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Work and Life in the Balance: Ways of Working and Living Among Elite French, Norwegian, and American Professionals

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Work and Life in the Balance:  
Ways of Working and Living Among Elite French, Norwegian, and American Professionals

By

Jeremy Markham Schulz

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

Graduate Division

of the University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Neil Fligstein

Professor Arlie Hochschild

Professor Trond Petersen

Professor Mary Blair-Loy

Professor Stanley Brandes

Spring 2010



## Abstract

### Work and Life in the Balance: Ways of Working and Living Among Elite French, Norwegian, and American Professionals

by  
Jeremy Markham Schulz

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology  
University of California, Berkeley  
Professor Neil Fligstein, Chair

The idea that work-shy Western Europeans and work-crazed Americans differ fundamentally in their orientations to working life and private life has gained wide currency on both sides of the Atlantic within the social science community, spawning rafts of studies charting differences in aggregate time use patterns and work value orientations. Taking an experiential perspective on the behaviors and orientations constitutive of working life and private life, my dissertation approaches the question of cross-national and transatlantic difference from a novel standpoint. Drawing on over one hundred and fifty in-depth interviews with comparable elite professionals, the dissertation carries out a three-way case study of the experiential divergences and convergences between the working lives and private lives of comparable French, Norwegian, and American elite professionals working and living in Paris, Oslo, and San Francisco.

The dissertation examines the ways these three groups organize and experience their working lives and their private lives by exploring convergences and divergences relating to a number of analytical dimensions. The study contrasts their daily work routines, their temporal zoning practices, their career pathways and aspirations, their romantic partners' occupational profiles, as well as their ways of talking about work, work effort, and leisure. Capitalizing on my unique body of data, the dissertation reveals the forms which these various practices and orientations take in these three distinctive societal environments.

The dissertation's findings add a new dimension to the ongoing debates around overwork, extreme work, and work-life strain among managers and professionals. The study's comparative findings reveal important differences in the ways that comparable populations of elite French, Norwegian, and American managers and professionals working in similarly high-stakes, rewarding, and remunerative jobs constitute working life and private life. Relative to their American or French counterparts, elite Norwegian managers and professionals treat their working lives as a less greedy life realm, responding to a social and cultural environment which acts in very specific ways to inhibit the kind of extreme work habits which run rampant in these two other societal contexts.

While both the French and American elite managers and professionals engage in extreme working, this way of working assumes somewhat different forms in the two societal contexts. The extreme work of the American managers and professionals is driven by a deep-seated desire

to perform well in a competition over money and personal status. By contrast, the extreme work of the French managers and professionals issues from an attachment to an occupational identity defined through membership in a recognized social and cultural elite. This identity is strengthened and reinforced by a surprisingly strong tendency for the male French elite professionals to pair up with occupationally matched women pursuing their own demanding careers.

Just as the dissertation provides a rich and nuanced picture of working life among these three groups of managers and professionals, it illuminates the complex linkages between extreme work among managers and professionals, on the one hand, and facets of societal context, on the other hand. Analyzing these connections from a variety of theoretical perspectives, the dissertation reveals the sources of these differences in stratification cultures, gender cultures, systems of elite education, and patterns of romantic and family life.

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In this vein I would like to extend my special appreciation to Arlie Hochschild. A terrific advisor, Arlie got me to see the reach and power of the sociological imagination and the way it could illuminate individuals' interior lives. I took away countless gems from our many wonderful brainstorming sessions where she shared her brilliant insights into the ways people act, think, and feel.

Special appreciation is also due my advisor and committee member from UCSD, Mary Blair-Loy. Appearing on the scene at the exact moment when I needed her ability to move between the empirical and the theoretical with ease and grace, she helped me to sharpen my arguments. The dissertation has benefited enormously from her thoughtful feedback. Finally, Stanley Brandes in the Department of Anthropology showed me that the anthropological imagination is not wholly incompatible with the sociological imagination. It is because of him and his writing workshop that I have tried to think about social context in a "holistic" way.

The research undergirding this project was an arduous, time-consuming, and expensive affair which necessitated the help of many kind and generous souls. Trond Petersen leapt to the rescue when I was still casting about for a research site in northern Europe. He kindly set me up with his vast network of Norwegian friends and colleagues and paved the way for what turned out to be a wonderful series of expeditions to his hometown of Oslo. It is thanks to Trond that I have had such a great fieldwork experience in the wonderful and fascinating country of Norway.

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The intellectual scaffolding for this project took shape slowly and gradually over the many years of research and writing. Whatever coherence the final product has is due to the volumes' worth of discussions, comments, and email exchanges I have had with a community of amazing scholars within many subfields and departments. During the project's gestational period, thoughtful and incisive comments came from many other scholars, both at Berkeley and beyond. Neil Smelser lent his theoretical hand to the project when it was unsure what it wanted to be. Ann Swidler provided unstinting counsel when it came to probing the murky depths of "culture." In all stages of the project Michèle Lamont offered constant feedback and steered me clear of the "national character" arguments which bedevil cross-cultural research in sociology.

Amy Schalet, another pioneer in sociological cross-cultural research, reminded me to honor the specificity of societies. Marion Fourcade helped me on many occasions with her insights on cross-national work and, *naturellement*, the exceptionalism of France. Jennifer Hook gave me her useful assessments of the time diary data I collected. Janet Giele kindly shared her insights into life course research when I approached her out of the blue. As the manuscript entered its final stages, Ron Jepperson and Gabe Ignatow gave their astute opinion on the connection between identities and societies. Many stimulating discussions about the project's form, content, and direction with fellow Berkeley graduate students and scholars-in-the-making Brian Lande, Manuel Vallee, Naomi Leite, and Benjamin Moodie moved the project forward by leaps and bounds. Ana Mónica Ryan came up with the title and helped me to stay sane and grounded during the many twists and turns of this project.

Praise and gratitude is due to the many respondents in the three countries who took time out of their busy and hectic lives to hold a conversation with me and allow me a glimpse of their lives. Their contribution to the project is both immense and unmeasurable.

A variety of programs and institutions stepped in to provide the crucial resources of time, money, and training indispensable to such an ambitious and expensive project. Grants from the UC Berkeley Department of Sociology, the UC Berkeley Department of Scandinavian Studies, the University of California Labor and Employment Research Fund, the Foreign Language and Area Studies Program, and the American-Scandinavian Foundation funded the project.

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## **Introduction**

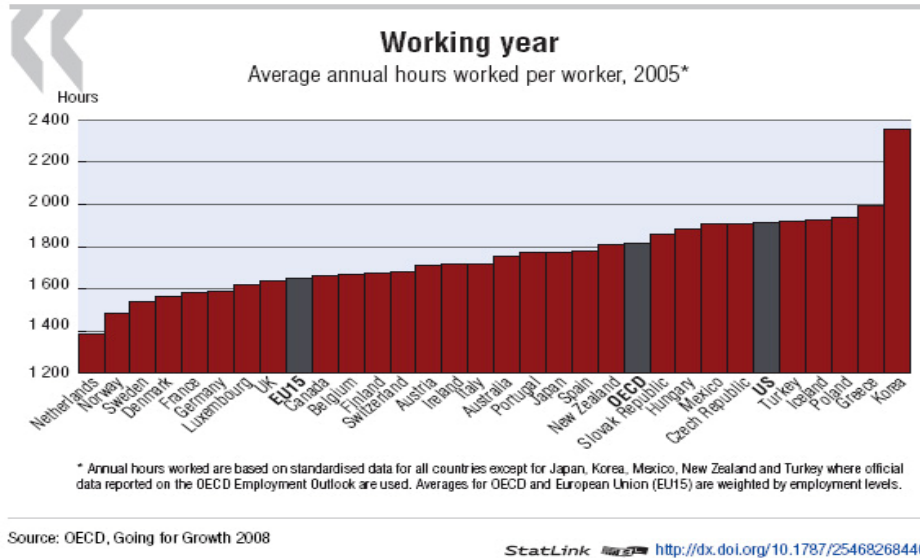
Empirically validated claims regarding the social, economic, and cultural differences and similarities between the United States and Western Europe, whether supportive or critical of the notion of a transatlantic divide, have long been grounded in long-distance portraits of the United States and various European countries based on aggregate data (Baldwin 2009, Martinelli 2007, Jacobs & Gerson 2006, Alesina et al 2005). Perhaps nowhere is this reliance on arm's length panoramas of the United States and Western Europe more apparent than in the much-contested area of working hours, work cultures, working conditions, and working life as a whole. For two decades, the debate over the overworked American and the leisured European has proceeded solely with reference to such coarse-grained bird's eye views of working life and private life on the two continents. Both parties to this debate, those who uphold the idea of the transatlantic divide and those who seek to rebut it, have marshaled large bodies of macrolevel data in order to plead their cases. Every contribution to this debate features an appeal to macrolevel or aggregate evidence, such as impressively detailed accounts of working time policies, sophisticated statistical analyses of time diary data, and statistical analyses of opinion data.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Transatlantic Divide in Working Time Patterns**

These often rigorous and comprehensive studies have yielded a wealth of insights into the contours of this divide in working life at the aggregate level, revealing several important transatlantic divergences at the aggregate level. With respect to average annual working hours, for example, it is well-known that the United States ranks higher in the distribution than most Western European countries. Economists have established that the gap between the average annual hours for the modal American and the modal French employee or German employee has widened steadily since the late 1970s (Alesina et al 2005). By the year 2005, the modal Dutch, Scandinavian, German, or French worker logs several hundred work hours fewer on an annual basis than his or her American counterpart, as illustrated in the following OECD chart:

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<sup>1</sup> Just as these aggregate studies of work hours patterns have revealed many intriguing transatlantic divergences between the US and Western European countries, particularly those located in the northwestern corner of Europe, macrolevel historical accounts of working time regimes have uncovered divergences between the laissez-faire American working time regime and more regulated and restrictive Western European regimes, particularly the "top-down" German and French models (Burgoon & Baxandall 2004).

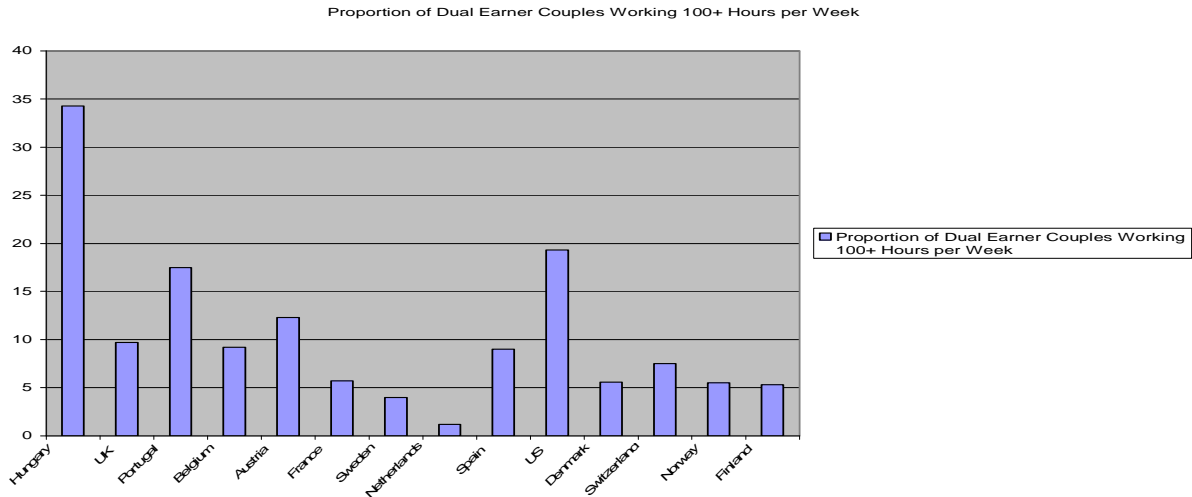


Further, the proportion of long-hours workers who regularly clock more than fifty hours at work per week is far higher in the United States than in Western European countries. The greater incidence of "long-hours" work in the American (and British workforces) as against the workforce of Western European countries such as France and Germany is well-established in the work hours literature (Jacobs & Gerson 2006, Alesina et al 2005, Jacobs & Gerson 2002). This gap between the proportion of American long-hours workers and Western European long-hours workers, particularly in countries like France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, is particularly pronounced for women workers (Medalia & Jacobs 2008). Other studies of aggregate work hours statistics have uncovered a divergence in the ways that working time is distributed over the workweek and the work year. The European economists Boeri and Burda have shown that the modal German worker not only devotes fewer hours to work than the modal American worker, but confines more of his/her paid work to weekdays and core business hours (i.e. 8 AM - 6 PM) as opposed to evenings and weekends (Boeri & Burda 2008). The distinctiveness of the United States in relation to core Western European countries can also be discerned in terms of vacation time (Schor 1992: 32-3). Americans lack access to the statutory and collectively agreed guaranteed paid leave which can amount to up to 30 days in some European countries (Alesina et al 2005). In 2005, the modal member of the French workforce dedicated an average of 33 days per calendar year to vacations, for example, while the modal American worker made do with a grand total of eleven vacation days during the course of the year (Baldwin 2009: 28). The same pattern holds with regards to Germany, Italy, and other Western European countries.

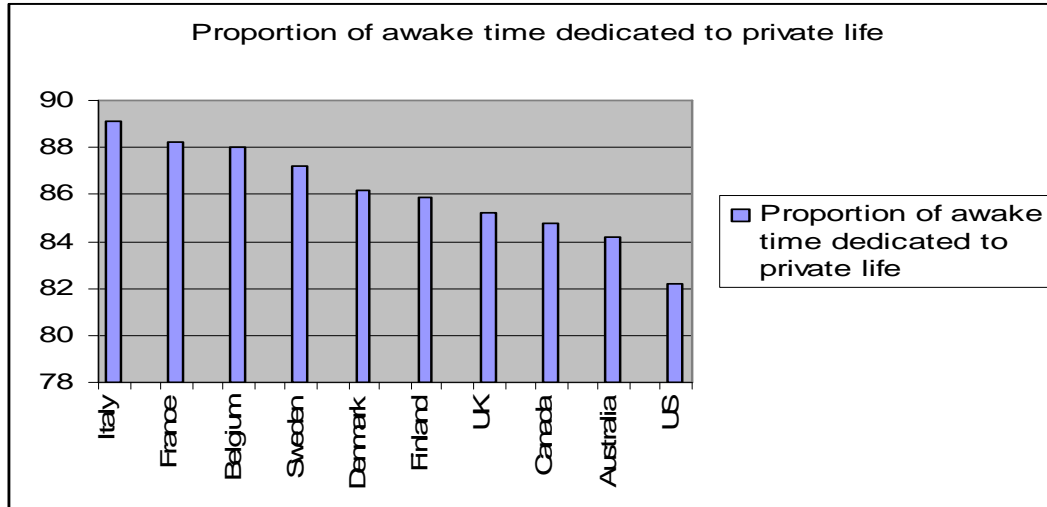
An equally large chasm separates the United States from these continental European countries when it comes to patterns of working time among (heterosexual) dual earner couples. Even though as a rule managers and professionals tend to work the longest hours of any occupational group and women tend to be less well-represented in the managerial ranks of European companies than American companies,<sup>2</sup> the proportion of American dual-earner couples

<sup>2</sup> Women account for a significantly larger percentage of the American managerial workforce than the managerial workforces of countries like France, Germany, and Norway. In 1990 men accounted only for 54% of managers in the US, but they accounted for 83% of managers in Norway, 78% of managers in Germany, and 86% of managers in France (Anker 1998: 258).

averaging over 100 working hours per week still exceeds the proportion of German and French dual-earner couples working similar hours by a large margin, as can be seen in the chart below:



With regard to these working hour patterns, the United States handily beats out Portugal along with the rest of Western Europe for the honor of having the hardest working dual-earner couples. As a result of their longer working hours and dearth of vacation days, Americans suffer from a relative dearth of discretionary time in relation to their Western European peers. As we might expect, countries like France and Sweden outpace the United States when it comes to the proportion of awake time consumed by nonwork activities, as the following chart illustrates (Viard 2002: 66):



### Transatlantic Divergences in Orientations to Working Life

Yet another line of research into the divide in working life goes down a different path, venturing beyond purely objective dimensions of transatlantic similarity and dissimilarity. Scholars affirming the existence of a transatlantic divide have cited survey-generated opinion data on work centrality, for example. Surveys carried out in the 1980s demonstrate a divergence between the French population and the American population when it comes work centrality, as gauged by their patterns of agreement and disagreement with the statement "a decrease in the importance of work in our lives would be a good thing." As Michèle Lamont notes in Money, Morals, and Manners, the rate of agreement with this statement in France was *triple* the rate of

agreement in the United States, at least when the survey was administered in the late 1980s (Lamont 1992: 241). Surveying professional employees in the British, American, and Hong Kong offices of a global financial corporation, Wharton and Blair-Loy found a small but noticeable divergence in the level of interest in part-time work schedules expressed by American as against British respondents sharing the same socio-demographic characteristics (although this gap was eclipsed by the gap between the US and UK groups and the group from Hong Kong) (see Wharton & Blair-Loy 2002: 53).

Cross-cultural psychologists interested in the importance of work vis-à-vis other domains within the individual's subjective "life space" (Snir 2002) have investigated the degree of work centrality characteristic of American versus Western European (German, British, and Dutch) workers. Drawing from their cross-national survey data, they have concluded that, on average, Americans do exhibit a higher degree of work centrality and hold a more favorable attitudes towards hard work than their German, Dutch, and British counterparts, when controlling for occupation and other individual-level factors (Heller & Ruiz-Quintanella 1995: 5-7, Furnham 1990). However, a recent contribution to this literature drawing from World Values Survey data finds that the modal European is actually more likely to agree with the assertion that "work is what makes life worth living" than the modal American (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2010), suggesting a transatlantic divide going in the other direction.

### **Transatlantic Divergences in Family Life and Marriage**

Analyses of analogous kinds of aggregate data from the United States and Western Europe has also uncovered some intriguing divergences between family life in the United States and family life in many European countries with respect to intimate partnerships and romantic relations. As Andrew Cherlin reports, intimate partnerships in Western European countries typically outlast American partnerships. Compared to their European counterparts, American women tend to marry at younger ages and tend to cohabit with partners in lieu of marriage. In other words, Americans move into and out of marital relationships with more rapidity than their French or Scandinavian peers and endure more breakups than their European peers within a given time period (Cherlin 2009: 17-20).

### **The Project's Aims and Scope**

These existing comparative studies of working life and private life in the US and Western European countries, despite their perfunctory claims to draw on "qualitative analysis" (Martinelli 2007: 5), hover at an abstract analytical level far removed from the concrete specificities of social life in its "first-person" or experiential incarnation (Levi Martin 2003). Training their attention exclusively on the modal behavioral and orientational patterns visible at the aggregated level of analysis, they do not touch on either the grammar (Bearman 2005: 52) of working life and private life in these different societal contexts. Nor can they delineate the concrete fields of action and motivation which shape the decision-making and strategizing which enter into the constitution of working life and private life in these settings (Rueschemeyer 2009, Levi Martin 2003). This grammar and these fields of action and motivation are the central topics of this project. Addressing the question of a transatlantic divergence in working life from this novel perspective, this project uses data from an in-depth comparative study to draw conclusions about differences and similarities between the working lives and private lives of concrete individuals living and working in the United States and two Western European countries.

By charting cross-national similarities and divergences through a comparative case study examining the lives of concrete individuals, we can lay bare the motivational, ideological, life history, and communicative dimensions of working life and private life on both sides of the Atlantic. With this study we can also answer the question implicitly raised by the many studies of the American manager and professional; namely, whether the American white-collar worker engages with work in a distinctively "devotional" way (Blair-Loy 2003, Hochschild 1997, Schor 1992).

In order to carry out this task, the dissertation veers from the well-worn analytic path traced by previous research into patterns of working life and private life in Europe and the United States (see Research Methods Appendix). Rather than comparing and contrasting abstract behavioral and orientational patterns characteristic of the hypothetical modal individual who stands in for the American or European population or workforce, this thesis undertakes an inductive case-based comparison of concrete individuals and groups living out their lives in concrete cultural and structural contexts (Yin 1995, Ragin & Zaret 1983). This comparison involves an in-depth examination of the routines, motivations, life architectures, and ideological practices of comparable urban American and Western European business professionals as they relate to working life, leisure, and family life.

This analytic strategy makes possible a more holistic approach to the dimensions of similarity and dissimilarity under investigation. Rather than treating the institutional, social, and cultural dimensions of working life and private life separately, as in previous comparative research, this dissertation seeks to understand the interrelations of these various dimensions and their instantiation in what I label "worksapes." The analytical framing of the workscape focuses attention on the entire constellation of influences and impingements which come into play in shaping the "objective" situation and the "subjective" experience of the particular worker under study. The workscape therefore encompasses impingements which spring from institutional, social, and cultural sources. Worksapes, in other words, cannot be reduced to their cultural, social, or institutional aspects.

Different worksapes can also vary in terms of their conduciveness to extreme work; some worksapes tend primarily to incite such behaviors and orientations while others inhibit them. At the outset, it is clear that each workscape greets the manager or professional with specific constellations of institutional, cultural, and social conditions relevant to extreme work. Some conditions make extreme work less desirable, less appealing, less necessary, less rewarding, and less practical, while others make extreme work more desirable, more appealing, more rewarding, and eminently "doable." Because worksapes have many different dimensions and aspects, and straddle the divide between the (inter)subjective (emotional, experiential, cognitive) and the objective aspects of social life (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), it is perfectly possible for a single workscape to promote work-centeredness in some ways and militate against work-centeredness in other ways.

The conception of the workscape deployed together with the notion of work-centeredness allow us to think relationally and "configurationally" (Ragin 2000) about patterns of working life and the experiential "field" embracing working life and nonworking life as a whole (Tabboni 2001: 16-17, Elias 1992). The concept of the workscape can prove very useful in integrating the findings from the dissertation's various analyses and charting the various divergence and convergences between the ways of working and living characteristic of the French, Norwegian, and American respondents. This notion can also play an important role in the formulation of an

answer to the dissertation's central question about the nature and breadth of the transatlantic divide in American and Western European working life and private life.

### **Why Elite Professionals as a Focal Population?**

Following in the footsteps of the numerous studies which take the working lives and private lives of managers and professionals as their empirical focus, this dissertation takes the men and women belonging to this influential, powerful, yet understudied class as its focal units of observation (Lamont 1992: xviii). Managers and professionals, as an economically, socially, and culturally privileged group within contemporary market capitalist societies on both sides of the Atlantic, not only set the terms on which members of many other classes live and work, but lead work lives and sometimes private lives which many individuals across the social spectrum seek to emulate (Bauman 1998). Further, the especially strong temporal, economic, social, and attentional investments which managers and professionals make in their work, relative to nonwork life realms, make them uniquely fruitful and "revelatory" candidates (Yin 1996, Maxwell 1994) for a comparative study of working life and private life in the United States and Western Europe.

For numerous managers and professionals, the domain of work exerts a very strong gravitational pull, presenting a highly seductive and magnetic experiential arena which offers numerous opportunities to craft and affirm desired identities and satisfy deep-seated needs for validation, companionship, and many other psychic and social gratifications. Surveys of British workers have found that work commitment, as measured by the "lottery win" question, is always higher among individuals employed in professional and managerial occupations than individuals in less prestigious and remunerative occupations (Hakim 2003: 55, Rose 1994).

For the many elite managers and professionals who work in "high-commitment" organizations, this magnetism is often reinforced and amplified by a greedy (Coser 1974) workplace environment. This environment confronts managers and professionals with all manner of explicit and implicit inducements and pressures to allow work to monopolize their time, energies, and attention, regardless of their nonwork interests, activities, and commitments (Andresky-Fraser 2001, Fuchs Epstein 1999). At the extreme, as these studies demonstrate, the manager or professional who falls under the sway of the "cult" of "schema" of work devotion (Blair-Loy 2003,) feels more alive while working than while living her nonwork life. Just as they are exposed to strong internal and external forces pressing them to dedicate themselves "body and soul" to their working life, often at the expense of their private lives, members of this occupational group also must contend with a range of forces which render home worklike and work homelike, blurring the potentially impermeable boundaries separating these experiential realms (Hochschild 1997). The "familizing" of the professional workplace and the suffusion of the professional's home life with work-related tasks and activities are two sides of the "integrationist" influences shaping the lives of many professionals and managers (Nippert-Eng 1995, Gottschall 2003).

Experiencing working life as an imperialist and fluid life realm intent on conquering their life space, many managers and professionals, particularly those with family commitments, serious leisure interests, or other countervailing pulls, give serious thought to managing the demands of their personal and professional lives and ameliorating potential and actual strains between these life realms. At the extreme, some of these managers and professionals devise what Swidler calls "policies" (Swidler 2001) regarding the allocation of time between working life and private life, the reasons why work does or does not deserve large amounts of time,

energy, or attention, the degree of commitment appropriate to working life and private life, the proper timelines and timetables for various events in these domains, and so forth. The extent to which many managers and professionals reflect on these themes and arrive at such policies is borne out in the commentaries which abound in the pages of interview-based studies of their work lives and private lives. For all of these reasons, this dissertation focuses on the working lives and private lives of managers and professionals in the United States and Western Europe.

### **Work Devotion in Transatlantic Perspective**

In-depth research on the nexus between working life and private life among managers and professional in multiple countries has yielded many insights into the character of work's capacity to induce vast commitments of time, energy, and attention. As the research shows, many managers and professionals of both genders often engage with their work as a self-affirming commitment worthy of dedication, long hours, and priority over other parts of life. For managers and professionals, working life can serve as the primary experimental arena where they affirm they kind of person they aspire to be and the kind of life they wish to lead. These professionals can embrace "extreme work" (Hewlett 2007) as an appropriate way of life. For some of these individuals, working life assumes the role of an identity anchorage or a central life interest while private life is shunted into the background (Stebbins 2004, Philipson 2002, Thompson & Bunderson 2001). For these individuals, the emotional payoff of work success, particularly the feelings of self-worth, usefulness, efficacy, and recognition fed by publicly visible achievement in the work arena, is the lure that makes work an fitting and irresistible colonizer of time and energy (Blair-Loy 2003, Cooper 2000, Wuthnow 1996).

In-depth studies of professional and managerial workers living and working in Western European have also identified something that looks like a devotional pattern among Western European professionals.<sup>3</sup> Like the Americans, Western European managers and professionals experience often respond to the magnetism of their work and the inducements of their work environments by putting work at the center of their lives, investing the lion's share of their time, energies, and attention in working life, and allowing work to preempt nonwork activities and interests. Interview-based, survey-based, and observational studies of French (Cousin 2004), British (Bunting 2004, Rutherford 2003), German (Kratzer 2003, Borchert & Landherr 2009), Danish (Westenholz 2006), and Norwegian (Rasmussen & Johansen 2002) managers and professionals suggest that they often find their work as all-consuming as do American managers and professionals.

The penchant for work dedication exhibited by these French and Norwegian managers and professionals resembles the propensity for the single-minded dedication evident among the American managers and professionals who populate the pages of the analogous in-depth studies carried out in the United States.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to read the voluminous qualitative literature on

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that, even in countries like France where the modal worker does not work very long hours, a significant percentage of managerial and professional workers still log very long workweeks. In France, some 28% of this group exceeds sixty hours per week on a regular basis (Burke 2008).

