrast, many of the Indian workers manage tensions by actively separating the workplace from family life. They establish clearly distinct functions for the household and workplace: "work" is what happens inside the office, and "family" is what happens inside the household. A male personnel executive at TransCo declares, "I hardly carry home my work. I have definitely a personal life to manage. I have my kids, I have my granny, and that is as important as my job. I need to balance my work life. When I am in the office, I am in the office. Period. If I am at home, I am at home." In another contrast to AmCo, family space is reserved not just for obligations or chores, but also for leisure. A junior engineer at the IndCo factory says, "We should not need to work late hours or on Saturday and Sunday, because we find it odd. All my friends working in other places definitely have off on Sunday, and we could meet them and relax." A female administrator at the TransCo factory concurs: "[We should have] a longer weekend, more leisure hours, and more time to do other work. Weekdays I just spend a lot of time commuting and have long hours. So, why not . . . take Friday off?" These IndCo and TransCo employees reject the acceleration of family life, and as part of this process, they construct work-family boundaries that are firmer and more impermeable than those of AmCo workers.

Bending to Institutional Boundary Pressures

Wouldn't we expect workers to resist the institutional pressures of their respective scenarios, at least to some degree? We do find that workers in all our samples balk at working long hours. Still, we are surprised to find that in all three firms few workers challenge the pressures (exerted by their respective companies and social contexts) regarding *boundaries.* Instead, most workers generally yield to those boundary pressures in their work-family management strategies.

For instance, even while AmCo employees might ideally like to insulate their home lives from the intrusions of work, their practices are in fact very accommodating. An indication of this is in Table 5, which shows how many AmCo employees describe a lack of time with family; yet, at the same time, few request policies that might separate work from family. Instead, AmCo workers tend to ask for *more control* over the work-family integration process. A male quality engineer at AmCo explains, "The biggest problem I have with balancing my work and home is . . . when I work at home and have a *deadline.* If I have something due tomorrow, I will sit up [until early] in the morning and do it. Like yesterday I put in four hours even though I was sick. And I have to meet another deadline tomorrow." Given the sporadic demands of the work, the main point of contention is *who* generates work schedules, rather than where or when the work is to be done. Furthermore, control over scheduling is sometimes more important than reducing their overall hours worked. An AmCo female corporate office employee says, "I try to get out by 8:30 p.m. because by that time it is getting too late. When it starts getting to be eleven hours or twelve hours, then my happiness goes down tremendously. But ideally, I would like to work 10-hour days. That would just be ideal for me." In sum, while these AmCo employees sometimes challenge long hours, they do not challenge the basic premise that work may intrude into the household.

In contrast, one might expect IndCo and TransCo employees to be more interested in flexibility, given the rigidity of their schedules and the length of time they spend in the office. While some of these workers do ask for flexible scheduling, most would rather repackage work within fixed "business hours." In fact, they would prefer both a significant reduction in, and standardization of, their work hours. A corporate office executive at IndCo articulates, "I would come to the office at 9:00 a.m., and leave exactly at 5:30 p.m. These are the office timings." A TransCo secretary concurs: "The timing should be strict: 9 to 5. Eight hours means eight hours. That is one thing which I would like to change—time with family and children. We should also devote some time to family." In this way, Indian workers support work-family separation.

Employees often approach work-family boundaries in ways that secure practical, everyday benefits. For example, many AmCo employees actively integrate work and family activities because they enjoy flexible schedules and the opportunity to participate in both work and family events as they arise, rather than according to tightly restricted protocols or timetables. Yet, while these strategies may reflect personal preferences, they also embody institutional demands beyond employees' control. Even though employees may *like* the opportunity to work at home from time to time, they have little opportunity to do otherwise because their employers also *demand* it. In addition, the broader socio-historical context continuously affects workers' "preferences" for how work-family relations are managed.