<sup>4</sup> American sociologists have identified a common syndrome among this group of workers, a syndrome which Hochschild has dubbed the "cult of workaholism" (Hochschild 1997) and Mary Blair-Loy has called the "work devotion schema" (Blair-Loy 2003). This cult has cast a spell over managers and professionals from many corners of the business world, including managerial workers at industrial companies (Frasier 2001, Hochschild 1997), technical professionals in engineering and software companies (Sharone 2004, Rasmussen 2003, Meiksins & Whalley 2002,

American professionals' stances towards their work and their jobs without coming across examples of men and women who, feel that work deserves nothing less than an open-ended commitment of time and energy, whatever it takes to "get the job done well" (see Maneiro & Sullivan 2006, Sharone 2004, Blair-Loy 2003, Meiksins & Whalley 2003, Philipson 2003, Cooper 2000, Hochschild 1997, Morrill 1995, Casey 1995, Kunda 1992). Engrossed in their "enlivening" (Weiss 1990: 44) and remunerative work, the American women and men respond to the call of an elusive yet potent "internal urgency" (Hochschild 1997: 58). This urgency prompts them to work long and intense hours, marginalize the nonwork parts of their lives, and conduct themselves as "unconditional workers" (Christensen 2005: 250).<sup>5</sup>

Putting the findings from the Western European and American studies side by side, one might be tempted to conclude that American managers/professionals and Western European managers/professionals share the same fundamental willingness to commit an almost unbounded amount of time and energy to working life, no matter the consequences for other parts of their life. However, such a conclusion would be overhasty for two reasons. First, the commitment any one individual exhibits to the "life to work" ethic or to extreme work is by no means uniform on either continent. Both sets of studies reveal pockets of deviance and nonconformism throughout the managerial and professional populations in Western Europe and the United States. In fact, as these studies suggest, managers' and professionals' orientation towards work can vary by individual attributes such as gender, life stage, generation, and parenting status as well as local contextual factors such as occupational affiliation, career trajectories, organizational and suborganizational affiliation, current position and future job prospects, and relationships with clients and supervisors (see Hochschild 1997, Bartolomé & Evans 1979).

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Cooper 2000, Casey 1995, Kunda 1992), finance professionals in financial firms and investment banks (Roth 2006, Blair-Loy 2003), corporate attorneys (Fuchs-Epstein 1999). These studies illuminate the seductive appeal which engaging, stimulating, and rewarding work holds for many of the more privileged workers in today's society.

<sup>5</sup> In many cases, this willingness to give unstintingly of oneself when it comes to work is experienced by these American professionals (both men and women) as an uncoerced, spontaneous, and voluntary gift of one's time and energies to a deserving activity. Thus, many of the high-achieving American executive women who populate Blair-Loy's book *Competing Devotions*, for example, spontaneously pour all their energies and time into their work, propelled by their appetite for the work and its manifold rewards. In other cases, this willingness to keep working until the job is done, irrespective of the time and energy it takes to carry impossible workloads or meet overambitious timelines, appears more as the consequence of a *compulsive addiction to a workplace social competition over status, validation, and recognition*. The male American software engineers interviewed by Marianne Cooper, for example, confessed an irrational attachment to "conspicuous overwork" (Cooper 2000: 384) as a means of demonstrating their manliness and their desire to do their part as a "team player." As one of her respondents said:

Even under normal circumstances when there are no extraordinary demands, you see people working thirty-six hours straight just because they are going to meet the deadlines. They are going to get it done. And everyone walks around proud of how exhausted they were last week and conspicuously putting in wild hours. It's a status thing to have pizza delivered to the office. So I don't know why it, happens, *but I really feel like it's a machismo thing. I'm tough, I can do this thing.*

Other male American software engineers interviewed by Ofer Sharone attributed their propensity to work marathon workweeks and neglect other parts of their lives to a similar desire to distinguish themselves in a competition with their peers, a competition which elevated some as "stars" and tarred others as "slackers" (Sharone 2004).



While providing useful and valuable insights into the work involvement of Western European professionals and managers, these in-depth studies of professionals living and working in a single country are not in a position to address the intrinsically cross-national questions regarding orientations towards working life and private life posed by my dissertation. What is needed is an explicitly cross-national comparative study which combines in-depth analysis with the right kinds of strategically selected cases. Because of this intra-individual variability in orientations, only a systematically and explicitly comparative in-depth study will suffice if we are to illuminate the convergences and divergences between Western European and American managers and professionals in relation to their orientations towards working life, extreme work, and the nexus between working life and private life.

### **Transatlantic Patterns of Temporal Zoning and Temporal Benchmarking**

The question of extreme work among American and Western European managers and professionals has received a great deal of attention from in-depth studies based on interviews and firsthand observation in single-country contexts. However, such studies have neglected to analyze managers' and professionals' involvement with working life and private life from a standpoint of a cognitive and cultural sociology (Zerubavel 1997) oriented to the ways which individuals configure the realms of private life and working life and endow these realms with more or less distinctive characteristics.

A study which approaches working life and private life from such a perspective has a lot to offer when it comes to enriching our knowledge of the transatlantic divide's experiential dimensions. As Nippert-Eng shows in her pathbreaking book Home and Work, this analytical framing of life realms can open the door to numerous insights into the ways in which working individuals seek to demarcate their work from their private lives or, conversely, bring these realms of activity, thought, and feeling together (Nippert-Eng 1995). In particular, this phenomenological approach to working life renders visible the various ways in which working individuals appropriate physical, social, and particularly temporal resources in the process of configuring working life and private life in particular ways.

Moreover, her study hints at the importance of the macrocultural environment as an important source of differences in the crafting of working life and private life as segmented and integrated experiential realms. Extrapolating from their experiences in Germany and France, several of her American respondents observe that the macrocultural environments in Western European countries are less conducive to the integrationism popular in the American workplace. Whereas the American scientists often permit their working lives to stretch on into blocks of time which could potentially be reserved for private life, the French and German scientists ended their workdays earlier and erected firmer boundaries between their working lives and their private lives. As these respondents reported, taking breaks for lunch and "knocking off early" are more respectable practices in France or Germany than they are in the United States, even for high-status scientists who enjoy a relatively free hand in deciding when the workday should end and how much work should be done "after hours" (Nippert-Eng 1995: 178-9, Lewis & Weigert 1981, Zerubavel 1981: 152-3). These anecdotal observations suggest that occupationally similar groups of American and Western European professionals working in similar organizational settings might nonetheless differ in their temporal zoning practices, particularly the zoning practices which apply to relatively underspecified and fluid temporal zones such as weekday evenings and weekends, zones which could potentially be allocated to work or to private life.

An in-depth comparison of these temporal zoning practices, as they are manifested in the working lives and private lives of comparable Western European and American professionals and managers, promises to disclose differences (and potentially commonalities) in the enactments of such binary cultural categories as work time versus leisure time (Tabboni 2001), public time versus private time, and organizational time versus self time/family time (Lewis & Wiegert 1981, Zeruvabel 1981). Such an in-depth comparison could bear much fruit if it focused on a particular part of the working day, for example the transitional (Nippert-Eng 1995) part of the workday which generally takes place during the early evening hours between 5:00 PM and 9:00 PM. It is during this block of clock time (Adam 1995) that managers and professionals on both sides of the Atlantic have to make consequential choices about when to end their workday and commence their nonwork lives and whether to introduce work into their nonwork lives or to keep the realms completely separate. A study which focused on this block of time could therefore shed much light on the influence of macrocultural environments (Hannerz 1992) on the ways in which comparable professionals and managers configure this frontier between working life and private life.

The lack of systematic comparative research on this topic is especially surprising in light of the apparent discrepancy between the evening routines of some American professionals and the evening routines of some Western European professionals, coupled with the well-established importance of societal context to such routines (Perlow 2001).<sup>6</sup> This discrepancy can be gleaned from the glimpses into the evening routines of American and European professionals and managers supplied by single-country in-depth studies. These glimpses suggest that French professionals, for example, may bring different expectations to the evening hours than American professionals and may end up zoning the 5-9 PM hours quite differently. A glance at the findings in Shih's study of Silicon Valley engineers reveals the decisive effects of organizational and peer-driven "temporal regimes" (Sabelis 2007) in the zoning of these hours and the demarcation of the boundary between working life and private life. One of Shih's Silicon Valley engineers, for example, explained that she often worked past 8:00 PM, even though there were no rules in her workplace against leaving the office at 5:30 PM, because of the informal pressures in her workplace. Fired by a desire to avoid creating the

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<sup>6</sup> There is one in-depth cross-national study which touches on the temporal zoning practices among comparable managers and professionals, but it concerns American and Indian blue-collar and white-collar IT workers, rather than Western European and American professionals and managers. Poster and Prasad carry out an intriguing cross-national study of boundary-drawing practices and boundary pressures among American and Indian white-collar and blue-collar IT workers. Basing their findings on interviews, surveys, and firsthand observation, Poster and Prasad find differences between the Americans and the Indians in terms of the groups' approaches to configuring the experiential spheres of working life and private life (Poster & Prasad 2005). Their study finds that the Indian IT workers made an effort to contain their work within particular temporal and spatial parameters in the interest of keeping their home lives free of work. The American IT workers (particularly the white-collar workers), however, allowed themselves to carry out work tasks whenever and wherever they felt it was most convenient, making it difficult to shield their home lives from the encroachments of work. As a result of their reluctance to contaminate their home lives with work activities, the Indian workers actually ended up working more standardized schedules and spending slightly more time at the workplace overall than their American peers (Poster & Prasad 2005: 130-131). The Indian cultural and structural context, it seems, facilitates the maintenance of relatively "impermeable" work-home boundaries and inhibits the spillover of work across these boundaries. The American societal context, by contrast, promotes more cross-realm spillover in both directions. These findings, while not directly relevant to the comparison between the temporal zoning practices of Americans versus Western Europeans, intimate that national-societal context can play an important role in creating the conditions under which professionals and managers experience stronger or weaker boundary pressures and engage in particular temporal zoning practices.

impression that she was slacking, she regularly stretched her workdays until 8:30 PM (Shih 2004: 238).

My company is very demanding in that it is a highly competitive environment. So if you leave at 5:00 PM or 5:30 PM, you feel that you are sneaking out! You feel 'this is going to reflect on me...' so I would work until 8:30 PM.

For American professionals, it seems, the desire to work late is experienced as an entirely *personal choice* to comply with the workplace norms and expectations. When French professionals elect to stay late at the office until 8:00 PM, it appears as a strategic attempt to stay true to the status of a *cadre* someone who "does not count the hours he or she works" (Boltanski 1982). One of Cousin's respondents explains that "It is not looked upon well to leave the office at 6:00 PM for the *cadre dirigeant* (leading executive)" (Cousin 2004: 131, 208). Indeed, it is a common practice, this man reports, for executives at his firm to send flurries of Emails at 7:00 PM in order to "leave traces" of their presence in the office. Another French professional confesses to "raising colleagues' eyebrows" when he leaves at 5:30 PM, a good ninety minutes before he ought to leave in the eyes of his vigilant peers. If these glimpses are any guide, French professionals only work late in the office in order to conform to working time expectations attached to their professional status. Unlike their American counterparts, they have little interest in outshining their peers in order to safeguard their feelings of self-worth.

These tantalizing hints point to potential differences between the ways in which American and French professional workers and managers manage the evening hours and organize the period between 5 PM and 9 PM. The only way of charting these practices and discerning possible cross-national divergences, however, is to undertake a systematic and controlled comparative inquiry into the temporal zoning practices of comparable American and Western European professionals and managers. Such a study could show whether and how particular societal contexts inflect these practices. Yet again, any effort to reach conclusions about the differences and commonalities between American and Western European professionals in terms of the evening zoning practices runs up against the lack of systematic comparative research drawing on qualitative data.

### **Hard Work Talk: Transatlantic Scripts and Discourses about Work Motivation**

This part of the inquiry compares and contrasts the communicative dimensions of American versus Western European managers' and professionals' working lives and private lives. Unlike the other components of the study, this strand focuses on a very specific form of occupational talk which turns up repeatedly in interview-based studies of professionals and managers on both side of the Atlantic, namely the "hard work talk" through which work devotion is rendered comprehensible, meaningful, and socially acceptable.

Dissecting the specificities of the justificatory frames and vocabularies (Swidler 2001, Boltanski & Thévenot 1999) which comparable American and Western European professionals employ to rationalize their tendency to work long and arduous hours, to accept challenging jobs, to take on difficult assignments, and potentially to sacrifice other parts of life for the sake of work or career success, this part of the study compares and contrasts the stable "scripts" which comparable American and Western managers and professionals articulate in their efforts to cast their work devotion in a favorable light. Here I take my cue from the sociological research tradition which treats such scripts as ritualistic formulations designed to appear convincing and

legitimate in the eyes of his or her intended audience. As analyzed through a sociological lens, such scripts can serve as a means of signaling the social desirability and worth of the behavior in question.<sup>7</sup> When tailored to convey a particular impression to the speaker actual or imaginary interlocutors, these scripts are a vital ingredient in the speaker's facework (Dominici & Littlejohn 2006).

Curiously, even though hard work talk makes an appearance in almost every interview-based study of managers and professionals, hard work talk *per se* has drawn almost no attention from culturally oriented sociologists, let alone culturally oriented sociologists oriented to cross-national comparisons. Yet a systematic and rigorously comparative study of the hard work talk articulated by comparable Americans and Western Europeans can yield valuable insights into the contrasting cultural menus (Lamont 1992) from which Americans and Western Europeans choose their occupational scripts. Such an inquiry promises to contribute to the project of comparative cultural sociology by identifying patterns of affinity and disaffinity for particular scripts, "cultural repertoires," and justificatory strategies (Lamont & Thévenot 2000: 4-5) among American versus Western European managers and professionals seeking to convey their reasons for applying themselves to work and devoting themselves to their jobs.

Tantalizing findings from single-country studies of managers and professionals also lend support to the hypothesis of a transatlantic divide in hard work talk. Enlisting responses to open-ended survey questions, the French sociologists Baudelot and Gollac show that the intrinsically appealing and stimulating aspects of their work figure very prominently in the discourses which French managers and professionals articulate about their work and their strong engagements with work (Baudelot & Gollac 2003). Extolling their work as "intellectually enriching," their respondents characterized their engagement with their working lives and their jobs as a "*métier passionnant*" (Baudelot & Gollac 2003: 143-4). One of the French professionals in Olivier Cousin's study explains that he could not possibly be expected to fulfill his professional obligations and do a creditable job unless he felt "passionate" about his work tasks and did not put any limits on the hours he worked (Cousin 2004: 232):

The goal, he said, isn't to create a definitive working time, but it is to do your work well, to be passionate about what one is doing.

As a result of his willingness to do put in as many hours as necessary to do his work "correctly," Thomas routinely winds up spending over sixty-five hours a week doing work, often skipping engagements with friends and family members in order to meet his firm's tight deadlines.

The French respondents are not the only Western Europeans who foreground their attachment to work content as the primary impetus to hard work. Such a cultural and discursive repertoire can be found in studies of Scandinavian professionals as well. The Norwegian IT professionals Rasmussen and Johansen interviewed in 1999 and 2000, not only worked long workdays, but approached their working life as an all-consuming "lifestyle" rather than an "8-4 job." For them, work life merits the bulk of their time and energy because it affords them the chance to exercise their creativity. Like the French, these Norwegians referenced the intrinsic interest of their work as the reason why they became so engrossed in their work and worked such comparatively long hours. As one of the male software programmers declared (Rasmussen & Johansen 2002: 32-6):

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<sup>7</sup> Sociological attempts to conceptualize and analyze such justificatory scripts from a sociological standpoint include Tilly 2008, 2006, Lamont 2000, Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, Chiapello & Boltanski 2006 [2001], Boltanski & Thévenot 1999, Wuthnow 1996: 95-98, Berger 1995, and Scott & Lyman 1968.

I work with what is basically my hobby. I am challenged every day.  
There hasn't been a single day when I haven't learned something new.  
It's very important for me to keep learning.

Another respondent appeared surprised by his own desire to stay in the office rather than spend time at home "watching TV":

There is not point in staying home to watch TV. After all, it's boring in comparison with what goes on here [in the office]. It's all upside down. One has more fun sitting here and working than going home and watching TV. It's like one looks forward to coming to work more than one looks forward to going home. It's all backwards when working is more entertaining than what one does at home.

Such accounts mirror those articulated by other managers and professionals from other Western European countries.

While similar discourses turn up in the interview-based studies of American managers and professionals, they are accompanied by quite different scripts relating to the motivational potency of extrinsic rewards (such as career success and money) and the importance of mobilizing one's energies. An excellent example of such a first-person account can be found in an interview excerpt from Philip, a hard-working hotel manager featured in Kathleen Gerson's book No Man's Land. When asked about his working habits, Phillip responds:

This is a hell of a lot of fun. I'm making an awful lot of money, and I'm learning a lot as I go. I work very long hours-seven days a week, ten to fourteen hours a day-and my wife might never get to see me. But every day is a challenge, and I am having a good time working very hard (Gerson 1994: 84).

Providing a double-barreled accounting of his commitment to hard work, Philip goes beyond the French and Norwegian managers and professionals in spontaneously bringing up money as an additional motivational impetus beyond the "fun" and "challenging" character of the work itself.

Other accounts foreground the mobilization of energy and the importance of drive as well as career success as inducements to hard work. Brian, one of the successful "utilitarian individualists" profiled in Habits of the Heart, brings up career success and money when he reflects on his meteoric rise to the executive ranks of his company. Brian, now on the other side of his midlife crises, admits to becoming "swept up in my own progress, in promotions and financial success." Adding yet another rationale for his attachment to hard work, Brian also remarks that he wanted to reach the point in his career where he could be sure that he was "performing at the absolute limits of my capability" (Bellah et al 1985: 68). In this interview Brian talks about the emotional gratifications he secures when he allows his work to fully mobilizes his energies.

This emphasis on fully mobilizing one's drive crops up in interviews with American women managers and professionals as well as American male professionals and managers. One of Blair-Loy's successful women executives recalled her intense involvement with her former job as general manager at a Fortune 500 company. Yvonne combines justificatory scripts relating to the character of the work itself with scripts relating to career success and her own "drive"(Blair-Loy 2003: 31):

I was there Christmas Eve day until 7 PM. I was usually there until 11:00. I worked all the time. I was very challenged and stimulated. I had a lot of drive and ambition...I got promoted very early...I always

found a lot of career success, a lot of attention and credibility. Like her male countrymen, Yvonne finds it hard to talk about her commitment to hard work without bolstering her justificatory repertoire with references to career success and the drive to succeed.

Western Europeans' reliance on talk about work's intrinsic qualities and Americans' openness to justificatory scripts revolving around drive and career success also becomes apparent in the one in-depth comparative study touching on occupational talk, namely Lamont's trailblazing comparative study Money, Morals, and Manners. This study uses interview material to explore the cultural categories French and American upper-middle class men employ to affirm their own worth and make judgments about the relative worth of others.

Drawing on her interviews with these two groups of men, Lamont concludes that the capacity and willingness to work hard and get ahead in one's career serves the American men as proof both of moral "purity" and personal worthiness (Lamont 1992: 40). For her French respondents, however, this willingness and capacity does not attest to moral character at all. In fact, among the "anti-work" Frenchmen at least, working oneself to the bone is considered an exercise in foolhardiness. In the opinion of these Parisian professionals the person who exerts himself at work and sweats blood for his employer is essentially donating his time and energy to an employer unworthy of his best efforts (Lamont 1992: 43-44).

Just as the French and the Americans appear to part company when it comes to the value and meaning of work effort, they go their separate ways when it comes to the import and meaning of career success and moneymaking. While the American respondents praise occupationally successful people as people with strong moral character, the French respondents dismiss career success as altogether irrelevant to character. Indeed, in the opinion of one of her French respondents, people who pursue career success to the exclusion of other life goals make themselves "completely ridiculous" (Lamont 1992: 65) by worshipping a false idol. While these comparative findings are not precisely on point, inasmuch as they do not probe the actual motivational scripts which Americans and Western Europeans use to discuss their attraction to hard work, they do provide further evidence of a divide in the occupational talk of Americans versus Western Europeans.

Given the findings from Lamont's comparative study in conjunction with the findings from the single-country studies of American and Western European managers and professionals, it is worth investigating the hard work talk of Americans and Western Europeans in an explicitly comparative way. Such a mapping these discursive patterns will not only provide insight into the ways in which Americans and Western Europeans talk about hard work, but will shed light on the role played by the "achievement ethic" (Weiss 1990, Williams Jr. 1964, McLelland 1961) and the "self-fulfillment ethic" (Wuthnow 1996, Hewlett 1989, Yankelovich 1981) in the lives and self-identities of comparable professionals in the United States and Western Europe.

According to many cultural sociologists, these two ethics continue to vie for the allegiance of managers and professionals in the United States and possibly beyond. The achievement ethic, associated with an emphasis on external indicators of achievement such as career advancement and money, has long been represented as a critical ingredient in the utilitarian individualism embraced by many American managers and professionals (Bellah et al 1985, Williams Jr. 1964). At the same time, however, other studies have portrayed a large subgroup of American managers and professionals as self-fulfillment oriented. This subgroup is preoccupied with the quest for self-fulfillment in their working lives as well as their private lives (Yankelovich 1981). In Yankelovich's study, a study drawing on interviews done in the late

1970s, we meet American managers and professionals who want to exert themselves in their jobs, but only if their jobs supply them with the self-fulfillment they crave. For these individuals, work effort can only be brought into being as the product of fulfilling and meaningful work (Yankelovich 1981: 151). Dedication to work cannot be coerced into being by the promise of mere external rewards (see also Wuthnow 1996). Beholden to the self-fulfillment ethic, these self-realizing managers and professionals seem to develop an ambivalent relationship to career success. At the extreme, they perceive hard work as so much unwarranted effort leading nowhere, a stance reminiscent of the stance expressed by Lamont's French "anti-work" professionals. The stance of the American self-fulfillment seekers seems to resemble the stance of the Western European professionals who talk about their work as an intrinsically gratifying activity worthy of their passionate commitment.

Without a systematic and explicitly comparative study drawing from on-depth interview material, however, it is impossible to say whether either of these ethics exerts a strong hold over either American or Western European professionals and managers or whether either group harbors a "symbolic preference" (Berger 1995) for either ethic. Because of the lack of such comparative research relating to hard work talk, we cannot say whether either ethic actually resonates more with comparable American or Western European professionals. Once we examine the actual scripts used in the hard work talk of comparable American and Western European managers and professionals, however, we can clear up this muddled picture. We can see how the two groups use the semantic resources of the two ethics to talk about their relationship to work tasks, work effort, career success, and other pertinent themes.

### **Experiences and Preferences of Matched Respondents: Work, Career, Partnering, and Family**

This component of the dissertation illuminates the ways in which matched American and Western European professionals approach their work, their occupational careers, their romantic lives, and their reproductive careers. It carries out this task by comparing and contrasting various facets of the work experiences and occupational trajectories of three groups of biographically matched male management consultants living and working in one of the countries under study. Relying on this rigorous case selection strategy, this study focuses on the working lives and private lives of male management consultants who are working or have worked in the same position, as a consulting associate, for the same Big Three elite global management consultancy, an organization with a globally uniform organizational culture. This part of the dissertation reveals how these three groups of matched male management consultants, men at exactly the same stage of structurally similar occupational careers, converge and diverge in several respects related to working life, private life, and family life. Making a contribution to the cross-national study of life trajectories and life architectures, a field dominated by very coarse-grained large-scale quantitative studies (Blossfeld 2009), this analysis taps both the interview data and the data drawn from life calendars to illuminate nationally patterns of work, career, and lifestyle profiles. This microsociological cross-national comparison enables us to grasp the significance of societal context as a determinant of life trajectories in a new way.

The section opens by comparing and contrasting the three groups of matched men in terms of their orientations to their work, their perceptions of the demands imposed by their jobs, and their approach to management consulting stint as an exploratory career stage tailored to their

own aspirations and career goals (Hall 2002: 69). It goes on to analyze the three groups' educational histories and their anticipations regarding their post-consulting career trajectories.

The section then turns its attention to respondents' expectations and aspirations relating to romantic relationships and childbearing. This part of the section pays particular attention to the profiles of the female romantic partners with which the partnered (male) respondents are romantically involved during their tenure at the consultancy. Adopting a "couple's eye" view of both occupational profiles and the childbearing aspirations, it charts the relationship of the respondents' occupational profiles and childbearing aspirations to the occupational profiles and childbearing aspirations of their romantic partners. This mapping exercise makes it possible to identify cross-national divergences relating to the kind and degree of alignment between the respondents' own "lifestyle preferences" (Hakim 2003) and the lifestyle preferences characteristic of their female romantic partners. Here we can see the complex linkages between the national context within which the respondent's work life and private life unfolds, the educational and occupational profile of his female partner, and the kinds of lifestyle preferences both of them entertain with respect to work, career, and childbearing. By discerning patterns with respect to the kinds and degrees of "alignment" between the male respondents' lifestyle preferences and the lifestyle preferences (Clarkberg & Merola 2003, Hakim 2003) of their female partners, women who vary in their own occupational trajectories and childbearing plans, it becomes possible to see where the "archetypal" work-family profiles for both the American and Western European groups diverge and where they converge.

### **Research Agenda and Contributions**

This dissertation draws on findings from an explicitly comparative case-based study grounded in an extensive body of interview data in order to explore the various ways in which American business professionals and their Western European counterparts engage with work, career, leisure, and family life. In comparing and contrasting the working lives and private lives of concrete American and Western European managers and professionals embedded in concrete life contexts, it identifies fundamental kinds of cross-national divergences in the workscapes which these men and women encounter in their objective situations and enact in their subjective dispositions. This dissertation, based on the results of systematic comparative research grounded in rich data relevant to the experiences of comparable individuals, makes it possible to unearth the societal roots of extreme work. It opens a new window onto the American and Western European workscapes and the ways in which these workscapes converge and diverge.



## **Chapter 2: Talk of Work: Divergent Repertoires in French, Norwegian, and American Justifications for Hard Work**

Interview-based and ethnographic studies of workers and workplaces feature many examples of discursive constructions relating to themes such as the significance of work tasks, the importance of having employment, the meaning of career success, and the motivations behind one's engagement with work. In this chapter I examine these many facets of what I call "occupational talk" in three different national contexts among professional and managerial workers employed in various organizational, occupational, and societal settings.

These examples of occupational talk can be classified and dissected along a variety of analytical dimensions. In terms of their content, instances of occupational talk typically belong to the broader category of evaluative accounts (Tilly 2006, Orbuch 1997, Scott & Lyman 1968). In giving these accounts, individuals typically seek to provide a convincing, defensible, and "self-congratulatory" explanation of their behavior and their manner of spending their life and time (Berger 1995: 44-48, 80, 100). They do so by aligning their work practices or orientations with socially acceptable and desirable patterns, and thereby signaling their affinity for these valued ways of acting and living. The resulting "vocabularies of motive" (Mills 1940) infuse their articulator's behavior with meaningfulness, acceptability, and even moral worthiness.

This task of justifying and rendering meaningful one's engagement with one's occupational life is often accomplished with the aid of stable formulations which vary relatively little from one enactment to the next. These stable formulations, variously labeled "scripts," "conventions," "repertoires," or "ritual vocabularies" (Swidler 2001: 53-56, Boltanski & Thévenot 1999, Wuthnow 1996) may be employed in a wide variety of forms and interactional contexts. Nevertheless, these scripts always play the same basic justificatory role. They serve to render the speaker's way of life justifiable, meaningful, and praiseworthy in her own eyes and the eyes of various audiences. At the same time, they implicitly establish some type of social relation, often between a social group with which the speaker identifies and other social groups (Tilly 2006, Scott & Lyman 1968).<sup>8</sup>

Such occupational talk scripts concerning figure particularly prominently in the commentaries of the managerial and professional workers employed in white-collar settings who treat their work as their primary "identity anchorage" (Thompson & Bunderson 2001). Framing their work as a critical and consequential "experiential realm" (Nippert-Eng 1995), many members of this group produce occupational talk both at work and outside the workplace.

The occupational talk produced by these managers and professionals provides a perfect opportunity to explore one of the classic issues central to the sociology of culture, namely the linkage between discursive cultural forms and the particular properties of the societal environments shaping these cultural forms. Unearthing the relationship between the specific form and content of occupational talk as formulated in particular scripts, this chapter links these scripts to the social and cultural characteristics of the societal environments which serve the scripts' articulators as their cultural reservoirs.

While giving us tantalizing glimpses into the occupational talk of managers and professionals, the sociology of culture has yet to tackle this issue directly. Existing studies of

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<sup>8</sup> To put it in interactional terms, when individuals engage in this talk, they do "facework." They craft signals of their worthiness and social acceptability tailored to what they think their audience expects and wants (Dominici & Littlejohn 2006, Lamont 2000, Goffman 1967).

managerial and professional work life and corporate culture only touch on occupational talk tangentially. As a result, these studies neglect to systematically explore the character, form, and content of the occupational talk that issues from the lips of managers and professionals. This chapter ventures into this terrain by focusing on the occupational talk produced by professional and managerial men working in the corporate world. It analyzes occupational talk as a set of discursive formulations with particular thematic structures forged with ritualized vocabularies (Swidler 2001).

Specifically, the chapter identifies and examines what I call "hard work talk," a particular species of occupational talk widespread within the male-dominated managerial and professional ranks of the business world. Hard work talk addresses the motivational aspect of work and constitute implicit answers to the questions "What are the reasons I work hard?," "Why am I working hard?," and "What motivates me to work hard?" These hard work formulations can incorporate both *first-order motivation scripts* adducing specific motivations (e.g. career success) and *second-order scripts* or glosses offering interpretations and specifications of these factors and their motivational roles.

Even a cursory reading of the numerous studies of the mostly male business professionals who populate the pages of organizational ethnographies and interview-based studies undertaken in white-collar workplaces (Roth 2006, Blair-Loy 2003, Rasmussen 2002, Fuchs Epstein 1999) makes the ubiquity of such scripts readily apparent. Hard work talk and the scripts which constitute it make an appearance in virtually all of the extant studies of managers and professionals toiling away in every corner of the corporate world. And yet, until the present study, hard work talk has yet to be explicitly formulated as an explicit object of sociological inquiry.

### **Exploring Cultural Divides in Occupational Talk**

For over twenty years, the purported cultural divide between American society and its continental European counterparts in regards to work culture has remained a staple of both popular writings (Rifkin 1994) and social science treatments of work patterns and family life (Martinelli 2007). Both social scientists and public commentators have drawn a sharp contrast between the work habits and orientations of allegedly work-crazed Americans and work-shy Europeans. This distinctively American embrace of ambition as an essential ingredient in upward mobility and its connection with both success and personal worthiness has been noted by Lipset, Lamont, Williams and many others who have sought to identify a specifically American kind of work ethic. In fact, Lipset identifies hard work as central to the "American Creed" but relatively peripheral to the creeds embraced by Europeans (Lipset 1996: 82). While much ink has been spilled on this transatlantic cultural divide, no comparative studies have sought to pinpoint both similarities and differences among comparable Americans and Europeans in regards to their understandings of work and the kinds of script they use to express these understandings.

This chapter draws on a cross-national comparison designed to address these comparative issues. The chapter examines the form and content of the hard work talk articulated by three sets of comparable professional men living and working in urban centers in France, Norway, and the United States: Paris, France, Oslo, Norway, and San Francisco, USA. It does so with an eye towards identifying the distinctive contribution of national-societal context as a factor shaping the hard work talk produced in the European setting as against the American setting.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Although particular cultural repertoires do not necessarily carry the same currency in every niche of the vast and variegated cultural space which forms the macrocultural context of a country like France or the United States,

This trio of countries, while sharing many societal and subsocietal features, nevertheless differ along a number of social, institutional and cultural dimensions which make them potential "revelatory cases" (Yin 1994) well-suited for a study of occupational talk among managers and professionals. Such a transatlantic comparison has long proven analytically fruitful, as the United States and continental European countries offer contrasting cultural environments which offer discrepant cultural repertoires to upper-middle class men (Lamont 1992) and strike many analysts as breeding grounds for contrasting work cultures (Rifkin 2004).

This three-way comparison reveals the precise contours of a cross-national divide in occupational talk by identifying specific first-order and second-order motivation scripts possible to draw connections between specific occupational scripts and various properties of the authors' societal environments. As the study shows, while some hard work scripts appear in the discourses of all three groups, the hard work talk of the American group assumes a strikingly distinctive form when juxtaposed with the hard work talk produced by the two European groups. By comparing the hard work scripts articulated by quasi-matched Americans, Frenchmen, and Norwegians, men who are all on their way to the very top of the occupational pyramid and the business world, the chapter unearths an important chasm between the script repertoires of the American respondents as compared with their French and Norwegian counterparts. While the French respondents, and, to an even greater extent, the Norwegian respondents carry out their justificatory labors with the aid of one particular script repertoire, a repertoire I dub in ideal-typical form the devotional-avocational repertoire. The Americans, however, less discriminating in their usage of hard work scripts than their French and Norwegian counterparts, add elements of an entirely different script repertoire which I label the overachievement repertoire. The gulf between these repertoires, as I show, emerges from deep-seated differences in the cultural environments of Western European societies such as France and Norway, on the one hand, and American society, on the other hand. Such a comparison enables us to better grasp the character of justificatory scripts and their relation to the social and cultural environments in which they emerge.

### **The Hard Work Scripts: An Overview**

Before delving into the intricacies of the various scripts under study and their distribution among the members of the three national groups, it is helpful to catalogue the overall distribution of scripts within the entire script space. When coded for hard work scripts, the entire corpus of data yielded three families of first-order scripts and an additional seven second-order specifications of these primary scripts. These first-order scripts are not distributed evenly among the three national groups. While those first-order scripts which thematize work content occur with roughly the same level of communicative intensity in the commentaries of the Americans and the two sets of Europeans, this is not the case with the other two families of first-order scripts. Based on the frequency of these first-order scripts and the degree of emphasis which they receive in their hard work commentaries, one could say with Goffman that the French and the Norwegians "undercommunicate" (Goffman 1973 [1959]) both the external motivation

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research such as Lamont's study demonstrates the analytic utility of approaching each group of respondents as more or less homogeneous units of comparison embedded in a relatively uniform sociocultural milieu. Therefore, for the purposes of this comparison, France, Norway, and the United States can be treated as more or less homogeneous macrocultural contexts.

scripts thematizing career success and the internal motivation scripts focusing on identity affirmation as a source of hard work motivation.

### **First-Order Scripts**

The spontaneous first-order scripts volunteered by the respondents fell into three primary categories. Moving left to right, they are the external motivations relating to work content, the external motivations relating to careers, and the internal motivations relating to identity and character.

It is important to note that these first-order scripts are all "self-regarding" scripts, inasmuch as they reference the worker himself as the most immediate beneficiary of his hard work. Thus, although there is no reason to think that the men in this study did not see their spouses and children (Orrange 2007, Gerson 1994), their employers, colleagues, and clients (Cooper 2000), or even their societies as ultimate beneficiaries of their hard work, they clearly saw themselves as the social actor with the most immediate and direct relationship to the hard work. It is important to note here that none of the respondents in this study tied their penchant for working hard directly to their family obligations (i.e. their love for their wife or children), their desire to pull their own weight among their work peers, or their desire to see their employer succeed in the marketplace. By contrast, all of the respondents provided self-regarding scripts which featured themselves as the immediate beneficiaries of their hard work.<sup>10</sup>

The external motivation scripts relating to work content include those scripts thematizing work tasks (I work hard because I enjoy my work tasks), those thematizing work responsibilities (I work hard because I enjoy my work responsibilities), and those referencing the social environment of work (I work hard because I like the people I work with). These scripts represent the penchant for hard work as the result of various characteristics of the content of the person's *work*. As we will see in the analysis, these three *external motivation* scripts find favor with the members of all three groups. Members of all three national groups availed themselves of the external motivation scripts singling out the motivational efficacy of work tasks and work content. If any script family straddled the transatlantic divide, it was this one.

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<sup>10</sup> Thus, even if this inventory omits the scripts offering family obligations or organizational loyalties as the primary motives behind hard work, it does not contradict the many other studies which feature these other-regarding scripts. While enormously valuable, this literature does not address the specific question posed in this chapter relating to the hard work scripts which these men use to describe their *immediate motives* for working hard as opposed to the ultimate beneficiaries of their hard work. For studies which feature accounts of the ultimate beneficiaries of hard work, see the large sociological literature on the "breadwinner" ethos among American males, and how this ethos ties identity to remunerative employment (see for example Gerson 2010, Orrange 2007, Cooper 2000, Gerson 1994).

<b><i>FIRST ORDER SCRIPTS</i></b> <b><u>AMERICANS</u></b>	<b>EXTERNAL MOTIVATIONS: TASKS (content)</b>  <b>Work tasks:</b> I work hard because I like the tasks that I perform.	<b>EXTERNAL MOTIVATIONS: CAREERS/MONEY</b>  <b>Career advancement:</b> I work hard to succeed in my job and advance my career.	<b>INTERNAL MOTIVATIONS: IDENTITIES (character)</b>  <b>Identity Affirmation:</b> I work hard to affirm who I am and to be true to myself.
<b><i>FIRST ORDER SCRIPTS</i></b> <b><u>FRENCH AND NORWEGIANS</u></b>	<b>EXTERNAL MOTIVATIONS: TASKS (content)</b>  <b>Work tasks:</b> I work hard because I like the tasks that I perform.	<b>external motivations: careers/money</b>	<b>internal motivations: identities</b>

Like the first set of external motivation scripts on the table's left-hand side, the middle column of the table lists the external motivation scripts that thematize external sources of work motivation outside the worker's personality. In this case, however, these motivations reference factors connected to the person's employment situation rather than his work situation. Someone who adduces these scripts talks about the motivational efficacy of career success and moneymaking as spurs to hard work. The two scripts which fall into this category are the "career advancement script" (I work hard because I want to advance in my career) and the "money-maximizing script" (I work hard because I want to make the most money possible). Contrasted with the external motivation scripts focusing on the work situation in the left-hand column, these external motivation scripts are not as evenly distributed across the three national groups. Instead, they turn up much more frequently within the commentaries of the American respondents than in the commentaries of either the French or the Norwegian respondents. Moreover, while they take center stage in the commentaries of the Americans, they play only bit parts in the occupational talk of the French and Norwegian respondents.

In the right-hand column, we find the two internal motivation scripts tracing work motivation to sources located within the worker's personality or psyche. Unlike those external motivation scripts which focus on the work situation, the internal motivation scripts rarely appear in the occupational talk of the French and Norwegian respondents. In fact, while they play a central role in the commentaries of the American respondents, they occupy a marginal position within the discourses of these two European groups, particularly the Norwegian group.

It is important to note at the outset that every one of the one hundred and one respondents enlists at least one hard work script and that all but six of the respondents used two or more scripts during the course of their interviews. Interestingly, the number of scripts appearing in the Americans' script repertoires typically exceed the number of scripts turning up in the repertoires of the French and Norwegian respondents. The typical member of these two groups employs an average of between two and three scripts. However, the typical member of the American group crowds his commentaries with an average of four scripts. Thus, the American respondents offer more varied rationales for their hard work and end up drawing from a greater assortment of script repertoires than their French and Norwegian counterparts, an assortment which includes several uniquely American scripts which point to a characteristically American form of engagement with working life and a characteristically American form of individualism.

## The Second-Order Scripts (Glosses)

Just as the open-ended questions in the first part of the interview elicited a diverse assortment of scripts spontaneously favored by the respondents, the more targeted follow-up questions included in the second part of the interview evoked the full spectrum of second-order scripts. These second-order scripts were associated *both* with the "first choice" first-order scripts *and* those first-order scripts which the respondent eschewed in his spontaneous commentaries. These specifications and interpretations of the first-order scripts assume a number of forms in the commentaries of the three sets of respondents. These forms can be seen in the following table:

<p><b>SECOND ORDER SCRIPTS</b> (<i>glosses of first-order scripts</i>)</p>	<p><b>Hard work worthy tasks = Rush:</b> My exciting tasks give me a rush from tackling challenges.</p>	<p><b>Career Success = Winning</b> I work hard to "win the game" because winning affirms my worth and status.</p>	<p><b>A Driven Person/Overachiever:</b> I work hard because I am someone who is driven to perform and succeed.</p>
<p><b><u>AMERICANS</u></b></p>	<p><b>EMOTIONAL GRATIFICATIONS</b></p>	<p>Winning is measured by money because money is an outward sign of my status that can be read by others.</p>	<p><b>A Slacker = Demobilization and Boredom:</b> I work hard because when I act like a slacker, I feel demobilized and this makes me bored and depressed.</p>
<p><b>SECOND ORDER SCRIPTS</b> (<i>glosses of first-order scripts</i>)</p>	<p><b>Hard work worthy tasks = Intellectual Development:</b> I work hard at my tasks because these tasks enable me to develop my intellectual capacities and potential.</p>	<p><b>Career Success = Getting More Fulfilling Work</b>  I need to succeed in my work so that I can get interesting work assignments and more control over my work situation.</p>	<p><b>A Developed/Realized Person:</b> I work hard because I am someone who is a fully realized individual with fully developed capacities.</p>
<p><b><u>FRENCH AND NORWEGIANS</u></b></p>	<p><b>INTELLECTUAL GRATIFICATIONS</b></p>	<p>The ability to choose interesting work assignments and exert control over my work situation are outward signs of my status that can be read by others.</p>	

A glance at this table makes it clear that, as compared with the two sets of European respondents, the Americans offer rather different interpretations of the each of the first-order scripts when prompted to address these motivational candidates. In the commentaries of the French respondents and the Norwegian respondents, when a work task is worthy of effort, it gets the adrenaline going and the blood pumping. In the hard work talk of the French and Norwegians, however, the tasks worthy of effort are those which help to develop intellectual and social capacities which would otherwise lie fallow. The prospect of success in one's career, for the French and Norwegian respondents, prompts one to work hard because it leads to more fulfilling work assignments and more autonomous work conditions. For the American respondents, however, the prospect of career success carries motivational efficacy because it promises to give one status and wealth. Achieving career success makes one a "winner" in the eyes of those who matter. Finally, the Americans applied a particular interpretative lens to the first-order scripts which touched on the theme of identity and the power of internal motivations. While the French and Norwegian counterparts framed these internal motivations as a matter of wanting to affirm

the identity of the *realized person*, the Americans interpreted these internal motivations as an outgrowth of the desire to affirm the identity of *the overachiever*.

### **The Hard Work Commentaries**

While this overview of scripts and script usage patterns helps to set the stage, to arrive at a more thorough understanding of these script profiles and patterns it is necessary to plumb the scripts' actual semantic content. Only through such an examination can we gain a better appreciation not only for the centrality and marginality of particular scripts, but also for the kinds of ritual vocabularies which organize the hard work commentaries of the French, Norwegian, and American respondents.

The following analytical section therefore illustrates these ritual vocabularies and lexical relations by presenting carefully chosen interview excerpts chosen to provide an exceptionally clear portrait of the ritual vocabularies organizing the occupational talk produced by the French, Norwegian, and American respondents. These excerpts have been carefully matched up against the larger body of talk in order to ensure that they faithfully exemplify the patterns characteristic of the corpus in its entirety. Further, in order to maximize the "biographical" comparability (Crompton & Birkelund 2000) of the scripts' authors, the section is divided up into four subsections, each of which presents interview material from individually matched respondents who approximate each other in terms of their educational, occupational, and sociodemographic profiles. Thus, the following three-way comparison juxtaposes interview excerpts from four trios each composed of a French respondent, a Norwegian respondent, and an American respondent.

As each set of these *illustrative trios* presents respondents in a different occupation or at a different phase of the career trajectory. By presenting trios drawn from diverse occupations and stages of the career trajectory, it becomes possible to appreciate the degree to which the hard work scripts are diffused within the three respondent groups and the extent to which the cross-national divergences assert themselves between members of different occupational groups and professionals at different stages of the career.

#### **Illustrative Trio 1: younger management consultants**

The members of the initial trio exemplify the pool of younger management consultants, as well as the wider pool of respondents, in terms of their script repertoires. All younger management consultants in their mid to late twenties in the launching phase of their careers, these three men have all followed very similar career trajectories. The Frenchman Marceau Bonnet, the Norwegian Henning Thorvaldsen, and the American Dan Kannon all entered the management consulting world in their late twenties as junior associates after excelling in their business studies at elite universities in their respective countries, where all three had earned an MBA or the equivalent postgraduate business degree. After landing their coveted consulting position in their elite management consultancies, they spent between two and four years working for the consultancy, rising to a level where they exercised managerial responsibilities and oversaw more junior consultants. Having proved themselves as capable professionals working in a very demanding field, all three men looked ahead to a bright professional future in the executive reaches of the business world.

While Marceau Bonnet, Henning Thorvaldsen, and Dan Kannon had all traveled along very similar educational and occupational paths, a comparison of the three men's' occupational talk brings to light stark differences in spontaneously articulated first-order hard work scripts. While all three men make extensive use of the external motivation scripts dealing with the work

situation, only the American Dan Kannon mixes both external motivation scripts relating to career success and internal motivation scripts relating to drive in his script repertoire. The two European men, by contrast, make do without these two scripts. Faithful to the external motivation script dealing with the work situation, they state their case without adducing any of the other hard work scripts. For both Marceau and Henning, the most important source of motivation stems from the intrinsically engrossing aspects of their work situation, particularly their work tasks.

In response to open-ended questions regarding their reasons for working hard, both Marceau Bonnet and Henning Thorvaldsen mention the importance of stimulating work tasks and work environments several times during this part of the interview. In response to the question "What do you like about your work?," Marceau expounds at length on the manifold gratifications he secures from his rewarding work situation:

**Interviewer:** What do you like about your work?

**Marceau Bonnet:** I think there are several things that are really great about the job, it's a position where you get to learn the fundamentals of business, it's really a two-three year learning process. You get to learn what matters in business, you get a sense of the business culture. So that's one thing, another thing is that *the work is very intellectually stimulating*, it's fun to dig into the analytics of the business, you need to research various issues, this is all very stimulating I would say.

As we can see from this excerpt, when Marceau weighs the motive forces behind his work engagement, he dwells at length on the role of interesting and stimulating work tasks. Thus, none of the open-ended questions about work motivation yield answers referencing either external motivation scripts relating to his employment situation or internal motivation scripts thematizing drive. Practically echoing Marceau, Henning attributes his willingness to exert himself to the intrinsic interest of the work tasks he performs and the fact that these work tasks help him to develop his capacities. It is for this reason that work deserves his dedication and effort:

**Interviewer:** So what leads you to work hard?

**Henning Thorvaldsen:** Well, the significance of my job right now is a little like the essence of my education; it helps me to learn and evolve as a worker and a person. This is why my work is an important part of my life.

In these responses to open-ended questions about work motivation in general, we can see how Marceau and Henning employ the external motivation scripts dealing with the work situation. This emphasis on work tasks comes at the expense of any references to career advancement and moneymaking, as well as personality characteristics such as drive and an aversion to idleness. Thus, within the commentaries of the two Europeans, the internal motivation scripts and the external motivation scripts dealing with the employment situation are both conspicuous in their absence.

Both of these scripts and the ritual vocabularies which go along with them turn up in the hard work talk articulated by the American Dan Kannon, however. When asked the open-ended questions, "Why do you work hard?" and "What are the things which make you work hard,?" Dan distinguishes himself from Marceau and Henning by supplementing the external motivation scripts relating to the work situation with occupational talk incorporating the other two families of hard work scripts. Dan stands apart from his two European counterparts when he talks about how he works himself to the bone because of the financial and status "payoffs" offered by his employment situation. Dan's hard work commentaries convey the message that it is the "value



proposition" represented by a job with an elite consultancy rather than the intrinsic rewards of the job's tasks which make the job's grueling seventy hour workweeks, unpredictable work hours, and incessant travel "worth it." This desire capture this occupational and financial "payoff" is the fuel that sustains his work effort and commitment. As Dan points out in beginning of the interview:

**Interviewer:** So what do you think about how hard you work now?

**Dan Kannon:** I knew [the job] would be hard. I knew there would be a payoff if I worked hard. I knew that at some point, I probably wouldn't like how hard it would be. But when I got an offer with one of the ones that I considered in the elite, it never occurred to me to turn it down. I thought about some of the tradeoffs and I knew that I was signing up for something that might be very hard but the opportunity seemed so attractive. The company had a great reputation and a lot of prestige. And the amount of the starting offer was more money than I've ever made in my life by a lot.

Rather than disavowing the motivational efficacy of money in the same way as Marceau, Dan dwells on his outsize salary and how much it means to him. He observes that he is "thrilled" to get the large paycheck which comes with his job. Reflecting on the motivational role of money, he characterizes it as one of his "prime drivers." Though he earns a salary approaching \$250,000, Dan admits to worries and feelings of inferiority about the size of his paycheck, particularly in light of the salaries some of his peers earn. He wonders aloud whether one of his friends, a consultant turned private equity banker who earned roughly \$1 million the previous year, secretly scoffs at his measly salary.

An analogous cross-national divergence appears with regard to the responses prompted by the more targeted questions which present the respondents with prespecified motivational candidates. For example, when asked to comment on the import of work tasks as sources of work motivation, Marceau Bonnet talks at length about the central role of "learning" as a goad to work effort:

**Interviewer:** So what is it about your tasks that makes you work hard?

**Marceau Bonnet:** What you do at work, the content of what you do, matters a lot, but also you have to learn a lot at work. I would quit my job tomorrow morning if I stopped learning. If I were the minister of industry, for example, I would work eight days a week because I would be learning so much. Then my eighth day would be spent doing something enriching.

Like his French counterpart, Henning Thorvaldsen also discusses the lure of learning and "developing one's intellectual and social capacities" as a powerful goad to hard work and the primary reason why he feels so strongly about the quality of his work tasks. When asked about the importance of career success, both men explain that such success is only important to the extent that it leads to more opportunities to engage in stimulating work down the line. In and of itself, the prospect of career success carries little motivational efficacy.

While the two European men answer the targeted questions by adducing the second-order scripts dealing with the intellectual merits of their work and the connection between stimulating tasks and self-development, the American Dan Kannon brings to bear rather different second-order scripts. First, when he addresses the motivating aspects of the work content, he focuses on the "adrenaline rush." Second, unlike his French and Norwegian counterpart, when he addresses the theme of career success he stresses the significance of "boosting" his "stock" and "coming out ahead" in the competition to gain a lucrative and prestigious foothold in the upper reaches of

the business world. Even if he got to work on the exact same assignments, there was no way, he announces, that he would work as hard "for a less prestigious firm." Third, the seductive prospect of a high-flying career exerts its motivational pull because of its effectiveness as a conveyer of status in the eyes of peers, family, and the wider world rather than its connection to securing stimulating work assignments in the future.

When addressing internal motivations for working hard, Dan articulates another uniquely American second-order script which differentiates him from Marceau and Henning. When discussing the lack of exciting and demanding work and how it effects his work motivation, he dwells at length on the *psychic dangers of a demobilization* which strikes when he finds work insufficiently demanding. He observes that a less demanding job which fails to absorb his plentiful energies would actually imperil his work motivation. One of the reasons why he chose the demanding field of management consulting, he explains, is because a less demanding line of work would leave him with an excessive supply of useless and demobilizing leisure time. Pondering a hypothetical scenario about a "potential life" (Hochschild 1997) where he would work at a substantially less demanding job, Dan speculates about the unhappy fate of his work ethic:

**Interviewer:** So lets construct a hypothetical scenario, if you were working at Palmolive or wherever and you were working your pretty relaxed forty hour weeks, how do you think this would affect your motivation to work hard?

**Dan Kannon:** That's the great fear, is that I were in a normal job with a normal workload, it would leave me less motivated. The experience of working hard is one of the things I like about this job. It ignites my fire.

Moreover, he would not know what to do with this free time. He would fall into a "couch potato existence," he imagines, which would leave him bored and listless and ultimately erode his self-esteem. Had he chosen a normal 9-5 job which did not impose such heavy demands on his time and energy, he would have inflicted boredom on himself and reduced his overall well-being. To make his point Dan conjures up a scenario involving copious amounts of TV watching and wasted time:

**Dan Kannon:** Maybe I'd watch more TV. Maybe what I'd do is watch more baseball on TV and eat more chips and that would be unsatisfying and I'd feel pretty bad about that. Now, I feel like I spend my free time really well now, but the thing is it's partially because I work so hard at my job. Otherwise, I might spend my free time just napping on the couch. So the value of the free time I'd get back wouldn't compensate for my loss of perceived stature and recognition.

The job of the management consultant serves Dan as an antidote to a potentially empty and boredom-inducing life outside work, as well as the royal road to the highly coveted goals of wealth, stature, and recognition. Here Dan invokes a second-order script revolving around demobilization, a script quite foreign to both Marceau and Henning.

### **Illustrative Trio 2: former consultants in the establishment phase**

The second trio of illustrative respondents exemplifies the scripts characteristic of the national groups, but does so by presenting excerpts from interviews with former management consultants in the next phase of the career trajectory. Unlike the first trio of younger management consultants in their mid to late twenties in the launching phase of their careers, these more seasoned professionals had moved from management consulting into executive positions within the strategy units of large and well-established companies. All three men had made this switch

after enduring years of grueling and unpredictable hours, arduous assignments, and incessant business travel as project managers for elite management consultancies. In this capacity they oversaw projects worth millions of dollars, euros, or Norwegian kroner, and dealt with heavy demands on their time and energy imposed by clients, partners, and peers.

This second group is representative of their professional peers within the larger pool of respondents. The Frenchman Stéphane Marlon, the Norwegian Einar Nyborg, and the American Sam King resembled each other in terms of their occupational trajectories. Each man had acquired a business-related degree from a prestigious educational institution and begun his post-MBA career in a prestigious management consultancy. Each man had proven himself as a capable professional able to deal with a myriad of challenges. Stéphane secured a management position at a large bank, while Einar went to work for a Scandinavian finance firm as a senior analyst. Sam parlayed his five years' worth of experience as a management consultant into a high-level strategy position within a multinational software company.