The Context for Work-Family Separation

Employees at IndCo and TransCo tend to keep work and family separate in part because they inhabit significantly different socio-historical contexts than AmCo workers. In contrast to that of the United States (as outlined in the introductory section), the socio-historical context for the Indian workers of our study varies in terms of the orientation of the social contract, and the direction of historically-shifting relations between work-family spheres.

An Indian Social Contract Favoring Work-Family Separation

In India, the family has an institutionalized foundation of support within the state, unlike in the United States. This dates back to India's independence, when the activism of both Gandhian nationalist movements and women's movements helped to secure substantial rights for families in the constitution (Kumar 1993). For instance, the Factory's Act of 1948 requires daycare centers in organizations with more than thirty workers.[9] Similarly, the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 requires employers to provide female employees with three months of leave *at full pay* and to guarantee jobs at the same level when employees return. These legal mandates are largely responsible for IndCo's and TransCo's paid maternity leave policy.[10]

Even without state laws, many Indian organizations offer additional material family benefits, such as bonuses and time off for family emergencies (Desai 1996; Weiss 1984). The IndCo president offers this explanation: "The Indian philosophy is like a family. The boss is the head of the family and, therefore, looks after their problems: he attends their weddings; if somebody is sick, he gives them money; he gives loans; he helps with housing. It is more as a social obligation." This corporate philosophy (albeit paternalistic) reveals how the social contract at IndCo and TransCo favors material assistance for families.

The Indian social contract also empowers labor unions to a greater extent than in the United States. There are, for example, more than a hundred types of labor legislation in India (Budhwar and Khatri 2001). These laws not only give workers more secure collective bargaining rights, but also provide the means to insure that family policies are enforced (Gothoskar 1992). For example, many of the past gains at IndCo, like on-site daycare at the factory, were the result of union activism by women workers. In contrast, AmCo has neither a union nor daycare benefits. This is typical of Silicon Valley high-tech firms (Louie 2001).

9. A notable contradiction here is that the Indian state requirement for onsite daycare promotes a *merging* rather than separation of spheres (i.e., bringing children and families to the workplace). While this case reminds us that greater state "support" for family may not always lead to a separation of the household from work, it still indicates how the Indian social contract provides more legislative interest in providing childcare by the state than does the U.S. social contract.

10. There are downsides to these laws as well, such as poor implementation and enforcement. In addition, while the state may be incorporating "family" in many positive ways, it also tends to justify women's subordination in the home and unequal access to rights in the public sphere. These dualisms highlight the contradictory role of state legal systems regarding women (Kapur and Cossman 1996).

The cost of this social contract for IndCo and TransCo workers is fewer job opportunities and lower wages than in the United States (Table 4). Globally, the Indian economy has been undermined by colonial control of local industries, and more recently (since 1991) by IMF loans and their mandatory structural adjustment programs, which require dismantling socialist protections for workers (Shah 1998). At the local level, political and business elites have supported these agendas and pushed extensive liberalization policies, as part of their quest for global capital. In turn, unemployment levels and labor market competition have increased. Thus, Indian workers and managers in our sample view employment prospects and conditions differently from their U.S. counterparts. On one hand, workers are more likely to hold onto jobs even if they are bad and are less likely to regard them as a source of fulfillment (Sekaran 1992). On the other hand, managers are not inclined to make jobs more fulfilling. Indian employers may feel less pressure to offer normative rewards to attract, motivate, and retain workers, but they also operate under a different social contract regarding employee policies. The IndCo president reveals this as he critiques U.S. firms for their elaborate work environments and social activities: "An American company comes in [to India], and they are more worried about how the office looks in terms of carpets on the floor, jacuzzis on every alternative floor (I'm just joking), all that kind of stuff. Whereas an Indian company is not that fussy about the job and the working environment, but they give challenging jobs." Job conditions and work environments are clearly less important under the Indian social contract.