An examination of the spontaneously articulated first-order hard work scripts produced by this trio of respondents discloses the same cross-national divergence which appears in the spontaneously articulated hard work scripts produced by the previous trio. As in the case of the previous trio, neither the external motivation scripts thematizing the employment situation nor the internal motivation scripts thematizing drive and boredom make it into the commentaries of Stéphane or Einar. As in the case of the previous trio, the two European men do not bother to utilize either the external motivation scripts thematizing the employment situation nor the internal motivation scripts thematizing drive and boredom, scripts which surface repeatedly in the hard work talk of their American counterpart.

While the Europeans Stéphane and Einar expound on the motivational potency of interesting work tasks and a stimulating work environment, avoiding any mention of moneymaking, career success, drive or boredom, the American Sam King follows in his countryman's footsteps by demonstrating a comfort and facility with these hard work scripts entirely foreign to his two European counterparts. Just as Dan Kannon distances himself from his French and Norwegian peers through his use of external motivation scripts relating to his employment situation and internal motivation scripts dealing with drive, so does Sam King. The following exchange illustrates Stéphane's comfort and fluency with the hard work script thematizing work tasks and work content:

**Interviewer:** So why is it that you work so hard?

**Stéphane Marlon:** There is never the idea that I will be at the office when I really want to be at home. If I am in the office, it is because I want to be there because I enjoy what I do. I want to do the tasks which make me feel good. That is why I am working so hard at the job that I have today.

Like the Frenchman Stéphane, the Norwegian consultant turned financial analyst Einar also enlists the work task script in order to account for his proclivity for hard work. Einar proclaims that there is "nothing more motivating than enjoyable work" and the "most important thing at work is to have fun." Moreover, he would be willing to work for much less money, as long as the firm could guarantee the stimulating character of his work tasks and projects. As for his countryman Henning, for Einar the intrinsic interest of the work situation is what makes it worthy of his unbounded effort and commitment.

The hard work talk of Sam King present a stark contrast to the commentaries of Stéphane and Einar, as the scripts which do the most justificatory work in his commentaries are those thematizing career, moneymaking, and drive. Unlike the hard work talk of European

counterparts, Sam King's hard work talk overflows with references to career success and money as the rewards playing the role of motivators and sustaining his habit of working long and arduous hours. During his long stint in management consulting Sam had regularly labored at the client's site at "three o'clock in the morning putting together a PowerPoint presentation," even when "everybody else had given up a long time ago and had gone home." Even though five years' worth of these 16 hour workdays and incessant travel took a substantial physical and mental toll, he felt fortunate that this job had taught him "what it takes to succeed in the business world" and had "snapped" him "into shape."

Unlike both Stéphane and Einar, Sam traces his intense desire to work hard to his insatiable hunger for career success and the money which comes in the wake of such success:

**Interviewer:** So what led you to work so hard as a consultant?

**Sam King:** My feeling on consulting was, if I worked 80 hours a week, I would advance my career at twice the speed. So this is why I was the first one there in the morning, and the last one there at night, for weeks on end.

Moreover, like several other Americans and unlike the two Europeans, Sam King expresses a willingness to gut out unappealing projects and uninteresting tasks so that he can reap the economic rewards which go to the person who excels at his job. He confesses that he will "eat a lot of crap" as long as he is "paid well."

**Interviewer:** So what is it that makes you such a hard worker?

**Sam King:** It is very important to me to always advance my career, get more recognition, and take a step forward. If I slacked off right now at my current job, today and just kind of coasted a little bit, it would take away the shine that I have right now at my job, which means it takes away the opportunity to move up eventually, or move somewhere else into a great role somewhere else in the business world. So, I'm more than willing to pay up now, and get the reward later.

At the same time, Sam was someone who acted at the behest of a powerful drive to succeed. At each stage of his education and professional career he felt "compelled to push with all my might" in order to reach his ambitious goals. As a junior management consultant working side by side with other ambitious people, Sam was happy to have the reputation as "the burner" and the "hardcore worker" among his hardworking peers and colleagues. Sam was someone who, in his own words, liked to "do things to death," whatever the context, circumstances, or task. This drive to succeed was not of recent provenance. He could trace this longstanding proclivity for "burning hard" all the way back to his formative experiences in grade school through his four jobs, through two years of business school and four years of college.

Just as Stéphane and Einar occupy one side of this divide in first-order scripts while Sam occupies the other side, the same chasm separates Sam from his French and Norwegian counterparts with respect to second-order scripts. The cross-national divergence which appeared with regard to the responses prompted by the open-ended questions reappears with regard to the more targeted questions presenting respondents with each of the motivational candidates anchoring the first-order scripts.

Deploying much the same assortment of second-order scripts as his French compatriot Marceau, Stéphane enlists characteristically European interpretations of the various first-order scripts. When he comments on the motivating power of work content, he dwells on the motivational efficacy of intellectually engaging tasks conducive to his professional and personal self-development. Reflecting on his proclivity for working long and arduous hours, Stéphane concludes that he only keeps such long hours and expends such effort because of the "learning

potential" supplied by the "intellectually rich" work projects. In articulating this connection, Stéphane focuses on the character of his work tasks and work environment. It is only because it makes him "feel good" to work on intellectually stimulating tasks that he is willing to toil in the office seventy hours a week. Ending his remarks on an emphatic note, he proclaims "even when I am working thirteen hours a day, when I work on something *really intellectually engaging*, I feel like I could go on forever." The importance of self-development also draws an emphatic commentary from Stéphane when he answers the targeted questions specifying internal motivations for working hard:

**Interviewer:** You mentioned that you also work hard because you want to be a certain kind of person. How would you describe the kind of person you want to be in your work?

**Stéphane Marlon:** I want to be the kind of person who has accomplished myself as fully as possible both personally and professionally. This is one of the reasons why I work so hard at this job.

Like the second-order commentary proffered by Marceau, Stéphane's second-order remarks feature many references to self-development through work. When addressing the role of internal motivations, Stéphane speaks about his strong desire to develop those intellectual and social skills which blossom most fully in and through his challenging work. These second-order scripts also turn up in the observations of his Norwegian counterpart Einar. Einar gladly fills his twelve-hour days with work because he has a hard time saying no to tasks which he finds "intellectually challenging and engaging [*givende*]." For him, as for other Norwegians, career success only matters inasmuch as it creates the possibility for more intellectually enriching work down the line. Like the other Norwegians, Einar is intent on avoiding the grim fate awaiting individuals who wind up doing the same tasks over and over again. If this fate did befall him, he would wind up "dead of boredom." Finally, when characterizing his internal motivations, Einar talks about hard work as a means of realizing his latent intellectual, emotional, and social capacities and becoming a fully realized person.

While the two European men answer the targeted questions by adducing the second-order scripts showcasing the intellectual merits of their work and the connection between stimulating tasks and self-development, the American Sam King brings to bear rather different second-order scripts. First, like his countryman Dan Kannon, Sam King zeroes in on the excitement he derives from his work as a high-flying business professional when he offers his gloss of the external motivation script connected to work content. He has no use for scripts thematizing intellectual self-development in his hard work talk. At the same time, he offers a uniquely American interpretation of career success as akin to a kind of "winning." Further, he likens the appetite for such success to hunger for victory in a competition:

**Interviewer:** And yet you have chosen a line of work that is very difficult, in terms of pressure and hours. What draws you to this kind of work?

**Sam King:** One thing I like to think about myself is that I've always been kind of hungry, and that's what has motivated me to work harder. *I want to win the game and the main I measure winning is how much money I get out of my job.* And I'm not ashamed of that. It always comes back to the money. I'm always benchmarking myself against my peers in terms of who is making more money and who has reached the highest level. And so it always comes back to the money. At the end of the day, that's my primary motivator.

In Sam's hard work talk the symbolic rewards of a successful high-income career come to the fore as a critical impetus to hard work. But these monetary rewards, it is essential to note, are themselves symbolic in character. By earning a high salary, he is making a statement about where he stands both within his employing organization and vis-à-vis his peers and competitors. Sam works hard to maximize his income, because by maximizing this income he can win respect from those who matter and come out ahead in the competition for status. Thus, moneymaking exercises its motivational potency because of its connection to status rather than material comfort.

Finally, Sam uses two characteristically American second-order scripts as glosses for the first-order identity script relating to internal motivations for working hard. When Sam discusses his reasons for working hard, he brings into play the internal script which thematizes his drive to succeed. When asked "What kind of person do you think want to be in your working life?," Sam describes himself as an "overachiever" who feels compelled to work hard by virtue of his personality. Further, he identifies this "need" to work hard as a prominent aspect of the "American spirit," an ethic he shared with the equally driven colleagues working in his firm:

**Interviewer:** While you were in the second job, did you work as hard as you did in the first job?

**Sam King:** Yeah, but only *because that's my personality*, it wasn't the company that inspired that effort. I think a lot of the amount that we work is driven by the need for personal accomplishment. I picked a company which matched my personality. It's an extreme of the American spirit here, it's like "we work hard." I think *we've got a personality type here that's pretty driven*. We all worked hard in school even before we started our careers.

Unlike his French counterpart Vallois and his Norwegian counterpart Leif, Sam attributes his penchant for working hard to a longstanding work ethic rooted in his personality. For this American man, the propensity to work hard represents a force whose strength does not fluctuate, no matter the character of his work assignments or work environment. Sam is someone who cannot help working hard, regardless of his work tasks, work environment, and work responsibilities.

Just as he cannot deny his inner drive and his identity as an overachiever, Sam cannot stomach the thought of easing up on work. Any attempt to "slack off" would compromise his identity as an overachiever and lead to a demoralizing state of demobilization. Sam recalls several periods in his life during which he experienced this state of demobilization precisely because he was not properly engrossed in an all-consuming job. In his long and detailed life history, Sam bemoans the twin afflictions of boredom and depression which inevitably ensue when he eases up at work and gives up on his identity as an overachiever:

**Interviewer:** You talk a lot about your own tendencies to work hard, so what would happen if you didn't work hard?

**Sam King:** It's always very conscious to me, that, I shouldn't slack off at work because it will make me miserable. I have gone through periods of my life where I worked in jobs which did not get my juices going and I became kind of lazy. I quickly found out then that laziness leads to boredom and boredom leads to depression. When I lapsed from time to time, like, later in my career, my first job out of undergrad, where I was in the factory in Florida, I didn't work hard at that job, and that's when I sort of became anti-social, and I just crept away to the apartment after work, and I never really went out, and I was sort of gloomy. When

I think back to those relapses, I realized that they happened because I was not working hard and I was being lazy at work and not trying to improve my situation. *This was what led me to become bored and then depressed.*

For him, hard work is represented not only as the preferred means to achieve career success, but also as the best means of shielding himself against the threat of becoming a demobilized and demoralized slacker out of touch with his true self.

### **Illustrative Trio 3: corporate lawyers**

In order to demonstrate that the scripts under study are not confined to consultants and business executives, this section charts the patterns of script usage among an illustrative trio of corporate lawyers representative of the larger subgroup of lawyers as well as the entire pool of respondents. Like the second trio of business executives, these lawyers have progressed beyond the launching phase of their professional careers. After excelling in their legal studies, Marcel Lasalle (French), Erling Jæger (Norwegian), and Matt Smith (American) had all worked as corporate attorneys in top-flight law firms in their respective countries. In their mid to late thirties at the time of the interview, these men had spent between five and seven years building their reputation as competent and fearless litigators at some of their nation's top corporate law firms, where all three specialized in banking and securities law, one of the most prestigious and demanding specialties within the entire legal profession. During the year of their interview, both Marcel and Erling took home the equivalent of \$180,000 in their own currencies, while Matt earned an income of \$230,000.

Here again, it is impossible to ignore the ways in which the first-order script repertoires of the two Europeans diverge from the first-order script repertoire of their American counterpart. While all three men draw extensively on external motivation scripts dealing with work tasks and work content, only the American Matt Smith augments his script repertoire with both external motivation scripts relating to career success and internal motivation scripts relating to drive. As was the case in the previous trios, these scripts do not turn up in the spontaneous commentaries of the two European men.

When asked why they work hard, both Marcel and Erling spontaneously volunteer replies incorporating the popular external motivation scripts which focus on work tasks and work content. Marcel calls his work tasks "inspirational," and observes that he would be happy to continue working twelve hour days throughout his career if he could count on such engrossing tasks. Erling, the Norwegian member of this trio, relies entirely on the external motivation scripts we have come to expect from the Norwegians, particularly the script which highlights the leisure-like aspects of work as the most potent motivational factors inciting him to work hard. He attributes his habit of working 12 and 13 hour days to the fact that he finds his work as an attorney "incredibly fun" [*fryktelig morsomt*]. These days are only tolerable, he feels, because his work really amounts to his "hobby." In his view, nothing can substitute for the motivational impetus he receives when he is "having fun at work" and having "tasks that I enjoy." In these formulations work has been defined as a particularly fulfilling and enriching form of play, an avocation or hobby enjoyable for its own sake. For Erling, it is only when there is a lack of intellectually stimulating assignments that boredom becomes a real possibility.

Matt, the American member of the trio, also makes extensive use of the external motivation scripts so popular among his European counterparts. During his first years as a litigator he was surprised to find that he enjoyed the thrust and parry of litigation to the point where he would lose track of time and become completely engrossed in his work for months on

end. At the same time, however, Matt explains that his desire to maximize his earnings also plays an important role in sustaining his motivation to endure the long hours, irritating clients, and often tedious assignments. In acknowledging this element, Matt confesses that he would find it hard to remain motivated if the company cut his pay significantly. In his comments Matt represents his interest in maintaining a high income as a critical ingredient in nourishing his motivation for hard work.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me why do you work these kinds of hours here?

**Matt Smith:** Money is definitely a big reason why I went into corporate law and why I'm willing to work the kinds of hours necessary to make a career here in this firm.

As this commentary makes apparent, Matt leaves room for the external motivation script connected to career success and moneymaking in his repertoire of first-order hard work scripts. As we can see, like other American members of the illustrative trios, Matt stands apart from his European counterparts Marcel and Erling when he uses the first-order scripts besides those relating to the content of his work.

The cross-national divergence between Marcel and Einar on one side and Matt on the other side is also visible with respect to the responses prompted by the more targeted questions regarding the role played by prespecified motivational factors. For example, when invited to comment on the reasons why he finds his work tasks so motivating, Marcel echoes his French and Norwegian counterparts and links the motivating potential of work tasks to their potential as important sources of intellectual self-development and important catalysts to professional learning. His second-order scripts focus on the role of intellectually engaging tasks as catalysts for self-development. Relying on a characteristically effusive French ritual vocabulary, he hails his work's developmental potential as a means of "self-completion":

**Interviewer:** What is it about your work tasks that makes you want to work hard?

**Marcel Lasalle:** I like to work hard when I am learning things that I don't already know, learning new skills and competencies [*savoir faire*] that I don't already have in my professional experience. Second, I am looking to complete myself in my work, to make myself more accomplished by doing things that I like, that challenge me, that push me, that make me progress. This job completes me [*m'accomplir*]. Today I work hard in a job that I adore and that fulfills me.

Marcel amplifies this commentary by confessing that he "wouldn't feel good" about himself if he didn't work hard. If he started easing up at work, he asserts, he would forgo the opportunity to develop his intellectual capacities to their "fullest extent." Interestingly, when addressing the role of money and salary, Marcel does admit that the desire for a high income spurs him to work hard. However, he explains that this high income is only important to him because it serves as a means through which he can underwrite a comfortable standard of living for himself and his family. In virtually the same breath he dismisses the intrinsic importance of "becoming a leader or climbing up the corporate ladder." Career advancement, in his opinion, is really only a worthwhile and motivationally efficacious goal if it "opens the door to more interesting work" down the line. Like Marcel Einar also explains the motivational efficacy of worthy work as a result of its potential as a source of intellectual stimulation and self-development. He repeats the standard European answer to questions about the import of career advancement as well, emphasizing its role as a means to securing interesting work assignments in the future.

As we have come to expect, Matt Smith fields these questions with a rather different assortment of second-order scripts. When addressing the motivational potential of engaging work



tasks, Matt cites the "adrenaline rush" he experiences while working seventy and eighty hours weeks in order to prevail in an all-consuming legal battle:

**Interviewer:** How do engaging work tasks help you to stay motivated so that you can give work your all?

**Matt Smith:** I actually don't have much trouble working really long hours, particularly *when the work is exciting. In the heat of the battle there's just so much adrenaline over such an extended period of time.* That's why it's easy for the work to really take over your life [for long stretches of time].

Like the other American respondents, Matt offers an interpretation of the external motivation script thematizing work which highlights the emotionally energizing aspects of the work rather than its character as a source of intellectual gratification. Matt also articulates characteristically American second-order scripts when weighing the motivational potency of career success and moneymaking. Sounding a slightly sheepish note, Matt admits that he is susceptible to the lure of money. His appetite for money has to do partly with concerns about economic security. But it also emanates from his desire to signal a certain socioeconomic status to his wealthy friends and neighbors, as he confides:

**Interviewer:** What are your feelings about money in relation to working hard?

**Matt Smith:** I did choose this demanding job because I knew I could earn a lot of money in it. Money is key for me. This is something I've realized about myself. I hate to say it, but the more money I earn, the better I feel about myself - 2x is always better than x as far as money goes. I've also realized that there's some status element to it, my wife and I live in a very materialistic area [the San Francisco Bay Area], and we're surrounded by many educated and wealthy people.

In answering the targeted questions, Matt also produces several well-elaborated second-order scripts concerning his drive and his aversion to excessive leisure. First, when asked to characterize himself in relation to work, he applies the popular term "Type-A personality" to describe his orientation to work. He also supplies an elaborate commentary on the theme of excessive leisure and demobilization so popular among the American respondents. Lamenting the demoralizing and demobilizing effects of an unwanted reduction in his workload, he recounts the feelings of "boredom" which marred his work life whenever he could not reach his billing threshold. Using the same second-order script as his countrymen, Matt blamed short working hours for a falloff in his work motivation and a precipitous drop in his overall well-being.

**Interviewer:** If the firm offered to pay you your current salary but asked you to work 30 hours a week how would this affect your work motivation and how would you feel about yourself?

**Matt Smith:** *I'd be bored, I gotta tell you. Since I arrived here in San Francisco there have been slow times here where I've just been bored, for me to bill 1900 hours, that's less than a forty-hour workweek of billing, it gets boring and I don't feel good about myself when this happens. I start to wonder whether I'm really such an overachiever after all.*

Thus, for Matt as for the other Americans, keeping his work hours high is indispensable both as a means of sustaining his motivation to continue working hard and as a means of sustaining his conception of himself as an "overachiever."

#### **Trio 4: engineering managers and technical consultants**

This final illustrative trio of respondents all work in the fields of engineering, engineering management, and technical consulting. Vallois Sauville (French), Leif Halvorsen (Norwegian), and Chuck Brown (American), all men in their early to mid thirties, hold postgraduate engineering or technical degrees from well-regarded institutions and have amassed extensive experience on both the technical and management sides of the high-tech industry. At the time of the interview, each man works demanding but not extreme workweeks in their respective companies. As with the other trios, the American member of the trio (Chuck Brown) brought home somewhat more income and paid somewhat less of his income in taxes than his European counterparts.

As was the case among the members of the preceding trios, the American Chuck Brown is the sole member of the trio enamored of the first-order scripts thematizing motivational sources other than work content. By contrast, both the Frenchman Vallois Sauville and the Norwegian Leif Halvorsen have little use for either the first-order scripts dealing with career success or those dealing with inner drive. Like their countrymen, they depend exclusively on the external motivation scripts which represent the motivation to work hard as contingent on work tasks and work content alone. Long workdays and frequent travel do not bother Vallois, as long as he can always "look forward to great projects." Saying much the same thing, Leif can endure the unpredictability of a work schedule designed to accommodate his clients as long as he knows that they will continue to present him with challenging assignments which he finds "engaging and interesting." By contrast, the American Chuck Brown implicates not only his interesting work assignments, but his interest in "getting ahead in my career" and his desire to affirm the identity of someone who "kicks butt" at work as factors fueling his motivation to work hard. He also emphasizes the importance of his high salary. Without such a high salary, he explains, he just "wouldn't be able to muster this kind of energy for work." Finally, Chuck makes use of the internal motivation scripts absent in the commentaries of Vallois and Leif, scripts concerning the importance of hard work as a way of maintaining one's sense of self. Thus, whereas the Vallois and Leif both dwell at length on the singular motivational role played by work content, the American Chuck Brown allows for a wider variety of motivational factors and draws on a wider variety of first-order scripts as a result.

Chuck Brown's distinctiveness relative to his European counterparts also surfaces with respect to the second-order scripts produced in response to the targeted questions. An examination of these responses reveals the same justificatory gulf which we encountered with regard to the previous three illustrative trios of respondents. Again, the Frenchman and the Norwegian interpret the three first-order scripts in ways which foreground the indispensability of demanding but intellectually stimulating work as a catalyst for self-development. Vallois offers the response "I am always seeking to develop myself, to augment my intellectual and technical capabilities" when asked "What is it about interesting tasks that keeps you motivated to work hard?" Leif also leans heavily on this self-development script. In response to the same question Leif repeatedly and emphatically highlights his desire for work which can help him "realize" himself. Repeatedly extolling his work as "rich in learning" [*lærerikt*], he emphasizes the motivational power of interesting assignments and the motivational void created by dull work tasks:

**Interviewer:** So what do you find so compelling about engaging tasks?

**Leif Halvorsen:** As long as I feel that I'm working with something intellectually exciting, I don't feel that I'm sacrificing so much when I work a lot. If it's

professionally intriguing and fun, then sixty hours per week is about right, but if it's boring work, and you feel like Charlie Chaplin on the assembly line [in the movie *Modern Times*], then twenty hours per week is too much. Personally, I have a very strong desire to make sure that I remain passionate about what I'm doing from a professional perspective and that I'm working with intellectually [faglig] exciting stuff. *It's about burning for something intellectually fulfilling.*

When asked about the motivational role of career success and money, Leif answers that he enjoys getting a decent salary, but that he would be willing to work hard, whatever his pay. Unlike the American respondents, Leif does not speak of his interest in maximizing his income as the American respondents. Rather, he aspires to earn an amount adequate to fulfill his material desires and the material desires of his family. A decent-sized paycheck only matters to him because it makes it possible to provide for himself and his family and build a "good economic foundation." In order to build such a foundation, he explains, one has to be willing to often work more than eight hours a day. In the same way, when asked about the role of money, Vallois talks about the various ways in which his relatively high income makes life easier and more secure for himself and his family.

Unlike the two European men, Chuck Brown speaks at length about the importance of achieving a high level of career success and maximizing his salary in order to join the "big boys." In this slightly indirect way he echoes the other American respondents by using second-order scripts which represent outsize salaries as tickets to high status as much as economic security and a comfortable standard of living. Equally striking in their divergence from the Europeans' second-order scripts are the second-order scripts which Chuck marshals when he responds to questions about his internal motivations for working hard and the connection between hard work and his sense of self. When addressing these themes Chuck expounds repeatedly on the force of his ineluctable "drive" to succeed and his indefatigable work ethic. His comments on these themes are worth presenting in full:

**Interviewer:** So what do you consider heavy and light work hours?

**Chuck Brown:** So when I started working at Consulting Inc., I worked quite a bit on the weekends--not because I necessarily had to do this, but because it was in me. That's what I had always done. My work hours have remained relatively constant for a long time. When I was younger, my dad and I would spend time together every Saturday morning. He ran his own business building and selling lockers. And so I would help him build and install lockers when I grew old enough. So I grew up getting up at 6:00 AM every day and going to work on the weekends.

To this day I just can't sit still. So I can't work short days. I'm unable personally to work low hours. I don't think I could work an eight-hour day if I tried, I don't think I could physically do it. I've been working ten-hour days since I was fourteen years old and I think it's built into my body to get up and do something hard and well and do extra to distinguish myself or my company or whatever it is.

*I've never taken a sick day in my career.*

Describing himself as an "overachiever," Chuck points out that he has never limited himself to an eight-hour workday and he cannot imagine himself working such "short" hours. Like the other members of his family, has never known any way of working other than working hard.

## Two Ideal-Typical Script Repertoires

The juxtaposition of the three groups with respect to their characteristic script repertoires reveals a striking divergence in the ideal-typical repertoires used by the American respondents vis-à-vis the French and the Norwegian respondents. As we recall, the external motivation scripts relating to work tasks, the work environment, and work responsibilities are popular with members of all three groups. However, in supplementing these scripts with external motivation scripts relating to career and moneymaking and the internal motivation scripts relating to drive and idleness, the members of the American group stand apart from their French and Norwegian counterparts.

Viewed in juxtaposition with these script repertoires of the French and Norwegian respondents, the script repertoire of the modal American appears strikingly distinctive. While the American respondents do mention the importance of interesting work tasks and responsibilities in the same way as their European peers, they also avail themselves of the other two families of scripts. For the Americans, the external motivation scripts thematizing career success and moneymaking and the internal motivation scripts relating to drive and idleness appear familiar, resonant, and compelling as first-order justifications for hard work. Thus, these motivational factors play a much more prominent role in the spontaneous hard work talk of the Americans than they do in the talk of the French or the Norwegians.

In their spontaneous commentaries the French and Norwegian respondents rely exclusively what can be described as a *devotional-avocational script repertoire* (see Stebbins 2004). In its ideal-typical form, the devotional-avocational repertoire represents the habit of working hard as the product of a decisive engagement with particular tasks, environments, and responsibilities. The devotional-avocational repertoire thus singles out the work situation itself as the primary stimulus to hard work. If the worker applies himself to his work, it is a response to the intrinsic gratifications he derives from his devotion-worthy work. The strength of his motivation hinges on the intrinsic appeal of the work itself rather than his attachment to career success or their impulse towards industriousness.<sup>11</sup> In the devotional-avocational script repertoire, the willingness to work hard is cast as the fruit of a near-autotelic (Cziksentsmihalyi 1990: 67) involvement with intrinsically enriching and enjoyable work tasks, work environments, and work responsibilities. Conversely, insofar as it effaces the employment situation as a motivational factor, the devotional-avocational script minimizes the motivational role of work's institutional correlates, namely jobs, careers, and paychecks.

The ideal-typical devotional-avocational script repertoire singles out the various characteristics of the work itself, rather than the job or the career, as the motivationally operative aspects of the work situation as a whole. It highlights the suitability of work as an experiential arena where one can realize one's cognitive and social capacities, enjoy mastery, and take pride in one's skills. In this repertoire, motivational catalysts like career success, status, and wealth recede into the background or disappear altogether along with the tendency towards industriousness and the constitutional aversion to idleness. Because personal growth and self-

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<sup>11</sup> Although it is true that the internal motivation scripts such as the drive script and the anti-idleness script sometimes surface as elements of the Frenchman's script repertoire, although always in a muted form. The ideal-typical Norwegian respondent such as Henning Thorvaldsen, Einar Nyborg, and Leif Halvorsen differs slightly from his French counterpart insofar as he does not care to address the role of career success or money at all in his commentaries and rarely uses internal motivation scripts. Moreover, even when French and Norwegian respondents do cite some aspect of their internal psychological makeup as the impetus to hard work, they avoid the ritual vocabulary built around "drive," preferring to talk about "restlessness," a trait with a contingent relationship to occupational achievement.

realization are the ultimate warrants for hard work in this repertoire, it exhibits a "Maslowian" flavor (Maslow 1954), ascribing the person's propensity to work hard to "self-realization" needs occupying the uppermost slot in the Maslowian pyramid (rather than to more basic "esteem" needs such as the need for social recognition, status, or wealth). Thus, by referencing self-realization so frequently and emphatically, the Norwegians and French respondents are claiming a kind of Maslowian status for themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the French or Norwegian respondent who relies exclusively on this devotional-avocational repertoire, however, the more promiscuous American augments his personal stock of scripts by drawing heavily from another ideal-typical repertoire, namely the *overachievement repertoire*. The scripts which make up the overachievement repertoire trace the willingness to work hard to other sources, primarily the desire for career success and money and the inner drive to apply oneself.<sup>13</sup> In this repertoire demanding work is cast as an outlet for energy and vehicle for the affirmation of a self-identity tied primarily to work effort. At the same time, such work is represented as a means of actualizing a propensity deeply inscribed in one's personality, a drive which predates one's encounter with the work world but is naturally oriented towards occupational achievement.

The overachievement repertoire offers a stark contrast to the devotional repertoire in term of its thematic structure. Unlike the devotional-avocational repertoire, it intertwines two very different strands, namely the strand connected to the person's "public engagements" (career success and moneymaking) and the strand connected to the person's inner involvements (drive, work ethic, industriousness) (see Jepperson 1992: 140). While the first strand points outward, towards institutional self-anchorages in the social world of jobs and organizations, the second strand points inward, towards the inner world of institutionally unmediated impulses and desires (Turner 1976). The overachievement repertoire thus binds together the institutional and the subjective dimensions of the self in a very specific way.

Upon closer inspection, however, even the institutional strand of the overachievement repertoire betrays a subjective aspect. Even as the overachievement repertoire holds out the earning of income and the accumulation of money as important rationales for hard work, the repertoire presents money primarily as a symbolization of comparative performance and personal worthiness rather than an instrument of material acquisition (see Wuthnow 1996: 125-131, Lamont 1992). Thus, in true Simmelian fashion, the articulators of the overachievement repertoire gesture towards the "affinity" between money income and the impersonal valuation of "individual achievement as such" (Simmel 1990 [1907]: 341). This valuation, as Simmel observes, enables individuals doing diverse work to commensurate their performances according to a common metric (Espeland & Stevens 1998).

In order to throw the contrasts and similarities of these two repertoires into sharper relief, it is useful to juxtapose them both to the classic Protestant Ethic which Weber sketched so many years ago. Viewed against the backdrop of the Protestant Ethic, the overachievement repertoire seems to recapitulate familiar themes. The religious vocationalist, as we recall, submits his labors

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<sup>12</sup> It is no accident that one of the Norwegian respondents references Maslow explicitly in his commentary on working life, saying "here one can choose the kind of job which stimulates one just like Maslow would recommend."

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, in deemphasizing the importance of career success, these very occupationally successful French and Norwegian men sound a bit like the American working-class men interviewed by Lamont (Lamont 2000). These men dismissed the pursuit of career success and money as misguided and trumpeted the importance of general happiness and well-being in an especially outside of work.

and his life to an explicitly conceptualized ultimate end, the end of salvation and divine grace. In this toil he seeks evidence of his own sinlessness and godliness. Like the original Protestant Ethic, the overachievement repertoire sanctifies industriousness as such and exhibits a relative indifference to the characteristics of the work content which brings this character trait to life. Just as Weber's Protestant Ethic promulgates doctrines prescribing "unceasing activity" in a work-related calling as an antidote to self-doubt and feelings of unworthiness (Weber 2002 [1920], Kalberg 2002: xxxiv), the overachievement repertoire presents work, particularly demanding work, as an existential locus for the actualization of the overachieving self. With its scripts focusing on drive and demobilization, the overachievement repertoire harkens back to the Protestant Ethic by casting industriousness and the avoidance of idleness as existential obligations relevant to one's inner condition, even if it frames these conditions in a nonspiritual form (Weber 2002 [1920]). Finally, as Serge Moscovici observes, the only reason why the Protestant ascetic chases after profit and wealth is because he treats the monetary value attached to the fruits of his labor as a valid measure of his own value in the eyes of the Almighty. For him, the money's importance as a marker of identity outweighs its significance as a means of material acquisition. In the same way, the overachievement repertoire diverts the adherents' attention and commitment away from money, considered as a means of procuring the "goods" of life, so that he can focus single-mindedly on the symbolic potency of money, considered as an indicator of his own worth (Moscovici 1993 [1988]: 169). In this way, both the classic Protestant Ethic and the overachievement repertoire enshrine the search for externally conferred self-validation as the decisive motivational factor sustaining the willingness to work hard and exert oneself.

The overachievement repertoire seems to bear a much stronger resemblance to the classic Protestant Ethic than its devotional-avocational counterpart. The devotional-avocational repertoire, as we recall, makes the worker's willingness to exert himself contingent on the worthiness of the work tasks rather than the inner character he brings to these tasks. The exclusive focus of this repertoire on external motivations at the expense of internal motivations thereby ensures that it departs from the Protestant Ethic in its basic structure. Secondly, as it specifies the desire for self-development and self-actualization as the ultimate wellsprings feeding the willingness to work hard, it puts experiential gratifications at the very center of hard work motivation, something entirely antithetical to the sober and somber Protestant Ethic.<sup>14</sup>

From a slightly different angle of vision, one could characterize the difference between these two cultural repertoires as encapsulating a distinction between two different motivational models vis-à-vis hard work. The only motivation model foregrounded in the devotional-avocational repertoire is a "pull" model in which the willingness to work hard issues from a forward-looking affinity for self-development and self-realization. The overachievement repertoire, by contrast features two different motivational models. Insofar as it highlights inner drive and the aversion to idleness, it puts forward a "push" model in which the propensity to work hard emerges from a longstanding character trait with roots stretching into the past.

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, we should not overlook the vast gulf between the religious Protestant Ethic and these two decidedly secular repertoires. The classic religious vocationalist, as we recall, labors so that he can certify himself as *a godly person in his own eyes, in the eyes of his religious community, and in the eyes of the Almighty*. The religious vocationalist learns to turn his back on all forms of enjoyment, whether those derived from the content of work or from its economic fruits so that he can focus on an entirely transcendent and otherworldly end at the greatest possible temporal and existential distance from his everyday life in the here and now (Poggi 1983: 41). This end renders the individual's experience in the here and now significant only as in an instrumental capacity.

Inasmuch as it showcases the bearer's orientation to career success and moneymaking, however, it to directs attention to the forward-looking aspects of the motivational apparatus.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter takes an inductive and exploratory step towards pinpointing the cultural chasms between the occupational talk of male business professionals in the United States and the occupational talk articulated by their French and Norwegian counterparts. The study lends support to the thesis of the transatlantic divide by showing how American male professionals diverge from their European counterparts when they offer rationales, accounts, and warrants for their propensity to apply themselves at work and endure stressful pressures and constraints on the job. The analysis of the interview material demonstrates that American context represents a distinctive cultural environment, offering a distinctive stockpile of occupational scripts different from those afforded by the French and Norwegian social contexts. In emphasizing the external motivations connected to career success and moneymaking, as well as internal motivations associated with drive and the demobilization caused by idleness, American male professionals engage in a culturally distinctive kind of justificatory labor and signal their membership in a distinctive justificatory community. Moreover, the analysis makes it clear that the American context constitutes favorable cultural terrain for a repertoire which finds little nourishment in the European contexts.

Although both the European and American settings are fertile soil for the external motivation scripts connected to work content, the Americans make use of a script repertoire largely foreign to the Europeans, namely the overachievement repertoire. In the commentaries of the Americans, references to work content are overshadowed by abundant references to career success, maximizing income, drive, and demobilization caused by excessive leisure. For the Americans, there is nothing wrong with a motivational engine which runs on fuel drawn from the lower levels of the Maslowian need hierarchy. For their French and Norwegian counterparts, however, more elevated motives must be found for hard work than the desire for a high income, career success, or the urgencies of a compulsive industriousness. This is why the French and Norwegians find it compelling to characterize their work devotion as a quest for self-realization and self-development, needs which occupy the upper reaches of the Maslowian pyramid. This is also why they are happy to allow their pursuit of baser goals located in the lower levels of the Maslowian hierarchy to recede into the shadows.

The more convincing and compelling character of the devotional-avocational repertoire among the French and Norwegians means that it can stand alone as a justification and rationale for hard work. Even among the Americans who have reached the pinnacle of the occupational pyramid, justificatory scripts connected to work content cannot shoulder the justificatory burden by themselves. The willingness to work hard must be anchored in firmer foundations than the search for a self-development and self-realization which hinges on the attractiveness of work tasks and a work environment over which he has no real control. In the American setting, the proclivity to work hard must be rooted in something less transient and contingent than the content of the work. By representing the desire to work hard as resting on more solid bedrock, the hard work talk of the American loosens the connection between the strength of his willingness to work and the character of the work itself. Thus, by invoking their drive, their aversion to leisure, and their interest in winning, the various elements of the drive-overachievement repertoire, the American respondents ensure that their motivation to work hard is seen as resting on fixed and stable foundations unrelated to the character of their work tasks,

work environment, and work responsibilities, characteristics which vary from one job to the next and from one line of work to the next.



### **Chapter 3: Zoning the Evening: Constructions of the Work-Life Boundary Among French, Norwegian, and American Business Professionals**

Within the comparative cultural study of cultural expectations and conventions, issues pertinent to the sociology of time have received short shrift. This chapter contributes to these relatively undeveloped area of inquiry by comparing the temporal expectations and conventions operative in different social environments, empirical inquiry can also shed considerable light on the structure and organization of some of the most basic sociocultural integrative norms undergirding modern societies.

Social theorists have long noted that well socialized members of a social collectivity, whether societal and subsocietal in scale, carry with them a certain kind of internalized temporal compass which indicates when particular activities are appropriate and when they are inappropriate, a sense Elias dubbed the "temporal habitus" (Tabboni 2001, Elias 1992), and Merton designated as "durational expectancies" (Merton 1957). These expectations are sometimes encoded in collective rituals, organizational schedules, and other strongly institutionalized parts of the social environment, but they are sometimes present in the more weakly institutionalized aspects of private life as well. In contemporary postindustrial societies, these normatively colored conventions steer the individuals' involvements with the "compulsory" activities of working life, the elective activities of private life, and the often tension-laden relationship between these two activity orders and institutional realms (Tabboni 2001, Lewis & Weigert 1981: 448, Zeruvabel 1981). As many analysts have posited, scheduling, timing, "durational expectancies," and sociotemporal rhythms serve as some of the primary axes around which social life is orchestrated in modern, highly differentiated societies. In all such societies, the employed individual must cope with the demands of a variety of "temporal orders" (Lewis & Weigert 1981) associated with the different levels of social organization.<sup>15</sup> In orchestrating the daily round, the employed person must weave together self time and organizational time.

Collective temporal conventions orchestrate the various parts of the individual's "daily round" (Lewis & Weigert 1981: 439), the quotidian temporal sequence which typically progresses from morning to midday to evening in a predictable and patterned way. For someone with a full-time job, the daily round usually involves physical movement as well as social and psychic displacement from the experiential "home" to "work" and back again (Nippert-Eng 1995). This study examines and theorizes the tail end of the daily round, the part of the workday which generally takes place during a particular slice of "clock time" (Adam 1995), namely the early evening between 5 PM and 9 PM, and which functions as a transitional period demarcating the realms of working life and private life, two contrasting "mental and social worlds" (Nippert-Eng 1995: 100, 117) which demand the fulfillment of different roles. These hours constitute, in many cases, a temporal border zone which potentially demarcates private time from public time and individual time from organizational time (Lewis & Weigert 1981, Zeruvabel 1981). For the employed professional man or woman, these fringe hours are when organizational time and work time often take precedence over the subordinate temporal orders of self time and family time.

In most cases the professional worker, by contrast with the blue-collar or service worker, exercises some degree of discretion and autonomy in demarcating work life from private life and

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<sup>15</sup> If we are to gain a more complete and nuanced understanding of these temporal expectations and orders, it is critical to look beyond the individual and organizational level to the societal level, a level where cross-national comparisons are indispensable.

disposing of this temporal period. By contrast with jobs which squeeze working time into predetermined blocks, many professional jobs impose demands which are relatively underspecified in temporal terms (Lewis & Wiegert 1981: 448). In law firms, consultancies, and other professional workplaces the exact placement of the boundary between the work and nonwork spheres is not predestined by organizational fiat, especially when systems of normative control prevail (Kunda 1992). Of course, as we know from numerous ethnographies of the corporate workplace, many corporate professionals stay in the office during these hours in response to overt pressures from their supervisors or peers (Collinson 2004: 233-5) or because of their desire to outdo their peers, dramatize their commitment to the firm or the product, assuage guilt, enact the role of the "go-to-guy," or placate some other internalized "urgency" unrelated to explicit directives (Sharone 2004, Cooper 2000, Hochschild 1997). An individual professional's workload, her level of ambition, and her personal circumstances clearly influence the timing of her departure from the workplace. Other professionals, for whatever reason, do make a habit of leaving the office at 5:00 PM or 5:30 PM, and feel that they can do so without endangering their employment (Meiksins & Whalley 2003). Whether or not these early leavers resume working again at home, they have to some extent displaced themselves socially and mentally outside the experiential territory of work.

Given that professionals exercise some discretion over their allocation of this fringe hours, it is natural to wonder what kinds of sociocultural influences impinge on their boundary experiences, boundary expectations, and boundary decisions. The many ethnographic and interview-based studies of professionals in the Anglo-American context have shown that professional men and women conclude their workdays in ways congruent with their life circumstances, but also with the work hours norms and durational expectancies imposed by their work peers, clients, supervisors, and their employing organization. In addition, the boundary between working life and private life is also informed by the "normalizing" influences (Turner 2002: 164-8) associated with broader and more diffuse sociocultural forces such as occupational cultures (Fuchs-Epstein 1999), gender cultures (Rutherford 2001), and even industry cultures such as the culture of "Silicon Valley" (Cooper 2000).

While these studies have shed light in many of the forces at play in the Anglo-American context, their single-country focus makes it impossible to identify the role of societal context itself as a factor influencing these boundary decisions. Capitalizing on a unique cross-national body of comparative data, this chapter illuminates the elusive contribution of societal context to the evening routine of the business professional. The chapter examines these normalizing influences as they play out in San Francisco, Oslo, and Paris, three societal contexts where professionals are exposed to contrasting stratification cultures (see Research Sites Appendix). In examining the connection between professionals' evening transitions from working life to private life and the character of their societal environments, the chapter provides an opening towards a comparative sociology of macrotemporal and microtemporal conventions. It also shed light on the link between temporal expectations around work and private life, on the one hand, and stratification cultures and gender cultures, on the other hand.

### **Conceptualizing and Analyzing Temporal Benchmarking and Temporal Zoning**

In identifying the various normative influences at play in these boundary decisions, it is helpful to make use of three theoretical concepts which have remained underemployed in both empirical and theoretical work on temporality and the construction of temporal boundaries:

namely, the interrelated concepts of *temporal benchmarking* and *temporal zoning (or temporal territorialization)*.

The concept of temporal benchmarking draws its inspiration from the notion of the *reference frame* originally formulated in the theoretical and empirical work of the psychologist Herbert Hyman and the sociologists Robert Merton and Ralph Turner. Developed to explain individuals' motives to benchmark their own behavior according to patterns of behavior and orientation identified with various reference targets, the idea was originally an outgrowth of the theory of role-sets (Merton 1963 [1957], Turner 1956). During its heyday in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the number of reference group targets proliferated in the works of sociologists and social psychologists who became preoccupied with producing more and more nuanced taxonomies of reference targets. Merton differentiated "membership groups," defined as similarly socialized sets of interactants, "social categories," defined as aggregations of normatively heterogeneous individuals sharing the same general status (class, age, etc.), and, finally, "collectivities," normatively homogeneous social categories whose members are alike in their orientations (Merton 1963 [1957]: 286-300). Ralph Turner offered a different taxonomy, identifying four separate types of groups (identification groups, interaction groups, valuation groups, and audience groups) as reference targets (Turner 1956). During the 1960s, as reference group theory became more and more identified with social psychology, however, this "theory frame" (Rueschemeyer 2009) receded from view within the social psychology and sociology more broadly. Despite its flagging popularity, however, the fundamental idea at the core of reference group theory, namely the notion that behavior and orientations are often benchmarked in view of a specific target individual, organization, or group, still retains many advantages as a heuristic concept. As I will show, it can play a very useful role in helping to conceptualizing the normalizing influences at work in the boundary decisions of individuals allocating the 5-9 PM hours.

The idea of temporal territoriality, first introduced by Zeruvabel (Zeruvabel 1981: 142) and used to great effect by Melbin in his study of the social construction of nighttime (Melbin 1987) and Nippert-Eng in her study of commuting (Nippert-Eng 1995), also proves its worth as an analytical resource useful in the study of the evening transition between working life and private life. As Zeruvabel and Nippert-Eng suggest, in many social contexts certain clock hours are collectively *zoned* as temporal zones appropriate for some activities and inappropriate for others. Depending on the cultural context, some of these temporal zones are designated as "free areas" where actors may engage in relatively unstructured activities without sanction (Nippert-Eng 1995: 122). When an individual enters such free areas, she is temporarily released into a "self time" where she is not as bound by the constraints of "organizational time" (Lewis & Weigert 1981).

In this chapter I press these two conceptual lenses into theoretical service through a comparative examination of the three groups' distinctive orientations to the temporal boundary zone corresponding to the early evenings between 5 PM and 9 PM. This empirical application demonstrates the analytic value of these concepts in the comparative study of social temporality as it is constituted in three different social settings where professionals are exposed to contrasting stratification cultures.

### **Three Patterns of Temporal Zoning**

For the Parisians, the hours between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM hold a very special significance as a deeply social work time where they can demonstrate their authority in the

workplace, commune with colleagues, and hone their skills. For example, Parisian bankers, managers, and consultants would enthuse about the camaraderie and the relative freedom from distractions they enjoyed in the office during the early evening hours. A male investment banker praised the between 5 PM and 10 PM as the period when he could finally get to practice his *métier* undistracted by the petty minutiae which diverted his attentions during the 9-5 PM portion of the workday. As he explained:

Really, 5:30-8:30 in the evening is the best part of the working day. The support staff have gone home, the clients have stopped calling.. and it's just us bankers.

This is when we get our intellectual nourishment, when we get to spend time together in the office. I get more gratification from the 5:30 to 8 PM hours than during any other part of the workday. It's this special time because we all know why we are here. We all went through the same education and worked very hard to get here, that's why the *cinq à sept* [smiles] is the payoff. This is when we learn from each other and those above us in the hierarchy.

This camaraderie and freedom from distractions was absent during the more structured parts of the workday prior to 6:00 PM, as he described:

Actually in the evening you have time to talk, to discuss topics a little more intensively with your colleagues and that you can enjoy some personal contacts within the hierarchy, et cetera, that's only in the evening. This is the part of the workday which is where the *real vision* happens.

Laurent, an ambitious Parisian executive with a management position in a large industrial company, proclaimed proudly that he typically left his office between 8:30 PM and 9:00 PM, and could not even imagine leaving his office before 8:00 PM. At 5:00 PM, he was commencing what he called his "second shift." After 9:00 PM, however, it was time for the *vie privée*. Moreover, if he left the office before 8:00 PM on a regular basis, he would inevitably find himself at loose ends. For some of the Parisian professionals with young children, the urge to spend the 6-8 PM period at work was so strong that they shifted their children's bedtimes so that they could see them before they went to bed. Laurent declared vehemently that he would "never" leave the office before 8:00 PM, no matter the workload.

While a majority of the Parisian respondents waxed eloquent about the 5-8 PM period, representing it as a charmed part of the workday, a number of them lambasted the tendency for the period to degenerate into a ritualistic kind of facetime. Many of the Parisian respondents conceded that they stayed in the office during the 6-8 PM simply because of it was expected, not because they had time-sensitive assignments to complete. One banking executive commented "when you are here it is normal to leave after certain people of course." A former internal strategy consultant who had gone to work for himself after toiling for a large French company recalled the imperative for "senior people" to stay after 6:00 PM so that they could hold conversations with colleagues "in the hallways":

In French companies there are many things that are decided in the hallways after 6 PM. It is really important when you are in a senior position to tarry in the hallways after a certain time. You are [physically] at the company, but you are not actually working.

However, a number of these men and women turned a critical eye towards this practice. In the opinion of a Parisian management consultant who had worked with dozens of Parisian firms, the practice of staying in the office late did nothing to enhance workers' efficiency:

Managers and professionals tend to stay very late here. This is a way to

show that you have authority or power in a company...a lot of people stay until 8:30 or 9:00 PM. A lot of people could avoid working late if they were more efficient, but they do it to show that they are the top dog [*ce moi le plus fort*].

One of the Parisian professionals, an executive who worked as an upper-level manager at a large Parisian consumer products firm, objected to the "stupid" practice of staying late in the office simply to "seem important."

I work really fast so I'm usually done by 7:00 PM, but I still have to spend an extra hour afterwards simply because Jean-Pascal still hasn't finished his work. There is enormous pressure to stay here until he leaves, so I sit around and write Emails and keep myself as busy as possible until it's the right time to leave... that's one reason I ended up leaving. It just seems stupid to me to waste my time staying in the office until 8:30 PM every night just to be with everyone else... this is one of the reasons why I left the company to start my own firm and become my own boss [*être propre maître*].

This practice, Adèle complained, did nothing to increase the "efficiency" with which people carried out their tasks. Serge, a Parisian attorney condemned the practice vehemently, praising the "rational" culture of "northern Europe," a part of the world where people were free to leave the office at a decent hour. He could not understand why Parisian attorneys were required to stay late in their offices:

If I could choose, I think that I would make things a bit like they are in Northern Europe. I would not obligate people to stay as late as one often sees in Parisian law firms or companies where, even if people don't have anything to do, they have to stay until 9:00 at night or else. I think that is basically completely ridiculous. If there is work to do, you do it. If you have to stay, you stay.

Another Parisian professional who had worked for the state and served as an operations consultant for several large private sector companies also pointed to the tendency of Parisian managers and executives to send flurries of Emails during the hours between 6 PM and 8 PM.

By contrast with their Parisian peers, the Oslo professionals, both women and men, were used to getting out of the office at a "reasonable" [*fornuftig*] hour, typically between 4:30 and 5:30 PM. This meant that, for both sexes, the bulk of the 5-9 PM hours were almost always spent at home in the company of friends, spouses, and children. Even for those men in positions with a lot of responsibility and pressure in their jobs, these hours were designated as "family time" [*familietid*]. Tobias, a senior project manager in the Oslo division of a large global management consultancy, negotiated a deal with his immediate supervisor with the encouragement of his wife. According to this arrangement, he could leave the office at 4:30 PM two days out of every week, barring extenuating circumstances. He preferred this arrangement, even it meant that he had to come in early the other two days of the week. His boss was also well-disposed towards the deal. In the Norwegian workplaces, the dispensation to leave work early applied not only to mothers and fathers with young children, however. It was routinely extended to childless employees as well. Thus, within these Norwegian workplaces, leaving the office before 5:00 PM became a visible and common entitlement which applied even to the childless employees who wanted to end the workday early.

The practice of liberating the early evening for family suppers was embraced by even the most hard driving Norwegian professionals. A young management consultant who expected to have children within the next "five years" looked forward to a time when he would leave work

early, stay home with his kids in the evening, and resume working late at night in his home office:

And so I think that when I have a kid I'll be home in the evening and join in on everything that is going on, and then work a little more in the later evening. Yeah. You need to find something that'll work, anyway. I would like to get home early enough to be able to participate in family activities in the evening. I think it's healthy. The idea is that you stay home during family time between 6 pm and 8 pm, and then you work from 9 pm to 12 midnight if you need to get something done before the next day.

Unlike the respondents from either Paris or San Francisco, many of the Oslo professionals with managerial responsibilities would encourage their subordinates to leave work behind by 5:00 PM so that they could carve out adequate time for their families and their leisure activities.

Unlike their Parisian and Norwegian counterparts, the Americans lived and worked in a social environment where the 5-9 PM period was not flagged either as working time or as private time.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, there was more variation in the Americans' 5-9 PM routines. Of the nonparenting Americans, roughly half often stayed in their offices past 7:00 PM. Of the parenting professionals, most of the women and men did try to leave the office by 6:00 PM, often without much success, because they could not rely upon any generalized understanding of this period as private or family time. Whether the Americans left the office early or stayed late, their routines did not draw upon any transorganizational cultural conventions which defined any part of the 5-9 PM period as either private time or organizational time. For this reason, they were operating in unmarked temporal territory.

### **The Three Patterns of Temporal Benchmarking Compared**

In each case group, deciding how to appropriate these hours implies a qualitatively distinct reference group. For the Parisian manager or professional, it was imperative to work during the evening hours as these hours served a critical role in validating and affirming their membership in the elite group of *les cadres and les cadres supérieurs*. The Parisian respondents, particularly those who worked in larger firms and exercised managerial responsibilities, experienced pressure to spend at least part of the 5-9 PM period in their offices visible and accessible to coworkers, superiors, and subordinates simply as members of this elevated group. For these elite *cadres*, the preferred way to demonstrate one's claims to membership in this exalted group was by staying in one's office during the crucial 5-9 PM period.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the habit

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<sup>16</sup> While the majority of the American respondents leave the office around 6:00 PM and 5:00 PM departures were relatively rare, it is also relatively uncommon to leave the office at 7:30 or 8:00 PM. One single corporate attorney often worked until 9:00 PM, but he was exceptionally committed to work. A single male engineer would work until 5:30 PM, leave for two hours, and return to the office between 8 and 10:00 PM. Unlike their Norwegian peers, the male American parenting professionals rarely take steps to ensure that they could see their children or romantic companions between 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM. The men who had small children rarely picked up their children from daycare in the evenings, preferring to drop them off in the mornings instead so that they could work until 5:30 or 6:00 PM. Unlike their French peers, however, these male professionals were unwilling to push their child's bedtime back purely because they felt obliged to spend their evenings in the office. One American attorney insisted that his wife put his daughter to bed no later than 8:30 PM, what he called the "witching hour," even if he had three or more hours of work left at 6:00 PM, his usual departure time.

<sup>17</sup> Although the Parisian professionals treated the hours between 6 PM and 9 PM as work hours, most of them were loathe to stretch the workday beyond 9:00 PM - an hour they often defined as "dinner hour." Indeed, in some of the Parisian workplaces, it was physically impossible to continue working after 10:00 PM. Stéphane, an executive at a Parisian bank which served governmental clients, worked until 8:30 PM most evenings. He was "motivated

of leaving the office before 7:30 PM not only signaled a lamentable lack of commitment to one's organization, but a weak identification with the role of *le cadre* or *le cadre supérieur*.

While getting to the office early was entirely optional, staying late was not elective because it was "socially necessary for elite *cadres*," as one respondent remarked. "People who are *cadres* don't consider their hours, especially in the early evenings," as one respondent remarked. Few of the Parisian respondents could stomach the thought of working with colleagues who refused to stay late. Pierre, a young Parisian investment banker educated at École Polytechnique, declared:

I don't want to have people working on my team who would just leave the office at 5:30 PM because it is five-thirty who would say to me "OK It's 5:30 in the evening, so I'm leaving." That's just not appropriate for *cadres*, particularly *cadres supérieurs*.