The Persistence of the Socio-Historical Work-Family Divide

The other buttress for solid boundaries among Indian workers in our study is the persistence of socio-historical divisions between workplaces and households in the wider society. Whereas workers at AmCo find these divisions to be eroding rapidly, Indian workers find them to be more enduring. To begin with, the organizational environment in India contributes to this split through strict bureaucratic control systems which, deliberately or not, separate work from family (Khare 1999). The prevalence of bureaucratic control in India is, in part, a vestige of British colonialism. As a TransCo employee explains, "The working environment in India, it is all this British system. There is all this hierarchy—you call your boss 'Sir,' and to do certain things, you have to go through many different levels." Because the British influence was strongest in governmental organizations, these settings tend to be the most bureaucratic even today. Private industries are comparatively less bureaucratic, and multinational corporations are even less so. Even so, while bureaucracy in the United States is described as fading (Baron, Jennings, and Dobbin 1988; Edwards 1979; Saxenian 1994), such bureaucracy is comparably more enduring in India (Budhwar and Khatri 2001; Gupta 1999). The extent of bureaucratic control in IndCo and, especially, TransCo is a testament to this.

Contextual factors in households also deter the blurring of boundaries common at AmCo. In general, Indian families are much larger and more interdependent than those in the United States. Nearly half of all Indians live in some type of extended family, almost double the percentage in the United States (Census of India 1991). There is also less variation in family size and form. Divorce rates are very low (Sureender, Reddy, and Baburajan 1992) and even if marriages dissolve, extended families often remain intact to buffer the transition. These factors, however, are not necessarily associated with better family relationships; they generate their own tensions and problems, not the least of which is domestic abuse. Yet if, as Arlie Hochschild argues (1997), the *instability* of family life is one reason why U.S. workers are turning their attention toward work, then the relative *stability* of Indian households may explain why Indian employees in our study are less likely to do so. In turn, the relative stability may reduce Indians' motivation to merge family with the workplace.

Consumerism and the mass media also encourage the work-family split in India. Unlike in the United States, where such institutions promote an acceleration of family life, Indians receive different, and sometimes contradictory, messages (Chakravarti 2000). Consumer products

are geared less toward accelerating household routines or replacing household chores. At the time of our study, for example, stores offered few frozen or prepared foods, and restaurants were unlikely to package meals for take-out. A TransCo manager observed, "You don't get 'ready-made' anything here." Furthermore, marketing campaigns are less likely to exploit or fuel tensions of working parents. Indian TV commercials for "two-minute noodles" show a housewife preparing a fast snack for her children's party, in contrast to U.S. ads showing tired parents coming home from the office to make the family dinner. Supplanting the "supermom" image with one of female domesticity in India is similarly problematic for women. Even so, one advantage is fewer messages urging women to merge work into the home than are found in the United States.

Finally, the Indian political context tends to support the ongoing separation of spheres. If the home has historically symbolized a "haven" against the turbulence of the economy in the United States (Lasch 1977), in India it has represented a shelter against imperialism (Chatterjee 1989). Under colonialism, and especially later during the rise of the nationalist independence movement, the home represented one of the few social settings where Indians could escape the brutality of the British and exert autonomy as citizens and control over their daily affairs. More recently, this vision has been reinvigorated by the Hindu Right. In part due to globalization, fundamentalist political groups in India have been re-empowered in the last decade. In fact, during the year of our study, they achieved control of the state with the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party. One of their main platforms was to promote the family as a source of Indian authenticity, especially in opposition to a morally corrupt West (Kapur and Cossman 1996; Oza 2001).[11] This ideology places a heavy burden on Indian citizens, making them responsible for protecting family life from *global* as well as local threats. In sum, the socio-historical trajectory and contemporary political environment of IndCo and TransCo have put pressure on workers to insulate their families in ways not common at AmCo.

Betwixt and Between—The Multinational Case

TransCo deserves a brief note because, contrary to common assumptions about transnational firms, its employees manage work-family relations in ways that are more similar to their counterparts at IndCo than to those at the parent company AmCo. Indeed, the U.S. ownership and corporate policies of TransCo might lead us to expect more workplace intrusions on the family among its employees. Yet, because of the strong influence of the socio-historical context in India, Transco's human resource policies often promote a separation of spheres.