Some of the Parisian respondents analyzed this practice in terms of the normative expectations attaching to managerial work in Parisian companies.

In the Parisian context, the workday could start as late as 9:30 AM, and could include an hour-long lunch break, but it often lasted until well after 8:00 PM.<sup>18</sup> One young Parisian investment analyst for a large Parisian bank left the office early, around 7:30 AM hour which he claimed would be compatible with family life. But a job which allowed him, as a *cadre*, to leave at 4:30 PM would be "incredible" and "simply impossible."

If you leave work at 7:30 AM, it's pretty decent, it's pretty decent, you don't expect to leave work at 4:30 PM, it would be incredible to have a job with these kinds of hours, if I left work at 4:30 PM, it would be half a workday.

Several other Parisian professionals also declared this period of time unfit for private life. One Parisian corporate attorney wondered how he, as a *cadre*, would fare if he could not busy himself with work during the hours between 6 PM and 8 PM. Constrained in this way, he asserted, he would undoubtedly find himself at loose ends during weekday evenings.

While some of the Parisian respondents seemed eager to extend their workdays past 7:00 PM, others were clearly not fond of the practice. But they recognized its compulsory character nonetheless. Jacqueline, a woman manager working at a well-known Parisian retail company recounted her frustration with the late hour workdays common at her company. Warned against leaving before 9:00 PM by her supervisors, she realized that, by leaving the office prior to 9:00 PM, she would be signaling a lack of dedication to the job and misplaced "priorities." Meetings at the company would be regularly scheduled to start at 7:00 PM and even 8:00 PM. Those young *cadres* who had the audacity to leave the office before 8:30 PM, she explained, had essentially signed their own "death warrants":

I am apt to work a twelve to fourteen hour days when things are going well, when things go wrong, I would do my 9-6, you can arrive after 9:00 AM here. But leaving early, that is really bad, it's like writing your own death warrant, if you leave at the end of the official working day, at 6:00 PM, you won't be taken seriously and you'll seem not to take your colleagues seriously. Once in a while, if you have a valid reason to leave, it becomes acceptable to leave at

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enough," however, to work "very late in the evening." But he knew that it wasn't necessary "socially" to work until 10 PM or 11 PM and doing so would actually detract from one's status within the organization.

<sup>18</sup> However, even in Paris the hours after 9:00 PM are generally considered private time. Further, relatively fewer of the older Parisians worked at home on their laptops; they are somewhat more "segmentalist" (Nippert-Eng 1996) than their San Francisco and Oslo counterparts in regards to the evening hours.

7:30 PM, and you shouldn't really be considering leaving before 8:30 PM, and if you are new and trying to prove yourself as a competent *cadre*, you shouldn't really leave the office before 9:00 PM.

She was struck by the fact that her colleagues generally acquiesced to this working schedule, even though it often interfered with their private lives. They accepted these hours, she surmised, because they were so eager to make a good impression on fellow *cadres*. To this end it was necessary to "be in the office at 7:30 PM."

In the Parisian case, the collective conventions appear to strengthen and render visible the differences between members of publicly defined status groups - *les cadres* and *les cadres supérieurs* - and those who do not belong to this elite. For these professionals, therefore, the routine of working during these hours operates as a practice conducive to the assertion of a status-group membership which differentiates them from their *noncadre* colleagues. In this way, the "evening facetime" mandate helps the status-conscious *cadre* affirm his status in a context where administrative staff are seldom seen in the office after 6:00 PM. The secretaries in the Parisian offices, as many of my respondents pointed out, rarely left the office after 6:00 PM sharp, while the workday of the elite *cadre* stretched on until 7:00 PM or 8:00 PM. In the Parisian context, therefore, the early part of the evening was reserved for social interaction and distinction work as much as it was allotted for the completion of actual work tasks.

While neither the San Francisco nor the Parisian respondents referred to "San Francisco" or "Parisian" work rhythms, the Oslo respondents repeatedly benchmarked their evening routines according to the routines of "Norwegians" and "Scandinavians." One manager at a large Oslo-based energy company, a company with offices in many countries outside Norway, praised the company for respecting the "general Norwegian working rhythm." Those who followed this rhythm generally ended their workdays around 5:00 PM and seldom stayed later than 6:00 PM. In the words of one Oslo management consultant "Norwegian professionals are very good at saying 'It's 5:00 PM and I'm going home'." One Oslo-based consultant who had worked extensively outside the country announced that "You won't find other countries where professional people leave as early as 4:00 PM." Borg, a senior manager at a Norway-based technology company, explained how his firm had set guidelines for managers which ensured that employees could leave their working lives behind after 5:00 PM:

The general Norwegian working rhythm is 8 to 4 PM, basically, yeah, people come to work at 8 o'clock and leave at 4 PM, basically, they tend to keep it to an 8 hour day, this goes for around 80% of workers. The philosophy here is that as a general rule we should not be available after 5:00 PM, it's sometimes hard to live by this rule I think, but it's a good ambition I think, and it applies to management all the way up.

Indeed, the most distinguishing characteristic of the Oslo workday was that it was supposed to end before 6:00 PM. A workday which lasted until 6:00 PM was considered "late," even if it was the workday of a professional in the corporate world. One Oslo professional found himself meeting with prospective clients between 4 PM and 6 PM, a time which was "actually a bit on the late side, for a Norwegian." For those Oslo-based respondents who worked for Norway-based employers, there were no prohibitions against leaving at 3:00 PM, an hour which marked the conclusion of "core time" [*kjernetid*].

Another mid-thirties management consultant working in an Oslo management consultancy approved of his firm's policies and expectations concerning working during the evenings. Unlike the consultancies anchored outside of Scandinavia, his firm did not expect the



consultants to work late into the evenings and give up the chance for what he called a "normal Norwegian evening." In contrast to employees at non-Scandinavian companies, he could usually make his escape from the office so that he could attend to his familial responsibilities awaiting him at home:

This company says very clearly that they want people to balance their work and the rest of their lives so that people succeed in work and private life.

This is a concept which is *very clear in Scandinavia*, even if others outside Scandinavia don't understand it so clearly. There are very few companies in Scandinavia which will say that you aren't a contributor if you say "for me it's important to get to see my kids in the evening and be there for them as their father."

Several Oslo managers made a habit of encouraging their subordinates to leave the office before 6:00 PM in order to make time for a "normal" private life. One manager at a Oslo risk management company considered himself in step with the majority of his fellow Norwegian managers when he tried to ensure that his subordinates could get off work as early as possible:

If you know that you have to finish this task by 5:00 PM today, you can normally do it. I sometimes wonder how people outside Norway are looking at this issue. But my opinion is that people should have a life outside the workplace. I think this is a fairly common way of looking at things *among us Norwegians*.

The expectation of an early departure from work was also entrenched in deeply rooted Norwegian cultural ideals relating to the normal workday and, more broadly, the normal life. An extremely successful management consultant who worked in a pan-European consultancy with a rather un-Norwegian work culture did no care for the managers who allocated assignments without regard to the work hours of the junior consultants. But there was one senior manager who made sure that the staffing for each project was adequate enough to ensure individuals' ability to work according to a "normal Norwegian" rhythm:

This manager asks other people to work efficient hours as well and he prefers people to go home at 5 or 6 PM as long as they've been efficient at work, he doesn't go and give people hopeless tasks, and he also puts sufficient people on projects to make it possible for people to *work normal Norwegian hours*.

Jørgen, another Oslo consultant lucky enough to work in a Scandinavian consultancy noted that his firm had set up guidelines and policies aimed at ensuring professional employees' capacity to "live normal private lives in addition to work." According to a manager in the HR division of a large Oslo-based energy company, few of her managerial and professional coworkers, even those without children or partners, stayed past 6:00 PM on a regular basis:

My impression of this company is that even those people who are single or divorced don't stay here until seven or even six PM. My impression is that there aren't very many who sit here in the office until this hour. At that time, it's pretty much dead here. Even if they could stay this late, they choose not to do so. They are influenced by our general *culture of leaving [the workplace] early*.

Another management consultant working in the Oslo office of a global consultancy explained that, as she had no wish to leave her children alone until 6 PM or 7 PM, she would never have considered working for the British or American branches of the firm where such practices were

widespread. She counted herself lucky that, along with a large proportion of the consulting staff, she enjoyed the liberty to leave the office before 5:00 PM. She was grateful that she didn't work in the UK where, she explained, "one can't go home before the boss leaves."<sup>19</sup>

In the San Francisco case, to the extent that the 5-9 PM routine was informed by the norms of a reference target, it was primarily a function of the "culture" of the immediate work environment rather than any supraorganizational expectations regarding the correct way to spend these hours. Thus, for a professional working in a "relaxed" workplace, it did not take any special boldness to leave the office behind between the hours of 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM. It was actually quite common for San Francisco managers and professionals who worked in the more sedate companies to leave the office around 6:00-6:30 PM. As a young engineer working in a Silicon Valley technology firm explained, he was used to people leaving anywhere between 5:00 and 8:00. His firm did have informal "facetime" rules, but these rules did not apply to the evening hours past 6:00 PM. Of course, if he happened to work somewhere where these facetime rules were in force after 7:00 PM, the situation would be different:

If I were at a *different company* where one has to stay until 7:30 PM, then your personal life is going to be very different, particularly in the evenings.

While a number of the San Francisco respondents did routinely stay in the office past 6:00 PM, several of the respondents actually left before 5:00 PM on a regular basis. But the dispensation to depart so early was understood not as the product of a general expectation or convention applicable to all workers. Rather, the dispensation to leave the office early was presented as a special accommodation which could only be realized in a special organizational context populated by "empathetic" people. As Mark, a financial strategist at a relatively small and progressive San Francisco company explained, his early departures were only possible because of the flexible "culture" of his employer and the personal situation of his immediate supervisor:

I leave at 4:00 or 4:30 PM most days and I've never had a problem. No one has said "you need to stay later regularly..." people in this company are very understanding...my boss has also been very good about this. He has his own set of kids only 2-3 years older than my kids, so he is very empathetic in terms of my schedule.

While most professionals did not feel comfortable leaving this early, a number of other San Francisco respondents did work in organizations where leaving before 6:00 PM did not arouse suspicions of slacking. Kirsten, a manager at a medical device company explained that, in her workplace, there would be no stigma attached to leaving before 6:30 PM. The same reluctance to extend the working day was evident in the work rhythms kept by the professionals working in the marketing division of a San Francisco software company. At his firm a 7:00 PM departure was considered late. As the marketing executive explained:

Here in the marketing division of this firm you get used to a certain rhythm and if someone says "you need to stay until seven o'clock tonight"

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<sup>19</sup> The contrast between Paris and Oslo in this respect can be seen clearly in the experience of Emma, a Norwegian consultant who lived and worked in Paris as a management consultant for several years after working in the Oslo office of the same firm, who explained the discrepancy between the Parisian 9-7 PM workday and the "Scandinavian" workday which ended between 4 PM and 5 PM. Because Emma kept to her Scandinavian work rhythm even when she worked out of the Paris office, she puzzled her Parisian colleagues who looked askance at her early departures but marveled at her ability to start the workday at 7:00 AM. This pattern can also be seen in the different opening hours of daycare centers; in France they stay open until 7:00 PM, while in Norway, they close as early as 4:00 PM.

it's like "oh, my god." But it's not like this *at other firms*.

As one of department's most productive professionals, he felt that a ten-hour workday was more than sufficient. Furthermore, his immediate supervisor, one of the firm's stars, distinguished herself by staying until 7:00 PM on a regular basis but discouraged him from following her example unless absolutely necessary.

Despite the reputation of San Francisco high-technology companies as long-hours workplaces, this pattern also held true for many large high-tech firms. One junior hardware engineer guessed that there were departments in his large high-tech firm where upwards of 50% of the managerial staff left the office before 6:00 PM on any given day. One of the firm's upper-level managers corroborated his picture of the professional employees' evening routines:

I've been here at Tech Corp. for a little over four years. In general, I would say that at least some people go home at 5:00 or 6:00 PM, although there are some individuals that work late, you never see them at 8:00PM in the office.

Another manager at the same firm, a manager who conceded that he worked some of the longest hours in his part of the company, routinely came back to the office after a ten hour workday and put in another two to three hours of work, often leaving the office for the last time around 11:00 PM. But this was something he did at his own discretion. He did not "expect" others to work these kinds of hours.

Several of the San Francisco respondents mentioned the influence of corporate culture in determining acceptable times for leaving work. One investment banker who had worked in a large industrial company prior to joining the bank recalled that the firm's headquarters emptied out by 5:30 PM. He attributed this pattern to the "relaxed" character of the "company's culture":

Unlike this firm, the hours at this laid-back firm were 8-5, the joke was that you could shoot a cannon down the corridor at 5:00 PM and not hit anyone...it was just the nature of the company. So what tends to happen is, you know, if you are already surpassing everyone else and you can go home at 5 PM and everyone else is already gone, you'll leave too, so that's just the *culture of the company*.

At his new investment banking job, however, leaving at 5:00 PM was frowned upon, even though the workdays started at 6:00 AM. Leaving the office before 6 PM was bound to arouse the suspicions of his partners. On the prowl for "slackers," they would look around to see who was still at his or her desk after 5:00 PM every day.

But there were other firms where it was possible to leave before 6:00 PM without being stigmatized as a slacker. Charles, one mid-level strategy executive, determined to get home before his child's bedtime, regularly succeeded in "slipping out the door" at his internet services company despite the "*late hours culture*" of his firm, a culture he attributed to the preponderance of "twenty-something" men and women without spouses or children. In his eagerness to get out of the office early, he would often sneak off before his colleagues noticed his absence:

I try to leave work at around 5:30 or 6 PM, some days are harder than others, X Corp. has a *late hours culture*, people will try to get your attention and grab you as you are getting out the door, so they might be counting on talking to me at 7:00 PM, so that's sometimes hard, I have to pretend to go to the bathroom to avoid them.

His habit of leaving the workplace before many of these other employees had not hurt his career in the least. He remained one of the firm's most favored employees, as he had recently been offered an unprecedented multi-month paid leave to spend time with his newborn son.

While the majority of the San Francisco respondents could count on liberating most of the 5-9 PM period for private life, a minority of these professionals did work through the 5-9 PM period on a routine basis. These respondents were the ones who worked in the highly remunerative and "extreme" jobs (Hewlett 2007) so plentiful in the fields of management consulting, corporate law, investment banking, and high-tech engineering. For these extreme workers, it was not uncommon to stay in the office until 7, 8, or 9 PM more often than not, particularly towards the ends of project cycles. But they did not stretch their workdays, they remarked repeatedly, simply for the sake of adding hours. Rather, they had chosen to work in demanding workplaces where the project deadlines were tight, the volume of work was heavy, and people stayed late in order simply because of the volume of work.

The decision whether to work late or not was, for many San Francisco respondents, a matter of keeping pace or outdoing their coworkers and peers. For Carl, an investment banker who typically started work at 6:00 or 6:30 AM, leaving the office before his equally driven peers would trigger these kinds of feelings. Representing himself as a "Type-A" personality, he explained that he did not want to be the person who left the office while others were still toiling away:

That's what it's all about. You're totally competing, you're competing every day here. Type-A personalities compete and so you want to be the top producer in the office and sometimes you feel guilty after a 13-hour day if you're going home while someone else is still working, yeah, I'm definitely in the top group here, I used to work until 7:30 PM or 8:00 PM whereas most people leave before 7:00 PM.

As we see, the San Francisco professionals did not experience the impingements of either the status-group norms familiar to their Parisian counterparts or the societal norms familiar to their Oslo counterparts. For them, the evening hours could be appropriated either for working life or for private life. To the extent that the way they appropriated these hours depended on aspects of the external social environment, the only norms which came into play were the expectations of coworkers, superiors, and clients and the culture of the organization in which they worked. Thus, if any of the San Francisco professional men and women spent this part of the evening working, it was not because they had benchmarked their evening routines against the routines of a particular status group, as in Paris, or the working members of the national-societal community, as in Oslo. Instead, they were responding exclusively to the norms propagated by a local workplace environment.

### **Contrasting the Three Patterns**

By comparing the boundary expectations and orientations of three groups, it becomes immediately apparent that the three groups, comparable in many respects, nevertheless differ in how they appropriate the evening hours. The three-way cross-national comparison shows that these three groups of similarly situated professional men and women approach the evening hours in contrasting ways. These similarly situated groups orient themselves to the work life - private life boundary in different ways which reflect the influence of distinctive reference targets and distinctive forms of temporal territorialization.

The gap between the boundary routines in the three cases is most obvious with respect to temporal reference targets. In the Parisian context, the temporal conventions which contribute the most to the work life - private life boundary are those which relate to the status-group culture of the occupational elite. Among the Parisian professionals, particularly those who wield managerial authority within their employing organization, it is imperative to stay in the office during the hours between 6 PM and 8 PM simply because this is what is expected of the elite *cadre supérieurs*. In the Norwegian context, a more solidaristic, egalitarian, and homogeneous environment, the operative temporal conventions arise from society-wide cultural ideals defining the appropriate placement of the transition from work life to private life and the best way to appropriate the 5-9 PM hours.

The boundary expectations of the Oslo respondents mirror those of their Parisian peers inasmuch as they also reference benchmarking targets outside their local environment. These men and women have a collective attachment to a particular daily rhythm and a particular work life - private life boundary. But there are profound differences between the two cases. In the Parisian case, the dominant temporal expectations governing the construction of this boundary spring from a normatizing process keyed to the production of social differentiation and distinction, while among the Oslo professionals it originates in a normatizing process attuned to the vision of the gender-neutral worker-caretaker. For the Norwegian professionals, leaving the office before 5:00 PM is what the typical Norwegian and Scandinavian worker-caretaker is supposed to do.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas the boundary decisions of the French and Norwegian respondents are informed by expectations related to reference targets beyond their workplace environment such as class-based status groups in the case of the Parisians and the national-societal community in the case of the Norwegians, the San Francisco respondents constitute this boundary solely in light of local expectations rooted in their organizational and occupational environment. Thus, for the San Francisco professional, the boundary expectations regarding the work life - private life interface derive from implicit reference targets belonging to the local social context such as supervisors, clients, peers, and other members of his or her immediate work environment, not distant reference targets such as society-wide status-groups or members of a national-societal community. For this reason, so long as she does not feel personally driven to work during the evenings and she is not defying organizational norms by leaving early, the San Francisco professional will happily leave the office before 6:00 PM. Moreover, in this societal context, a professional fortunate enough to work for a "relaxed" employer can leave the office before 6:00 PM on a regular basis without defying temporal expectations, assuming that her workload is manageable and her personal circumstances are conducive to this work life - private life boundary. Thus, viewed from a cross-national perspective, the San Francisco case represents a distinctive kind of societal context, a context where distant temporal conventions are relatively weak in comparison with the local temporal conventions.

This is not to say that the Parisian or Norwegian respondents do not attend to the more immediate reference targets which occupy center stage in the San Francisco context. In fact, the Norwegian and French respondents do pay close attention to the boundary construction activities and orientations of their peers, coworkers, and the expectations of their employing organizations.

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<sup>20</sup> When these Norwegian respondents make the choice to spend these hours attending to their private lives rather than working, they testify to their full-fledged membership in this lifestyle community coextensive with the nation of Norway or even the Scandinavian countries as a cohesive cultural collectivity.

In each context, these expectations are entrenched in multiple workplaces. But in these cases these local expectations incorporate norms associated with more distant reference targets; within each of the organizations employing the Parisians, there is an implicit recognition of the distinctive evening routines of *cadres*, and *cadres supérieurs*, particularly elite cadres with credentials from prestigious Grande Écoles. Within Norwegian employing organizations there is an implicit understanding of what it means to divide working life from private life in a properly *Scandinavian* way.

A similar pattern holds with regard to temporal zoning patterns. When the Oslo professionals arrive at 5:00 PM, they confront sociocultural expectations which flag the next three hours as private time or family time, whatever their class, gender, age, or family status. The Norwegian presumption in favor of constituting this period as self time or family time represents an integral part of Norwegian work culture shared across classes, occupational groups, and employing organizations. In the Parisian case, these same clock hours are marked as a special kind of "social" work time where *cadres* and *cadres supérieurs* can commune with one another, dramatize their authority, and practice their *métier* undistracted. For the San Francisco respondents, these hours are much less strongly distinguished from the preceding hours and the subsequent hours.

In San Francisco the weak territorialization of the early evening, coupled with the salience of the norms associated with local reference targets, means that the San Francisco respondents elude the influence of the temporal alignment pressures impinging on their Parisian and Norwegian counterparts. As a result, the San Francisco professionals, men and women who enjoyed more temporal flexibility in the early evening than their Parisian counterparts or Norwegian counterparts, experience less serious temporal mismatch problems with either significant others or children. When the partnered but childless San Francisco men, for example, spend parts of the 5- 9 PM period in the office, they are not afflicted with the pangs of guilt vis-à-vis their romantic companions which beset their Norwegian counterparts. However, compared to the Parisian context, the San Francisco context offers less evidence of what one could call forced temporal alignment on the part of the male San Francisco parenting professionals. None of the parenting professionals in San Francisco saw fit to postpone their children's bedtimes so that they could regularly stay in the office until 8:00 PM.

### **Temporal Orders and Societal Stratification Cultures**

While the chapter's conclusions are necessarily exploratory and heuristic, they bring new life to old questions about the elusive linkage between sociocultural influences and patterns of work and private life in different societal and cultural contexts. Revealing deep-seated differences between the kinds of boundary expectations and normatizing pressures operative in different societies, this comparative study yields findings which point to a connection between these expectations and the stratification culture of the societies in which they materialize. As we have seen from our mapping of these experiential and cultural processes, there are three distinctive patterns of temporal benchmarking and temporal zoning among comparable groups of individuals who occupy analogous parts of social space (Bourdieu 1989). These three patterns correspond to the distinctive stratification cultures dominant in the three societal contexts under study (Lamont 1992, Smelser 1973: 75).

In the two European cases, the evening hours during the workweek are strongly territorialized as either private time or working time. When disposing of these hours, business professionals in the two countries are apt to benchmark their orientation and behavior against the

orientation and behavior of reference targets beyond their immediate social environment. In the San Francisco case, however, the respondents benchmark their evening routines exclusively against the expectations of local reference targets, typically norms of their department or employing organization. Thus, the San Francisco case differs from the two European cases inasmuch as it confronts business professionals with extremely weak macrotemporal conventions which cannot compete with the comparatively strong temporal conventions issuing from the workplace and the employing organization.

The two European cases offer examples of environments with strong macrotemporal conventions which set the parameters professionals' boundary decisions. In the Parisian milieu, with its hierarchic, formalized, and generalized status order and its "backloaded" daily rhythm, the evening hours become territorialized as a special kind of working time which can be described both as organizational "facetime" and status-group time defined by the identity of the *cadre* and the *cadre supérieur*. In this context, the evening social interaction which takes place in the Parisian workplace serves as a symbolically potent ritual which sustains the individual's sense of identity as a *cadre* or a *cadre supérieur*. In the Parisian context, the corporate professional's presence in the office during the 5-9 PM period, specifically the period between 6 PM and 8 PM, serves as a mark of coveted "symbolic distinction" at the same time that it dramatizes his or her authority and responsibility within the organization (Baudeolot & Gollac 2003, Cousin 2003, Bourdieu 1989). In Paris the practice of working during these hours is linked to a status culture binding authority, rank, and position together with the practice of a distinguished *métier*. Thus, in this context, to spend the evening hours in the office and to conspicuously sacrifice potential self time is to participate in a public status group ritual (Collins 2004: 272-5) which serves to enact a salient categorical identity and dramatize negative solidarity vis-à-vis the less elevated *noncadres* who habitually leave earlier, around 6:00 PM. In this context, the evening hours are strongly territorialized as both organizational time and as a social kind of working time.

Such supra-organizational collective conventions also make an appearance in the equally corporatist but more egalitarian and solidaristic Norwegian context. Here, however, temporal benchmarking is oriented to the workforce as a whole and the "lifestyle community" to which the workforce belongs. In this societal environment, the professional who quits the office early demonstrates his commitment to his private life and, indirectly, his adherence to a strongly felt cultural ideal regarding what constitutes a full and fulfilling private life. In this lifestyle community, all working people, regardless of class or gender, are subject to strong social and cultural pressures to reserve time for themselves, their friends, and their families in the evenings. In this setting, to use the early evening these hours for private life appears more acceptable than donating them to one's greedy employing organization or using them to affirm their position in a transorganizational status hierarchy. While this pressure is particularly strong for those with small children and other dependents for whom they have personal responsibility (Johansen 2007), it does impinge on those with older children and those without children as well.

San Francisco stands alone as the context where norms associated with interactional reference targets such as peer groups, superiors, and employing organizations come to the fore as the most salient normatizing forces with the most influence on elite business professionals' boundary decisions. In this societal context, the weekday evening is weakly territorialized and temporal benchmarking is oriented towards local contexts and actors relatively unconstrained by processes oriented to more socially remote targets. Many organizations work their professional employees around the clock while others did take steps to facilitate early departures from the

office. Moreover, the San Francisco professionals considered the "greediness" (Blair-Loy 2003, Coser 1974) of the work environment, along with their family status, the single most important determinant of the evening routines. Thus, within the achievement-oriented yet egalitarian stratification culture in which the San Francisco group lives and works, the most salient and significant acts of temporal benchmarking take local kinds of reference targets such as workplaces, work peers, and organizations as the relevant benchmarking targets.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

As the findings illustrate, occupationally successful professionals appropriate the evening hours differently in France, Norway, and the United States. Even among individuals who confront similar demands on their temporal resources and share similar life circumstances, evening routines vary in patterned ways along with the processes of temporal benchmarking and temporal zoning which inform them. Business professionals working and living in these two corporatist European social environments divide the evening hours up between working life and private life with an eye to benchmarking themselves against the behaviors ascribed to members of sociocultural categories such as *cadres* and idealized worker-caretakers. In the American context, however, these very same business professionals look exclusively to their local environment for cues about how to dispose of these hours. In this environment, local temporal conventions acquire an autonomy they lack in the two European environments.

Business professionals living and working in the San Francisco context, and most probably other urban American settings, tend to follow evening routines which reflect the normative pressures emanating from an immediate work environment relatively unconstrained by external cultural forces. Thus, these influences operate relatively autonomously with respect to temporal orders issuing from more diffuse and loosely bounded higher-level social formations (Turner 2002). In both the French and the Norwegian cases, however, the professionals' evening routines are shaped not only by normative pressures refracted through an autonomous organizational environment, but by influences originating in higher-level social structures such as status groups and national-societal communities (Parsons 2007 [1979]). In these two settings, the professional does organize her evenings in deference to her employer's "temporal regime" (Sabelis 2007) and other purely local norms and conventions specific to her organizational environment or social networks. But in these contexts, the local temporal conventions constitute specifications of conventions associated with higher-level social formations and categories. Thus, in observing the norm of working late in France or leaving early in Norway, the professional responds to localized conventions but also affirms an identity as a *member of a categorical social unit* such as a status-group (France) or the community of hybrid worker-caretakers (Norway).