For instance, we see this pressure for a separation of spheres in TransCo's job structures and rewards. Managers explain that they have a long-term plan to emulate the parent company, but in the meantime job arrangements remain in limbo between the hierarchical structures like those of IndCo and the flat structures of AmCo: "We have fewer titles than most [Indian] companies here, and at the same time we have more titles than we have in the States." Further, TransCo managers are influenced by locally pervasive rewards systems like those at IndCo as they make the transition to the wage and promotion structures of AmCo:

> We are on seniority-based salary systems here but we really focus on performance and not how long you continue to breathe. We do it because of the way this economy is in this time. Here, so much of things are based on years of experience rather than performance. Because even in the software industry [in India], you see the kind of the mentality where people are more on an hourly basis—this much an hour, that much an hour, etc.

11. There are also certain cases in which the Hindu Right advocates public- and career-oriented roles for women (Sarkar 1996). An example is the "Anti-Mandal agitations" of the early 1990s, when women were recruited to stand with their male allies in defense of upper-caste Hindu privileges in employment, against the challenges by marginalized groups such as the Scheduled Castes.

Thus, when it comes to career ladders and wages, Indian bureaucratic environments are an important source of policy for TransCo, as with IndCo.

The socio-historical context shapes TransCo's work-family program as well. TransCo managers have a unique vision to combine policy features of both AmCo and IndCo by integrating job restructuring benefits like flextime, flexplace, and job-sharing with material family benefits like paid maternity leave. However, features of the context allow for more effective implementation of the latter. For instance, bureaucratic organizational practices render job-restructuring benefits like flexplace difficult to enforce (Poster 2000). At the same time, the local social contract provides many incentives for employees to favor material family benefits. Given the comparatively lower wages at TransCo versus AmCo, policies like paid maternity leave have greater appeal to local Indian workers than do those like flextime.

Work and Family in an Era of Globalization

At the outset, we asked three guiding questions: If labor patterns are "converging" globally, are U.S. work-family patterns inevitable worldwide? Will international branches of U.S. corporations promote work-family arrangements that reflect current developments of their head offices based in the United States? Will separate rather than integrated work-family spheres become the international norm? Our analysis of two Indian-based firms and one U.S. firm suggests qualified negative responses to all three queries: employees of the Indian firms have not duplicated patterns of integrating work and family typical of employees at the U.S. firm.

At AmCo, we find that more than one-third of the workers take work home at night, many bring their family and leisure activities to the office, and some even resolve family conflicts in the workplace. Furthermore, 42 percent of AmCo employees claim that family interference with "work" or "personal life" is a significant source of work-family tension (unlike the Indian firms, where it is mentioned rarely or not at all). AmCo workers' strategies for handling this interference combine activities from both domains. In this way, boundaries for AmCo workers tend to be permeable; work and family tend to merge. IndCo and TransCo employees work longer days in the office, but are much less likely to take work home with them than employees at AmCo (among non-production workers). Few Indian employees conceive of the workplace as home-like or satisfying, and few employees describe households that would be amenable to more work-family integration. Instead, 60 to 90 percent of the Indians in our sample list "insufficient time for family, children, or housework" as the major source of work-family tensions (compared to thirty-four percent at AmCo), and their boundary-management strategies tend to separate work from family as much as possible. The result is separate work and family spheres with relatively solid boundaries.

Our findings confirm other work-family studies like that of Nippert-Eng (1996) in showing there is, in fact, a range of boundary types and management patterns. While none of the firms represent the extremes of Nippert-Eng's continuum, they do reflect the polar differences. Our findings also corroborate other international studies (e.g., Wharton and Blair-Loy 2002), showing that U.S. workers are more prone to "overtime cultures" than are workers in other nations—in our case, India.