As this chapter shows, these temporal orders do not always lend themselves to harmonization. In the French case, there can be a disconnect between the organization's temporal regime and the temporal regime of the working *cadre*, on the one hand, and the "temporal habitus" (Elias 1992) of the individual professional, on the other hand. When the workday continues into the evening solely so that the *cadre* can observe the imperative to stay late in the office, the prolongation of the workday can appear as an imposition which serves the organization but does little for the individual professional, particularly when the evening hours are frittered away in relatively unnecessary tasks. This seems to be true for those French professionals who do not identify particularly deeply with their occupational status as a *cadre*. In the Norwegian case, on the other hand, the temporal habitus of the individual appears aligned



with the with the supra-organizational mandate to leave work early, a mandate designed for a gender-neutral worker-caretaker. Even the most work-centric of the Norwegian respondents do not dismiss the practice of leaving the office at 4:30 PM, a practice common in many large firms and the Norwegian state sector. Further, those employing organizations which did insist that their professional employees stay in the office during the 5-9 PM period as a matter of course (such as global management consultancies), were inevitably represented as deviant organizations which defy the Norwegian prescription concerning early departures from the office. The more the organization honors this mandate, the more "Norwegian" its approach to working hours and work schedules. In the American case, the professional has to deal with an employer which had a relatively free hand in deciding when the workday should end. Thus, unlike the French professional, if the American professional grows tired of long workdays, she can usually find another employer who could tolerate earlier departures, assuming that she was willing to settle for a less remunerative and prestigious position. Thus, the Americans felt that they could exercise some autonomy in orchestrating their evening routines, as they could select from a menu of more or less demanding workplaces when it came to departure times.

The findings from this cross-national study bear on the nexus of gender and work which has drawn so much attention from scholars in the Europe and the United States. The different temporal conventions evident in the three cases all have a strong connection with gender regimes (Connell 1987), forms of gender differentiation (Acker 1992), and the gendered division of labor (Blair-Loy & Jacobs 2003). It is not surprising that the macrotemporal conventions prevailing within the French upper-middle class affirm the necessity of working during the 5 PM to 9 PM period and have a masculinizing flavor. In this Latin European environment which welcomes a "traditional" gendered division of labor (Hofstede 1998), professional women are supposed to behave in a masculine way and work late into the evenings, regardless of their parenting status. In the much more gender-egalitarian Norwegian environment, men with caretaking duties are subjected to strong pressures to leave the office early and put limits on their working hours in deference to their parental duties. Here, the operative macrotemporal conventions, together with public policies and arrangements conducive to shared parenting (Aarseth 2007, Ellingsæter 2005), incline both women and men towards a more egalitarian division of paid work and household labor. In Norway, these temporal conventions impose constraints on the working day and therefore make it difficult for professionals of both genders to allocate their evenings for work rather than private life. The informal stricture on evening work thus has an impact on the evening routines of childless professionals as well as parenting professionals.

In the French and Norwegian cases, the operative macrotemporal conventions seem to favor a stereotypically masculine (France) or feminine (Norway) approach to the experiential realms of work life and private life. However, it is important to recall that these conventions affect the work habits men and women alike, even if men and women often respond differently to them. Moreover, the temporal benchmarking practices of the French and the Norwegians are *not* oriented to explicitly gendered references targets. The French *cadre is* not presumed to be male and the Norwegian worker-caretakers are not presumed to be female. In the American case, there is actually a greater scope for an explicit gendering of the evening routines and the temporal conventions which structure them simply because men and women are presumed to exercise more individual discretion in how they appropriate the evening hours and to exhibit their masculinity or femininity through these decisions (Poster 1999). When women choose to work in more "family-friendly" organizations and occupations with relatively relaxed temporal regimes and men elect to work in more rigorous organizations more taxing temporal regimes,

then these women and men are simply enacting gendered identities. Men are conforming to the gendered code of the hardworking "go-to-guy" willing to stay the course until the job gets done (Cooper 2000, Weiss 1990) and women are exemplifying the worker who is willing to work less so she can attend to domestic responsibilities (Acker 1992, 1990). Thus, to a much greater degree than their Norwegian or French counterparts, when professional women and men in San Francisco choose to work in organizations with late hours or early hours cultures, they are seen to be playing out an intrinsically gendered behavioral code which prescribes a particular work-life balance. Insofar as the Americans feel empowered to individualize their evening routines, they also feel able to assert their own authentically gendered temporal habitus.

This chapter demonstrates the profound ways in which societal context shapes the mundane practices of dividing working life from private life among individuals who vary little in terms of their occupational and sociodemographic profiles. In the two European contexts, these professionals confront strongly territorialized evening hours. The primary reference targets which come into play for the French and Norwegian professionals originate in the social formations located "above" the organizational level of social life (Turner 2002). In the Parisian context with its more hierarchic and corporatist stratification culture as well as in the Norwegian context with its comparatively "tender" (Hofstede 2003, 1998) gender culture and egalitarian and solidaristic stratification culture, this temporal benchmarking process addresses status groups and national-societal communities rather than the immediate workplace, and the evening hours are more strongly territorialized. In the French context temporal benchmarking is oriented to status groups and in the Norwegian setting such benchmarking is geared towards the enactment of an idealized social category which transcends the work milieu. In the French context, these macrotemporal conventions generate negative solidarity between higher and lower status groups. In Norway, however, such conventions knit together the workforce as a whole across class lines.

Finally, this examination of these professionals' evening hour routines shows that the motivational fields affecting these elite business professionals differs by societal context. When the French, Norwegian, and American elite business professional decides what to do with his or her evening, he or she is responding not only to the demands of his or her workload, the expectations of his or her peers and clients, and the temporal regime of his or her employing organization. He or she is also responding to culturally specific internalized perceptions of what is an appropriate use of his or her evening hours, as well as the external incentives, rewards, opportunities, and exigencies relating to work and private life.<sup>21</sup>

The French, Norwegian, or American elite business professional finds himself or herself in a "space" of workstyles (Bourdieu 1989 [1984]). Like the individual navigating through the space of lifestyle, the individual navigating through this space of workstyles marks himself or herself as positively or negatively distinguished relative to other individuals within the field based on his or her taste for particular types of work (Bourdieu 1989: 20, Bourdieu 1984 [1979]). But his or her position is also marked by practices involving the appropriation, utilization, and

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<sup>21</sup> Here I draw upon Levi Martin's very broad definition of field theory in his overview (Levi Martin 2003). I operate from the assumption that patterned motivations and practical dispositions emerge from the encounter between social actors endowed with culturally specific predispositions and societally specific fields of action and motivation (Rueschemeyer 2009: 243-6, Levi Martin 2003: 36-8, Lamont 1992, Bourdieu 1990 [1980]). This broad conception of fields leaves room for action fields more loosely structured than Bourdieu's fields of "organized striving," fields where "contestants" struggle with each other to enhance their relative standing within a structured space of positions arranged in a hierarchic order (Schwartz 1995, Bourdieu 1989 [1984]).

expenditure of "generative" resources, namely time, vital energy, and attention. Individuals who work during the evening hours, by choosing to work while they could potentially go home, are thereby demonstrating a particular taste for work. Within the world of the Parisian professional, the taste for evening work confers an important kind of positive distinction.

But this taste confers a negative kind of distinction within the Norwegian context. In this much more solidaristic and gender-egalitarian society, exhibiting the taste for hard work does deliver the kind of status payoff that it does in the French context, even among the women and men who occupy the top of the socioeconomic pyramid. In fact, in the Norwegian context, the claims to social distinction made by elite business professionals (both women and men) who can point to the ways they have put work "in its place" often appear more credible than the claims made by their more work-centric peers.

Business professionals living and working in American society, with its distinctively loose daily rhythm and distinctive stratification culture, face a distinctive constellation of autonomous localized temporal conventions. They look only to their immediate environment in deciding how to allocate the evening hours between 5 PM and 9 PM. In this sense, the American context can be distinguished on a fundamental level from the two European contexts. In the American setting localized temporal reference targets predominate over more socially remote reference targets and temporal zoning remains highly specific to the individual and his or her work milieu.

## **Chapter 4: Career Convergences: A Set-Theoretic Study of Matched French, Norwegian, and American Male Management Consultants**

This chapter compares and contrasts the educational backgrounds, work profiles, and career trajectories of three groups of biographically matched male consultants employed by the Paris, Oslo, and San Francisco offices of the same Big Three elite global management consultancy. By undertaking such a cross-national comparison of matched individuals nearly identical in terms of their ascriptive attributes (gender, ethnicity, life stage), as well as their educational backgrounds, occupational trajectories and fields, and organizational affiliations, this chapter exploits an unusual opportunity to isolate and identify the various causal roles played by national-societal context in shaping the individuals' experiences of various aspects of their working lives and occupational careers (Crompton & Birkelund 2000: 335-6). By examining these biographical dimensions of variation cross-nationally, the analysis is able to show how national context comes into play as a decisive influence in the lives of sociodemographically similar individuals who have been channeled through parallel educational institutions and have wound up working in the same positions for the same global firm.

The chapter's individual-level matching strategy affords explanatory leverage over questions regarding the interplay of individual goals and aspirations, local life context factors, and macrostructural/macrocultural environments. It makes it possible to analyze the relationship between the ways in which French, Norwegian, and American professional men with very similar occupational goals and aspirations shape their work and career trajectories. Grounded in rich data, such a study promises to shed light on several elusive questions within cross-national life course research, questions relating to the effects of societal educational and employment regimes on partner choices (Blossfeld & Timm 2003, Kalmijn 1998), the age-grading effects of particular educational and employment regimes (Featherman 1983).

### **Why Management Consultants Working at a Big Three Firm?**

At first glance, Big Three management consultants might seem an odd choice for such a cross-national comparison, as the management consulting field originated in the United States and still carries with it a decidedly American "flavor."<sup>22</sup> And yet, as a research setting, the Big Three management consulting firm constitutes a perfect organizational environment in which to find the kind of biographically matched individuals suitable for such a cross-national comparison.

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<sup>22</sup> While the Big Three American management consultancy did exit the 1980s as an American institution, it enters the 21st century as an increasingly globalized institution. At present, the "Big Three" elite management consultancies (McKinsey, BCG, and Bain) have evolved beyond their American origins to become some of the most "transnationalized" organizations within the entire business world, at least in terms of the profiles of their professional workforce. BCG, for example, employs consultants from over 20 countries in its global operations. This evolution is borne out in the trajectory of McKinsey, probably the preeminent management consultancy in the United States and perhaps the world as a whole. McKinsey appointed its first non-American worldwide managing director, Rajat Gupta, in 1994. By then, the firm already earned 60% of its revenues outside the United States and employed people from over 20 different countries. Gupta, raised and educated in India, was hired by McKinsey in the 1970s in the New York office after distinguishing himself at Harvard Business School. McKinsey, in Gupta's words, had become a "*global institution*" relatively insensitive to the nationality of its professional employees. For historical reasons having to do with the development of professional services firms, almost every single one of these highly desirable firms originated in the United States.

While it is true that the field of management consulting originated in the United States during the 1960s and matured in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s (McKenna 2006), consulting firms have entered the 21st century as extremely transnationalized organizations. Both integrated and decentralized, today's Big Three management consulting firm employs a multinational workforce across its numerous offices located in many different countries. However, each office assembles most of its own consulting staff by recruiting consultants from its host country. This is particularly true in the North America and Western Europe, where local institutions produce highly qualified recruitment pools of business and technical graduates.

While the Big Three management consultancy employs a heterogeneous consultant workforce from the standpoint of nationality, it employs a very homogeneous workforce from the standpoint of educational backgrounds and work experience. Rather than hiring the bulk of their consulting staff from companies or "client-land" (LeTrent-Jones 2001), the Big Three consultancies recruit the majority of their entry-level analysts and entry-level associates straight out of undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly those which specialize in economics, business, or the hard sciences. This pattern of recruitment, which began in the early 1960s in the United States (McKenna 2006), enables the firms to capitalize on the youth, energy, and ambition of individuals at the launching stage of the business careers (Bartholome & Evans 1979). Indeed, in conjunction with their pyramidal "leverage" model<sup>23</sup> and their outsize billing rates, it is the tremendous toil of these highly motivated "grinders" plucked out of colleges and universities which sustains the immense revenues generated by the Big Three firms (LeTrent-Jones 2001).

For the last two decades, the elite consulting firms have enjoyed immense success in their recruitment efforts vis-à-vis the world's leading educational institutions specializing in technical fields, economics, and allied business fields. Each vacancy at one of the Big Three consultancies usually attracts a minimum of 100 applicants and often many more. In the United States and European countries, the firm's recruitment efforts are targeted towards a handful of elite institutions (Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, Harvard, Stanford, Northwestern, etc. in the US, Polytechnique and HEC in France, etc.). The popularity of the Big Three firms among the graduates of these institutions cuts across national borders. In the United States, during the high water mark of management consulting in 1999, 25% of Harvard's graduating class competed for entry-level positions at a single Big Three management consultancy (BCG) (Lemann 1999). A year earlier, over a third of all graduating MBAs from Wharton, Northwestern, MIT, Harvard, and the Booth School at the University of Chicago headed straight for jobs in management consultancies such as CapGemini, Accenture, BCG, Bain, McKinsey, Booz, Allen & Hamilton (Lublin & Hausman 1999) The appeal of these global firms is not confined to graduates of American business schools and colleges. When students attending the top 80 European MBA

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<sup>23</sup> Unlike most companies, elite management consulting and investment banking firms are built around the "leverage model." The *leverage model* makes it possible for a small number of highly paid "minders" to appropriate a very large proportion of the firm's revenues, while leading the much larger number of less highly remunerated "grinders" who carry out the firm's revenue-generating projects (O'Shea & Madigan 1997: 293-4, LeTrent-Jones 2001: 128). Whether paired with an investor-organized or a partnership-organized ownership structure, the leverage model can generate immense profits for the firm's owners as long as the firm can command high billing rates from clients. The leverage model works best when the firm can count on a steady flow of hardworking, motivated, and amenable workers ready, able, and willing to carry out the firm's demanding projects. The largest and deepest pool of prospective grinders, as such firms have learned through long experience, is to be found not in client companies or "client-land" as it is called within consulting, but in undergraduate and graduate programs within the world's leading universities (LeTrent-Jones 2001, Lemann 1999).

programs were invited to rank the ten most desirable places to start their post-MBA careers, they placed elite management consultancies McKinsey and BCG in the top the fourth positions respectively (2008 Pan-European MBA Survey).

While these firms depend on similar recruitment channels and screening procedures to assemble their multinational consultant workforces, it is important to note that each office is responsible for its own recruiting, and each office draws from a nationally specific recruitment pool. With the partial exception of the largest offices in New York and London, each member of the Bain and Company network of offices recruits from a nationally specific group of applicants drawn from the office's home country. Because the Big Three firm employs similar recruitment channels and similar screening procedures, but uses them to recruit nationally specific groups of employees, it affords an excellent opportunity to contrast the career trajectories and family trajectories of individuals who are nearly perfectly matched along a number of objective and subjective dimensions.<sup>24</sup> This chapter therefore compares and contrasts three groups of fifteen male junior consultants ranging from associate to project manager along a variety of dimensions pertaining to the job, the intensity and volume of work, their ages, their partner trajectories, the occupational profiles of their partners, and their parenting trajectories.

### **The Demands of the Job**

While the members of the three groups worked under roughly similar conditions and constraints, the demands of the job did vary slightly across the three groups.<sup>25</sup> As the map indicates, the French consultants work extremely long hours and do a fair amount of intra-European traveling. With one exception, French consultants toiled for fourteen and even fifteen hours during "normal" workdays, even when their projects were in the early stages of the project cycle. As one of the consultants reported:

We work many hours here. Many hours. The average day here starts at 9:00 AM or 9:30 AM and ends around 11 PM or midnight. Sometimes even later.

We work fifteen hours per day on an average day at this firm.

As another, more cynical, French consultant put it, those who made it to the next level were the ones who could marshal the extraordinary stamina and endurance which the firm demanded of its junior consultants:

Those who stay and rise to the top in this consultancy are the ones who can work until three in the morning while their neighbor falls by the wayside at two in the morning.

For another French consultant, the pace, pressure, and hours combined to deliver a knockout punch his very first year on the job. After "crunching numbers" from 9 AM to 2 AM every day for eight months, he found himself "unable to speak or get out of bed for two weeks." Once he recovered from his nervous breakdown, he resumed working a "more liveable" 9 AM to 11 PM schedule. For this consultant, a twelve-hour workday was a "light day." Another French consultant explained why it is that his French colleagues outwork their American counterparts,

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<sup>24</sup> The Big Three firms employ an intensive screening process to weed out "misfit", typically resulting in a pool of recruits who have very similar personality profiles (see Rivera 2008).

<sup>25</sup> In all three countries, the Big Three management consultancies are widely known as exceptionally demanding workplaces, even with the demanding professional services arena. Because of demanding clients, high billing rates, ambitious partners, and tight timelines, almost every project requires workweeks of 60+ hours and 2-3 days travel to client sites every week, as well as near 24-7 availability to the client (Perlow & Porter 2009, LeTrent-Jones 2001, Pinault 2000).

attributing the more demanding work conditions to the higher position of the firm in France versus the United States:

To work in a Big Three consulting firm in France is to be have one of the very best jobs in the country. The hours here are much tougher than the hours in the US, because there are so many more consultants and consulting firms in the US. When I worked out the firm's Chicago office, I left at 8:00 PM.

This would never happen here in the Paris office.

In explaining how they coped with these marathon workweeks, the French consultants referenced their experience gaining admission to the elite Grande École. This experience had inured them to the intense pressure, the tight timelines, and the endless performance evaluations which they faced as management consultants working for a Big Three consultancy. As one French consultant put it:

I never been afraid of the pressure and the long hours. Just to get to this point, I have had to work all the time and deal with tremendous pressures. So I've become accustomed to this kind of situation. It seems completely normal to me.

Though many of the French consultants expressed dissatisfaction with the intense pressure, the travel, the heavy workloads, and the extreme hours, they felt that this price was worth paying in view of the experience they garnered as consultants. Moreover, even when they left the firms and joined the "more relaxed" French companies, they might well still have a strenuous working life full of travel and long workweeks. One French consultant predicted a post-consulting workweek which never dropped below sixty hours per week:

I can accept these working conditions because they are part of my education in a way. Just like I studied 60-70 hours a week to gain admission to École Polytechnique, I am working 70 hours per week so that I can succeed here and gain a good reputation. And I might well work 60 hours a week for my next employer, that's for sure. That's a pretty standard workweek for an executive at a large French company.

Pascal could see himself working sixty or more hours a week even after leaving the consultancy and joining a more typical French company as an executive or manager.

Marathon work hours were not the only challenge with which the French consultants had to cope. Because the Paris office of the consultancy was staffed with highly capable consultants with rigorous training and a wide variety of skills, many of the consultants found themselves staffed on projects with non-French clients located outside the country. During these projects, they followed the "American-style" pattern of working out of a hotel located near the client's site. In the course of a single year, once consultant had spent significant amounts of time working out of hotels in Greece, Germany, the UK, and Spain. Another consultant found it so aggravating to "get on an airplane at 7:00 AM every Monday and flying to remote places in Germany" that he considered quitting the firm.

While they faced heavy demands on their time and energy, the French consultants could avail themselves of generous leaves. All of the French consultants took between 4 and 5 weeks worth of vacation most years, and rarely worked during August, the summer holiday month when the French business world shut down.<sup>26</sup> The office practically closed down during the month of August as the Norwegian economy went into hibernation during this month and client

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<sup>26</sup> The Norwegians also enjoyed about the same amount of paid guaranteed vacation time as their French counterparts, although their summer holidays took place in July rather than August.

work dried up. In addition, the consultants enjoyed a guaranteed 10 day vacation during the Christmas holiday and a couple days off during the Easter break as well.

The Norwegian consultants generally did not work at the same pace as their Parisian counterparts. Unlike the French consultants, they worked in an office where the partners had, under some pressure from junior consultants, made an informal commitment to keeping the "baseline" workweek at 60-65 hours, and where junior consultants were did not leave the Scandinavian area much for assignments. Unless the project deadline was looming, the majority of the Norwegian project managers sent their teams home between 8 PM and 10 PM. On Fridays, most of the consulting staff left the office at 6:00 PM, to return on Monday morning. Looking forward to a more relaxed working life in the future, Espen took inspiration from the experience of his friend, who had recently left to work in a large Norwegian company headquartered in Oslo. He had heard that this person had managed to cut his workweek down to an average of less than fifty hours a week. These stories circulated around the firm's junior ranks, and made an impression on all of the consultants I interviewed. As another consultant explained:

Almost all of the people I know who have left the firm have gained between ten and twenty hours for themselves by quitting this firm and going to work in the strategy departments of large Norwegian companies. It's almost impossible to get a job in a Norwegian company where you work as much as we do here. Even the people working in the private equity firms here in Oslo don't work our hours.

This expectation was rooted in reality. When I re-interviewed Espen two years after leaving the firm, while he was working in the Oslo office of a pan-Scandinavian investment banking firm, he confirmed that he had reduced his workweek by an average of fifteen hours per week. His average workday had declined from fourteen hours to eleven hours and he was able to get home by 8:00 PM most nights. While the French consultants did not expect to maintain the pace and work intensity they sustained at the consultancy during the next phase of their working lives, they did foresee many sixty hour workweeks in their professional futures. The Norwegian consultants, however, were aware that a sixty hour workweek put them at the extreme end of the Norwegian work hours spectrum. Tellingly, the only consultants who anticipated working 60+ hour workweeks routinely once they had left the consultancy were the ones determined to pursue their careers outside of Norway.

Compared with the French group, the work hours of the Americans did not appear particularly extreme. In fact, the fourteen and fifteen hour days reported by the French were rarer among the American consultants working out of the San Francisco office. Several American project managers "on the lower end" confessed that they rarely exceeded 60 hours per week. Another American consultant explained that he and his compatriots would "complain quite bitterly" if the workweek started to creep above 14 hours a day or started to consume parts of the weekends. Luckily, an 8:00 to 11:00 PM day was an "unusual occurrence."

While the Americans did not have to work quite as long days as the French, they had to do even more traveling and had shorter vacations. Eight of the Americans had spent over half of the year doing project work for clients located in another part of the United States, usually in another time zone. One of the American consultants remembered the damage which this travel schedule had inflicted on a budding romance only four months old. The romance had fallen apart after he had been assigned to a project which required him to spend every week on the East Coast. As for vacations, none of the Americans had ever taken more than four weeks of paid



leave in one year, and a quarter of the Americans had taken less than three weeks of vacation during at least one of the years they worked as consultants.

When it came to their expectations about future working conditions, the Americans diverged more from the Norwegians than the French. Based on the experience of other ex-consultants, the Americans could expect a gain of roughly eight to ten hours per week, a temporal gain which exceeded the gain expected by the French consultants but did not come close to the gains expected by the Norwegians. However, where the Americans expected to make improvements in their lifestyle was in terms of the amount of traveling they did. Based on the experiences of previous cohorts, the Americans anticipated a dramatic reduction in the amount of traveling they did for work. One of the Americans explained that his friend who had gone to work in the strategy department of a Bay Area high-tech company finally "got to sleep in his own bed" on a regular basis.

### **The Perceptions of the Job and the Work: Three-way Cross-National Convergence**

Members of all three groups approached their stint in consulting in fundamentally the same way, as a transitional phase in their careers, a kind of unique and short-term apprenticeship which bridged the purely educational phase and the purely professional phase of their work lives. They saw the 3-5 years they expected to spend as associates and potentially project managers at the firm as a kind of hyper-intense and compressed business training which would serve them even better than the training they had received in their educational institutions. It was virtually impossible, as a Norwegian consultant declared, to find this type of training anywhere besides one of the Big Three management consultancies. It was as a management consultant, rather than at his university, that he had received his "real training." As he explained:

My time here has been like getting another education. It made it possible for me to acquire a portfolio of skills which complemented the skills I acquired in my scientific studies at school.

This French consultant was prepared to spend several more years in his twenties working as a management consultant "in order to expand" his "professional possibilities" down the road. One of his American counterparts stressed the wide variety of skills which he gained as a result of this apprenticeship, saying "since I've been at the firm, I've worked on strategy and operations projects, and I've developed my problem-solving skills, my analytical skills, but also my communication and interpersonal skills a hundredfold." As one of the Norwegian consultants observed, his four years at the firm represented "investing rather than harvesting" years because he was still building the foundation for his real career. Another Norwegian consultant explained that he never "planned on staying here many years," but that he felt fortunate that he was able to "complete" his education in such a way: .

The way that I see it, it's a part of your education...sort of a post-MBA education. It's really unique because it gives you the chance to work within many different industries and in many different functional areas such as strategy, operations, finance, due diligence, marketing, practically anything you can think of.

Another American consultant explained that, by gaining expertise and experience in the full spectrum of functional specializations, he was building a foundation for a career in line management culminating in a CEO position. There was little point in prematurely narrowing their professional focus before they had found the right functional niche for themselves:

I'd like to run a business. It's my ultimate career goal, it's what I'd like

to do the rest of my career. I've done a lot of strategy stuff already, and now I am getting exposure to different functional areas like finance, marketing, operations, so once I move around and get all that experience, I will be well-suited to running an entire company.

By participating in such a wide range of projects with such a wide variety of clients, these consultants not only acquired particular competencies and forms of expertise, but learned how to apply these skills to solve real problems facing real firms. The Norwegian consultant Olaf explained that he had never really understood how "decisions were made" in companies until he had worked on several consulting projects for clients.

Members of all three groups also saw their short-term stints as management consultants as a part of their careers where they could leave an indelible imprint on the corporate world despite their youth and inexperience. A multi-year stint at their Big Three firm gave them the chance to participate in decisions which would "make it to the front pages of the business paper," as one French consultant explained. One thirty-year old American consultant remembered his first years at the consultancy, when he dispensed advice to "C-level people all over Europe" and felt "on top of the world," asking rhetorically "where else can a twenty seven year old close a deal worth \$250 million?" For one of the French consultants, working as a project manager at the firm meant that powerful executives would take his advice very seriously despite the fact that they had spent their entire careers working in their industry and he had spent a grand total of three months studying it. It is gratifying, he revealed, to "have a seat at the table with such prominent and powerful people."

The important thing is the professional apprenticeship that puts you in contact with business elites. Because then you can get a real sense of how they do things.

Moreover, with his lack of experience, at any normal company he would find himself "several levels lower" than the people with whom he interacted as a Big Three management consultant. A Norwegian consultant made the same point in slightly different terms, talking about the "impact" of the firm's activities on the Norwegian business world:

This firm has a lot of impact on the Norwegian business world, it more impact than practically any other firm. Here as a consultant you get to work with the largest companies in the country on some of the biggest issues. Here we are directly involved in most of the big deals, the biggest mergers, or the biggest operations campaigns in the biggest companies in the country. And this can be very exciting for someone straight out of school without a lot of work experience.

One of the American consultants wondered aloud whether someone only five years out of business school was truly qualified to be making such "big decisions" for large and important client companies:

It can happen that you're dealing with a major company that everybody has heard of and everybody you know has heard of and you're doing something big for them..and it sometimes comes to me as a sudden 'shazzam', you know, I'll be like 'wow!'...you know, I'm sitting here and I'm inside thirty and I'm going, you now, I'm looking at the two numbers and I'm making a judgment, and based on what I come up with, big things are going to happen. Like, big enough that I shouldn't be sitting here.