However, our study also challenges the work-family literature on transnational grounds. First, it provides a clearer conceptualization of "context," helping to explain differences across national sites. The influence of socio-historical context in our study is apparent in that the work-family patterns at TransCo end up looking more like patterns at IndCo than at its own parent company, AmCo. By more adequately specifying context, we hope to address some of the unanswered questions in transnational studies (e.g., Perlow 2001) by identifying *external* as well as internal factors that affect work and family arrangements.

Second, we show that a transnational perspective can improve upon the oversimplified explanations of work-family patterns emerging from standard theoretical models. In particular, this approach recasts the common explanations of "culture" and "development" for our cases by acknowledging the multiple factors within sites that shape work-family relations.

For instance, a typical "cultural" argument regarding pressures on Indian households suggests that cultural preferences for hot meals create greater time demands on family members for cooking. Yet our informants, like of those of other studies (Rout, Lewis, and Kagen 1999; Shah 1998), report that this "cultural trait," in fact, depends upon household size, networks, and power relations. Elaborate cooking is more common at extended-family events, rather than at daily meals, and in joint families where senior males are more likely to make such requests and have the power to enforce them. Workers at IndCo and TransCo from smaller families (which represents a minority group in our sample) report more modest meals and egalitarian cooking arrangements.

The "development" argument about greater family pressure in India is that limitations of infrastructure and technology reduce household access to electricity and running water. Yet, again, we see other intervening factors as equally relevant, including the context of Indian governance and bureaucracy. An industry journal survey has rated India "worst among Asian countries for the integrity and efficiency of its bureaucracy" (Saxenian 2000), and Nobel Prize-winning poverty scholar Amartya Sen has called the Indian state "completely counterproductive" in managing some of its development programs (Economic Bureau 2003). Because the Indian state has been inept in managing its "underdeveloped" status, household technologies may function differently in India than in other Southern countries.

A contextual approach also recasts conventional explanations about the low priority of work among Indians in samples like ours. The cultural account suggests that "cultural programming" among Indians makes employees "hard-working only when needed" (Hofstede 1991:37). At IndCo and TransCo, however, we find that these "cultural values" are structurally embedded in organizational systems of bureaucratic control. These systems discourage "cultures of overtime" through formal rules about finishing work inside the office, and reduce performance pressure through seniority-based, rather than performance-based, reward systems.

Development models, on the other hand, would attribute Indian work patterns to a lack of technology, which prevents employees from working outside the office. It is true that India has a weaker technological infrastructure than does the United States, particularly in terms of resources for high-tech workplaces with personal computers and Internet connections (UNDP 1999); however, organizational policies in the firms in our study also limit the way workers use them. In fact, IndCo has a peculiar "anti-technology" work environment, despite the fact that it is a computer firm. The president refuses to use a computer in his own work: "I don't have a PC on my table. If I need information, I call up." Many employees follow his lead, and the few IndCo and TransCo workers who take work home do so without laptops or Internet connections (e.g., printing out e-mail messages at the office to be read at home). In these examples, the complexity of the context plays a role in shaping work-family boundaries in ways ignored by more simplistic accounts of development and culture alone.

Third, our study challenges the work-family literature to become truly international. We argue that this field can be theoretically and empirically enhanced by expanding its scope, especially toward the global South. Most comparative work-family research misses the crucial role of North-South asymmetries, due to its narrow focus on the United States and Europe. Focusing on Southern nations like India allows a critical view of the role of global inequality in work-family dynamics. For instance, in our study, separation strategies at IndCo and TransCo are partly the product of *global marginalization* in India from colonialism, structural adjustment, and liberalization. Similarly, work-centered integration strategies at AmCo are partly related to the *global economic privilege* of the United States, which endows its firms with greater resources to provide employees with material incentives to prioritize work.

In addition, a transnational view can improve our conceptualization of the mechanisms of work-family dynamics. Conventional approaches tend to see these patterns as *internally* generated by or within the nation-state. Yet, we see them emerging from global sources as well. In fact, this view is key to our definition of "context"; it involves an interactive process *across* different national sites that shapes work-family boundaries. The implication is that factors like high unemployment and low economic development are not merely self-generating problems for countries like India, but are perpetuated by countries like the United States through their support of unfair trade policies and international debt. Similarly, a preference for work-family separation is not necessarily inherent in Indian "cultures." This preference is sometimes linked to the activities of foreign groups, like the immigrant "Non-Resident Indian" groups in the United States who financially and ideologically support the Hindu Right movement in India. In short, Northern countries often contribute to India's putative "under-development." Moreover, they may also affect Indian "cultural values" that, by the other accounts, are the ultimate source or result of work-family dynamics. Instead, our transnational approach views global and local politics as intertwined, and emphasizes the way global power in the North contributes to and magnifies inequality in the South.

With respect to social policy, we do not see either integrated or separate work-family spheres as ideal, given that both come with costs. In the case of AmCo, permeable boundaries of overlapping spheres give employees more leeway in scheduling, but are accompanied by an acceleration of family life which compromises the quality of time with family. Many scholars also suggest that the benefits of flexibility are greater for firms than for workers (Osterman 1995; Smith 1997). Indeed, some AmCo employees use their work flexibility in ways that enhance productivity for the firm, but lengthen work hours and reduce family time. Taking advantage of such flexibility can also make work less visible to managers, and therefore more difficult to assess and reward (Clark 2000). This is a particular dilemma within AmCo's context, which is inclined toward performance-based rewards.

Alternatively, solid boundaries between separate work-family spheres at IndCo and TransCo come with many costs as well. In the office, these costs include hierarchy, centralization, and strict enforcement of the rules, as well as a lack of satisfying working conditions (which many scholars argue can lead to improved family lives). In addition, because their households tend to resist workplace demands, some Indian employees are unable to pursue extracurricular activities that would advance their careers, like international travel and night-time MBA classes. For these reasons, we conclude that neither integration nor separation of the workplace from the family is inherently superior, since there is "no one desirable state" for work-family relations (Clark 2000).

This observation may recast some assumptions about work-family policy in the literature. Contrary to the expectations of convergence or modernization theories, our study indicates that there may be a downside to exporting U.S. work-family policy to India. If maintaining work-family boundaries is the preferred strategy of IndCo and TransCo workers, then policies like flextime and flexplace, which undermine boundaries, may not be appreciated (Poster 2000).

Similarly, contrary to the expectations of cultural theories, there may be a downside to exporting India's policy to other Southern countries, and vice versa (even among those countries displaying similar "collectivist" values). The president of IndCo shares this sentiment:

> I used to work in a British multinational corporation in India, and I had a boss. He used to keep saying, "In Zimbabwe we do this . . . In Zimbabwe we did that . . . Why can't you do it here?" You need to design systems which are native, home-grown, and useful for the local conditions, and not say, "I just bring this system. What's good for Zimbabwe is good for India."

Such cases discourage the development of cookie-cutter models of work-family policy, which would inappropriately lump together different nations and sites (especially Southern ones). Rather, work-family policy, like work-family theory, will need to account for such intersections of global and local contexts.

Finally, there are several limitations of this analysis, which might be addressed in future research. As a case study, our study reflects only one snapshot of work-family relations. It also considers only one kind of organizational environment: large firms in the high-tech industry. The literature would benefit from a view of other firms, other industries, and other sizes of organizations to assess the broader applicability of our findings.

We especially regret neglecting issues of race, class, gender, life course, and region in this analysis. This gap is purely a function of limited space, as we do indeed find variations in work-family patterns in relation to such factors. While issues of class, gender, and life course frequently have been addressed in the literature, transnational analyses are rare and deserve greater attention. Both the United States and India are highly diverse societies requiring careful analyses of inequality and stratification. We hope future studies will explore the implications of these cleavages for work-family relations.

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