A French consultant also noted the fact that in no other corner of the corporate world could someone so green and inexperienced make such weighty decisions. It was only because he worked for one of the Big-Three management consultancies that his very experienced and elevated clients would actually listen to him.

Just as members of all three groups approached their stints in management consulting as both a "paid education" and a "career booster," they also viewed this stint as a test of their potential as future executives and business leaders. Members of all three groups had the "career payoff" uppermost in their mind when weighing the offer. As an American consultant put it, "I never would have even considered turning down an offer from such an elite firm." The payoff of a stint at such an elite firm was not lost on the French or the Norwegians either. One of the French consultants indicated that he would never have turned down an offer from a firm with such a "prestigious name," as a stint at the firm was bound to lead to many good career prospects. A stint at the firm, as he said, would do more to accelerate one's career than any other kind of work experience. An American consultant exclaimed that he would never apply himself to the same extent if he worked for a firm without the same "brand power."

I wouldn't work this hard for Accenture and I'm being very candid at the risk of sounding arrogant. It's not because I take such pride in working at the firm but the brand has power.

The Norwegians and the French likewise extolled the firm's "brand name."

All of the consultants paid heed to the need to stay in the firm for a minimum of 3-4 years so that they could prove themselves and put themselves in a position for the promotion to the coveted project manager position.<sup>27</sup> Even those who were tempted to quit decided to stay so that they could reap of the "career payoff" accruing to those who reached the level of project manager at a Big Three consultancy. An extra year or two could enhance their professional capital and give them a crucial edge in the competitive post-consulting job market. One American consultant was ready to quit after four years at the firm, but he "gritted his teeth and gutted it out" so that he could be promoted to project manager. He knew that future employers would find it impressive that he had managed to reach this coveted position, only two rungs down the ladder from partner. In the eyes of potential post-consulting employers, a stint of five years or longer in the firm signaled a level of ability and endurance which could only enhance the candidate's appeal and marketability. One of the French consultants quickly discovered the truth of this perception once he left his consultancy and sought employment as an executive with large public companies:

If I can show that I did five years in a Big Three management consulting firm, that's going to open a lot of doors for me. The first thing that any recruiter or head hunter or hiring person looks at, they say 'five years in consulting,' That's what it says on my r sum  - That is, I think statistically, much longer than most people stay.

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<sup>27</sup> Less than 10% of consulting associates working in a Big Three firm clear the hurdles necessary for appointment as partner, mostly because these organizations are designed as very steep pyramids, where the grinders (analysts, associates, engagement/project managers, and associate principals) far outnumber the relatively few partners and directors sitting atop the organization and because of the "up-or-out" promotion system which created vast amounts of attrition in the junior ranks. The vast majority of individuals who make the transition from a university directly to one of the Big Three elite management consultancies do so with the understanding that they will spend less than a decade at the firm, and most likely less than 5 years. The average tenure for junior consultants at the "Big Three" (Bain, BCG, and McKinsey), for example, is three years.

Unlike their French and American counterparts, however, the Norwegian management consultants did not feel as much pressure to reach the project manager level in order to prove their worth to prospective employers later on. The Norwegian consultant Borg managed to reach the associate level at the firm in record time, but then decided against working himself to the bone in order to secure the project manager position. As Borg recounted:

I have actually achieved my first goal very quickly, I became an associate in less than two years, and so that felt very good. But now I don't know whether I really want to move on to the project manager role.

Rather than exerting himself to move up into this role, he quit after working for a year as the firm's marketing manager. This early departure did not do any damage to his career, however, as he quickly found a very good strategy position with a large Norwegian company.

Just as members of all three groups shared the same understanding of their time-delimited stint as management consultants in the Big Three firm as a singular opportunity to enhance their skills, their expertise, and their future marketability, they also treated this stint as a test of their capacity to deal with the extreme demands imposed by the consulting environment. With four to five years of management consulting under their belt, they figured, no prospective employer would doubt their capacity for hard work and sustained effort. Given the well-deserved reputation of their Big Three consulting firm for arduous assignments, a constant pressure to perform, long hours, and frequent out-of-town travel, a four to five year stint as an associate and then a project manager would inevitably confer a reputation as a dedicated worker if nothing else. As one of the French consultants put it, "After showing that I know how to work like hell for three years straight, I'll be popular among French companies." Another French consultant echoed his remarks, noting that "our reputation here is such that any other company will know just how hard I've worked here and how hard I am capable of working when I'm motivated."

### **Educational Systems and Career Trajectories: French Exceptionalism**

The consultants from the three countries by and large approached their stint as Big Three management consultants in the same fashion, inasmuch as they all treated it as a short-term career accelerator which would boost their business career into a high orbit. However, there were nation-specific differences when it came to the paths these consultants took to arrive at the Big Three firm and the anticipated paths out of management consulting into the next phase of their careers. For the French consultants, more than half of whom had graduated from the prestigious and highly selective Grande Écoles Polytechnique, the stint at an American Big Three management consultancy was the culmination of a very intense multistage selection process which ended around the age of twenty-five or twenty-six.<sup>28</sup>

For the French management consultants working at the Big Three firm, a stint at the firm was the natural next step in a career progression which began with a degree from one of the most prestigious Grande Écoles. To secure a position as a consultant in the Paris office of a Big Three consulting company was to obtain one of the "very best position in the private sector." As Matthieu explained:

If you want to go into the private sector after graduating from École Polytechnique and then HEC, or ESSEC, it's important and necessary

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<sup>28</sup> The rarified educational pedigree of the French consultants is not surprising, as this Big Three consultancy recruited almost exclusively from these institutions. This office employed two full-time recruiting officers who spent large amounts of time identifying promising candidates for the firm.

to work for a Big Three consultancy or an American investment bank like Merrill Lynch. This is how you get your business career off to a great start in France.

In fact, the French group had an elite educational pedigree which neither the Americans nor the Norwegians could match. Of the fifteen consultants interviewed for this study, seven had first degrees from the foremost scientific Grande École in the nation, École Polytechnique, widely considered one of the most selective institutions of higher education in the world.<sup>29</sup> Of the eight remaining consultants, all had earned first degrees from second-tier Grande Écoles nearly as selective as École Polytechnique.<sup>30</sup> These institutions included the École des Ponts et Chaussées, École des Mines, Institut des Sciences Politiques, and Institut d'Études Politiques. The consultant's second degrees had come predominantly from HEC (École des Hautes Etudes de Commerce) or ESSEC in Paris, but quite a few had attended INSEAD, the London School of Economics, or elite American business schools such as Harvard Business School and Stanford Business School.

The French consultants had the strong sense that, by launching their business careers at a prestigious and selective Big Three consultancy, they were continuing an ongoing competition with their peers. This competition had absorbed their energies for many years prior to entering the firm. One French consultant described the process as a tournament with many rounds and relatively few contenders left in the final stages, proclaiming "I have been competing with a small group of my peers for many years," he said, "and now I'm taking it to the next level." Having distinguished themselves in this sustained and very intensive competition for a place at one of the Big Three firms, these young men and women regarded themselves as victors in an extremely rigorous competition with their peers.

Many of the French management consultants began thinking about joining one of the Big Three management consultancies as soon as they decided to enter the private sector, usually during the first or second year of Polytechnique. But it was usually when they ascertained their class ranking that they made up their minds to give up on the public sector. This decision to attend HEC meant that they were passing up the possibility of a prestigious position in the elite corps at the Ministry of Finance (Ministère de L'Économie des Finances et de L'Industrie) in order to go into the private sector. In fact, every one of the French consultants had made the decision, at one point or another during his or her educational trajectory, to abandon any ambitions to work for the French state. One of the French consultants recalled the moment when he recognized that he did not have the "soul of a haute fonctionnaire." After this realization, he quickly abandoned his plans to apply to ENA, perhaps the most prestigious Grande École next to

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<sup>29</sup> When comparing their professional situation to the professional situation of his American counterparts working in the American offices of the firm, Jean-Pascal observed that the Parisian office was staffed almost exclusively with technically trained men. Because the Paris office recruited only "pure scientists and people with engineering backgrounds," none of the consultants had come to the firm with training in "softer" fields like biology, economics, or other social sciences. Because of this bias towards scientifically and technically trained recruits, the firm ended up hiring from a recruitment pool with very few women. This situation was different in both the UK and the US, where the firm recruited individuals with a variety of backgrounds and with expertise in "softer" fields of study.

<sup>30</sup> Admission to École Polytechnique is an honor reserved for less than .5% of those who begin their rigorous preparatory coursework, and to graduate among the top quarter or even the top half of the 400 X graduates is to earn a lifetime status which can open doors within the highest reaches of the French public and private sectors (Platt 1994).

Polytechnique, and applied instead to the private Parisian business school ESSEC so that he could launch his career in the private sector:

I graduated highly ranked with honors [*laureat*] from Sciences Po. So what happened then? I did not avail myself of the opportunity to proceed to ENA. I said to myself, "I want to go into the private sector." So I went on to business school. I did l'ESSEC because I was tired of studying at that time. And I wanted to earn money and I had made up my mind to go into the private sector. So after ESSEC, this firm was the obvious next step.

At the same time, however, but it was also a renunciation of a very different career path in the public sector and the elite ranks of the French state administration reserved for graduates of this elite institution. Of the French management consultants graduating from Polytechnique, none had ranked in the top 10% of their classes.

The Norwegian group resembled the French group in some respects, but differed in others. Like the French consultants, the Norwegians were between the ages of 25 and 27 when they first began their jobs at the firm. Like their French counterparts, these men and women constituted an equally rarified group, consisting of some of the most ambitious and talented students from the top Norwegian technical and business schools. Recruited aggressively from an analogous trio of Norwegian universities (NTNU in Trondheim, the public business school Handelshøyskolen in Bergen, and the private business school BI in Oslo), these students had distinguished themselves in fields such as engineering, economics, and business administration.<sup>31</sup> As one of the Norwegian consultants announced, "The Big Three consultancies in Oslo get the sharpest technical and business minds from the best Norwegian universities." It helped that the consultancy's office in Oslo, like its counterpart in Paris, had acquired a reputation as the most desirable and attractive places to launch a high-flying business career in Norway by the late 1990s. As one of the Norwegian consultants recalled:

When I graduated from the Norwegian School of Management in 1999, management consulting was a very popular career choice. Some 30% of the graduates went into some kind of consulting work. And the top 10% of this group found work at the Oslo office of one of the Big Three consultancies. This office was particularly popular. These three firms were the most desirable positions for people wanting a career in the Norwegian business world.

Just like the French recruits who had entered the firm from Polytechnique, HEC, or ESSEC, the Norwegians who joined the firm from one of these three schools found that many of their schoolmates had also applied to one of the Big Three consultancies.<sup>32</sup> In the opinion of one of the many rejected applicants:

The Big Three consultancies really like the people at NTNU who study

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<sup>31</sup> Technical backgrounds were almost as well represented among the Norwegian recruits as they were among their French counterparts. Of the fifteen consultants, eight had obtained MA/MS degrees in engineering, business economics, math, or some other hard science field from NTNU, and the other half had obtained a degree described as "halfway between a BA and an MBA" from either Handelshøyskolen or BI.

<sup>32</sup> Here the smaller scale of the Norwegian recruitment pool came into play. The firm's Norwegian office only dealt with a total recruitment pool of 300 or 400 people between the three universities, and handpicked only 3-4 new recruits each year from this pool. Because of the small size of the Oslo office, only three recruits could be hired each year. This recruitment pool contrasts with the much larger recruitment pool in the French case, where the pool was on the order of 1000 people and the firm hired 9-10 new recruits each year.

industrial economics, they take maybe nine to twelve people each year. These people are the pick of the litter. These people are very ambitious and very focused and they know what they want. You can also see that they have a strong work ethic and they are very capable.

These were the students which the Big Three firms recruited aggressively.

Neither the Norwegian nor the American consultants gave any thought to joining the state before moving on the business careers and joining the consultancy. Unlike their French counterparts, who had friends and peers making their high-flying careers in the elite parts of the French public sector, these Norwegians had little interest in launching their careers in a slow-moving and "boring" environment.<sup>33</sup> One of the consultants characterized the state as a stagnant workplace ill-suited to him and his "dynamic" compatriots:

I don't know anyone who did well at NTNU and decided to go into the public sector. We got the impression that the Norwegian government is very boring and slow-moving. And none of us know anyone who has gotten a job in the Norwegian public sector, even if the hours and working conditions are really good there.

In the same way, the American respondents never considered the possibility of working for any branch of the US federal or state government.

## Conclusions

When it comes to the three groups' perceptions of their stint in management consulting, and the career advantages which such a stint brings, the three groups essentially mirror one another. Members of each group count on their three to four year stint at a Big Three management consultancy to boost their careers into a very high orbit and give them a crucial edge in their search for high-level positions at large companies in their respective countries. Additionally, they all agree on the immense advantages conferred by such an early exposure to the most powerful organizational and individual actors in the business world and the most consequential decisions taking place within the business world.

In spite of the fact that all three offices belong to the same well-integrated network managed by a unified global partnership, the conditions under which the consultants work do vary slightly. Somewhat surprisingly, the French consultants work the longest hours on average, although it is the American consultants who take the least amount of vacation and do the most business traveling. While all the groups can expect much more time to themselves after leaving consulting, only the Norwegians can look forward to a substantial reduction in their work hours (over twelve hours a week) after their departure from management consulting. The French and the Americans will likely work fifty-five or more hours a week even ten years after leaving the management consulting field. When it comes to post-consulting work conditions, the Norwegian groups stands out as exceptional among the three groups of respondents.

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<sup>33</sup> Besides their aversion to careers in the large Norwegian public sector, the Norwegian management consultants set themselves apart from their French counterparts in another more subtle way. The French consultants, as we recall, had all entered consulting as the winners in a high-stakes multistage tournament, having emerged as the champions in an extremely long, rigorous, and competitive process of selection. The Norwegians had also bested many of their peers to get jobs at the firm, but they had not been subjected to a selection process anywhere near as long or intense as the one endured by the French consultants. For the Norwegians, their stint as Big Three management consultants was not the same culmination of an extremely long and intense process of grooming as it was for their French counterparts. Moreover, unlike their French counterparts, the Norwegians did not seek further credentials by attending elite American or international business schools after receiving their first degrees.

This three-way cross-national divergence gives way to a more straightforward transatlantic divergence in the case of the three groups' age profiles. As we have seen, the American consultants were an average of two to five years older than their French and Norwegian counterparts, mainly because of the Europeans did not break up their education with a stint in the work world before obtaining their terminal degree. This transatlantic age gap results from the different articulation of the elite educational system with the employment system in each country. In the two European countries, an individual on track for a high-flying business career is supposed to complete his educational career before beginning his occupational career, at least if he is pursuing a career within the business world. In the United States however, individuals are supposed to return to school for an elite MBA after entering the work world, thereby breaking up their employment career with an educational stint.



## **Chapter 5: Divergences in Partner Profiles and Partner Alignment Profiles: A Set-Theoretic Study of Partner Alignment Among Matched Male Management Consultants**

This chapter deals with the occupational profiles and family trajectories and aspirations of the matched respondents' female partners. Melding the data from both the interviews and the life calendars, it sheds light on the ways in which members go about choosing their long-term romantic partners, calibrate their "family clocks" together with these partners (Altucher & Williams 2003), and constitute the shifting interfaces between working life and private life (Shin-Kap Han & Moen 2001). The chapter pays special attention to the types of matches and mismatches which occur when respondents partner with women who have their own occupational trajectories, lifestyle preferences, and life plans (Orrange 2007), preferences and plans which sometimes come into conflict with the respondents' own designs. Like the previous chapter, this chapter makes extensive use of set-theoretic visualizations in order to inductively identify divergences between nationally "archetypal" groups of French, Norwegian, and American respondents.

### **Nonwork Trajectories: Three-way Cross-national Divergence**

Just as the three groups differed in their working conditions, they also exhibited cross-group variation with regard to their age profiles, their partner trajectories, and their parenting trajectories. These patterns of similarity and dissimilarity are easiest to identify with the aid of profile maps similar to those produced for the previous section on work conditions. As it clear from these maps, the American consultants tended to join the firm at an older age than their French and Norwegian counterparts. While the French and Norwegian consultants joined the firm in their mid-twenties (25-27), the Americans joined the firm in their late twenties or early thirties (29-33). The French respondents whose partners work fifty or more hours per week, a subgroup which accounts for more than half of all the partnered French respondents, are involved with women who have themselves graduated from an elite educational institution and are following more or less the same high-flying career track. Alain, one of these French respondents, explained that, since meeting his current wife at École Polytechnique, they had followed parallel career tracks, seeking out demanding jobs with very long work hours:

I met my now wife while I was attending École Polytechnique several years ago.

She also went to HEC afterwards and got a demanding job afterwards. She always wanted a demanding and stimulating job like mine. She's actually working even more than I am at the moment...she's doing M&A transactions for a high-profile banking group. She probably works on average 75 hours per week.

As a result, they rarely got to see very much of each other during their hectic workweeks. On the "good days" he could count on seeing his wife between 10 PM and midnight, when they went to bed. On the "bad days," however, both he and his wife would generally return home no earlier than midnight. Both he and his wife were committed to having children in the near future. But Alain had set a more aggressive timetable for parenthood; he could see himself becoming a parent within the next five years. His wife favored postponing children until she had spent seven to eight years working at the bank. At this time she would be in her mid-thirties, prime age for childbearing, and she would have left her mark on the business world. It seemed likely that this disagreement would be resolved in favor of her timetable, as Alain recognized that she had a right to "capitalize on her intensive studies" and "pursue her career," before leaving the high-flying world of finance.

While the majority of the partnered French consultants expected to spend their twenties with a girlfriend or wife engrossed in her own high-flying career in the business world, this was not the case with their Norwegian counterparts. Partnered with less career-committed women more interested in moving quickly into motherhood, these men experienced pressure in the opposite direction. Among the similarly aged and partnered Norwegians, it was the women who set the more aggressive timetable for childbearing. Of the eight Norwegian consultants with partners at the time of hiring, six of them were partnered with women who had quite different career aspirations and quite different educational trajectories. These women held public-sector jobs outside the business world, jobs such as schoolteachers, dentists, nurses, and government lawyers, jobs which typically allowed for reduced schedules for parents. A 28-year old Norwegian consultant Sigmund had married his high school sweetheart Vigdis prior to starting at the firm at the age of 28. As a junior consultant, he typically dedicated between 60 and 70 hours a week to work and traveled extensively. His wife, however, lived a far less work-centric life as a personal assistant to an executive at a large Norwegian company, typically spending between 40 and 45 hours in the workplace. Unlike her French counterparts, Vigdis did not harbor any ambitions for a "big-time" business career, although she expected her husband to work fairly long hours during his entire career, although not the kinds of hours he was working as a Big Three consultant.

Unlike her French counterparts, Vigdis was adamant about having her first child before turning thirty. At the age of twenty-eight, she felt that she had already put her own parenting aspirations on the shelf for long enough. It was imperative, she declared, that she and Sigmund "head into their thirties as parents." In order to liberate time for the intensive parenting she anticipated, she would be happy to shift careers and become a schoolteacher. She hoped that a career as a schoolteacher would enable her to free up more time to "look after the children and be available to them."<sup>34</sup> But she did not have any intentions of permanently dropping out of the workforce and becoming a "stay-at-home" mom either. For his part, however, Sigmund was not nearly as eager to become a parent so early into his career. In fact, he would be happy to spend the next five years as a nonparent. There was "no reason," he indicated, "to rush into parenthood so soon." Indeed, by the time he had started the third year at his job, she had made good on her promise and started the training program leading up to certification as a teacher.

As we have seen, the partnered French and the Norwegian consultants, though similarly young, got involved with young women, also in the mid-twenties, traveling along different career trajectories. While the young partners of the French consultants wished to launch big-time professional careers as befitted their elite training and education, and could see themselves delaying childbearing until their mid-thirties, the Norwegian women entertained rather different long-term life goals (Orrange 2007) and different childbearing timetables. For them, childbearing took precedence over careers. And, as far as childbearing was concerned, sooner was better than later.

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<sup>34</sup> The Norwegian parenting professionals studiously avoided the kind of paid childcare help used by many parenting professionals in other countries (Blair-Loy & Jacobs 2003). One female Norwegian manager I interviewed couldn't even imagine handing over caretaking responsibilities to a paid helper. She was adamant about being the one to pick her daughter up from kindergarten in the afternoons - this task was a vital part of "being a parent," in her view. Further, if she or her boyfriend were not able to carry out this assignment, the duty would fall to a grandparent rather than a hired hand. A male software developer who regularly picked his young children up from the kindergarten declared "there is no point in having children if one never spends time with them and leaves them in the hands of "nannies" and such...I think this is very irresponsible."

When compared to their French and Norwegian counterparts, the American respondents found themselves in a distinctive situation. As we recall, the American respondents were 3-4 years older than their French and Norwegian counterparts, as they had amassed several years of work experience before joining the consultancy and had more time in school as a result of their three-year MBA programs. Their partners were also several years older than the partners of the French and Norwegian consultants. Of the eleven partnered Americans, four were partnered to women pursuing similarly demanding careers. The remaining seven Americans replicated the "Norwegian" pattern, inasmuch as they partnered with women who were not on track for big-time professional careers requiring extensive commitments of time and energy (i.e. workweeks averaging over fifty hours per week).

Unlike their French and Norwegian counterparts, the American respondents seemed to be more aligned when it came to childbearing timetables and parenting aspirations, whether or not they were aligned with regard to their occupational trajectories and professional aspirations. Whether they wanted children in the near future or not, the first year American respondents who wanted to have children relatively soon were paired with women who also wanted children relatively soon, even when these women had very different career aspirations. Likewise, the first year American respondents who wanted to postpone childbearing or did not want to frame plans for near-term childbearing had relationships with women who were content to consign childbearing to an undefined future.

Interestingly, those partnered American men paired with high-flying career-committed women (Gerson 1993: 100) during their initial year at the Big Three consultancy did not share their French counterparts' aggressive timetable in regards to parenting and procreation. Childbearing was consigned to a future whose temporal parameters were left undefined. Even though they were in their thirties instead of their twenties, these American men seemed content to put off childbearing for the sake of their immediate career goals and the career goals of their wives and girlfriends. These three men thus distinguished themselves from both their French and their Norwegian counterparts in terms of their procreative timetable and their willingness to allow their career-committed partners to advance their own big-time business careers at the same time that they were advancing their big-time business careers. As Sal, one of these mid-thirties Americans put it, "The goal is to have kids. The goal is also *not yet* to have kids."

Carlton serves as a telling example of this phenomenon. In his early thirties at the beginning of his tenure at the consultancy, Carlton met his wife while he was working on an assignment out of town. The woman he married had already earned an MBA and had many years of workforce experience behind her. At the time of marriage, she was two years into her tenure as a project manager at a high-profile management consultancy herself. While he worked twelve hour days himself, she could easily log sixty-five or seventy work hours a week during crunch times. As a couple, running at full throttle at their respective jobs, they could log up to 125 working hours a week. He expected them to keep up this pace for the next five years, until such time as they both received promotions in their respective firms and could claim the outsize salaries due partners. Thus, both members of the couple poured their energies and time into advancing their careers as rapidly as possible. As Carlton explained,

It is really important than one or both of us get to the partner level at our respective firm. Hopefully, before we turn forty years old. This way, we will really be putting ourselves in a position to become financially independent before we hit the age of forty-five. Once we have a few million [dollars] in the bank, then we can start to pull back a little bit.

We really want to slow down by the time we hit forty-five. You can't stay in this game forever, or you're going to crack.

Equally committed to her high-flying career, his wife embraced the same timetable for her own career.

While they set a clearly defined timeline for their careers, neither member of the couple entertained a definite timetable for procreation or childbearing, even though both were in their early thirties. When asked about her family plans, Kendra did not want to venture any precise prognostications, saying "Ideally I'd like to have a kid or two sometime in the future, but having kids is kind of far from my mind right now." Indeed, a certain ambivalence colored their perceptions of parenting. Both Carlton and Kendra were mindful of the fact that one of them, most likely her, would have to quit a lucrative, rewarding, and high-profile job in order to free up time for parenting. As he said, "I don't know how we would manage to progress in our careers if we added kids to the mix right now." Indeed, he did not like the idea of her stepping down from her job in the firm, as her income was "a big part of why we are getting closer to our financial goals." For this American consultant, then, an entry into parenthood which coincided with his climb up the lucrative rungs of his firm's corporate ladder (and his wife's climb up the lucrative rungs of her firm's corporate ladder), would not be ideal, as it would jeopardize his primary goal of amassing a nest egg sizeable enough to make him and his wife independently wealthy.

The same considerations around money prompted another mid-thirties American respondent partnered to an equally career-committed professional woman to put childbearing and parenting on the back burner. Beginning his position as a project manager at the Big Three firm in his mid-thirties, Sigmund looked forward to reaching the partnership before turning forty. He expected his wife, a corporate attorney by profession, to do the same in her firm. Together, they would be able to bring home a paycheck which would assure them of a very comfortable existence in one of the country's most expensive areas and, ideally, free them from material concerns altogether. The premature entry of a child into their lives would naturally derail such an accelerated career progression, at least for his wife, as her career demanded long workweeks and extensive business travel. Neither he nor his wife had ruled children out, but it made little sense to plan for children in the near future, either. An aggressive timetable for childbearing and parenting would conflict with their ambitious career plans. At the same time, both he and his wife enjoyed the freedoms of the childless life. The "freedom to travel on a whim and do whatever we want," after all, was a liberty which they did cherish. For these reasons, he felt fortunate that his wife, who had yet to experience a "strong urge to have children," loved her job every bit as much as he did and was as committed to her demanding career as he was to his demanding career.

In summary, while there is considerable overlap between the three groups of respondents in terms of their nonwork trajectories during their first year of tenure and their third year of tenure, it is nevertheless possible to identify distinctive subgroups of respondents who exhibit nation-specific profiles with respect to their own age, the age and work profile of their partner, and their parenting status and childbearing timetable. These nation-specific profiles most distinctively Norwegian (with regard to the first year profiles) would have to be the young man in his twenties who is content to wait until his thirties to have children. This man is partnered with a woman who holds a full-time but relatively relaxed job outside the business world and wishes to pursue an aggressive timetable with regard to childbearing and parenting. The archetypal profile for the French group departs considerably from this Norwegian profile. The archetypal French respondent is a young man in his mid to late twenties who himself harbors an

aggressive procreative timetable but is partnered to a woman who is ambivalent about having children during her twenties and wishes to pursue her own big-time career within the business world during this life stage. Finally, the archetypal American, several years senior to his French and Norwegian counterparts, is partnered either with a business woman who is willing to drop out of the workforce upon the arrival of a child or someone who is herself willing to forgo children for the time being in order to realize her near-term career aspirations.

These cross-national divergences in nonwork and nonoccupational trajectories stem from a combination of cultural, institutional, and social factors which operate in various ways in the three countries under study. The very consequential two to three year age difference between the American respondents vis-à-vis their French and Norwegian counterparts results directly from the educational systems through which the three groups of consultants have been channeled. The major difference here has to do with the fact that the American business schools prefer applicants who already have several years of work experience under their belt, while the French business schools and the Norwegian MA programs accept applicants without any work experience whatsoever. Only the French students make a seamless transition from the *École Polytechnique* to HEC without entering the work world. These different admissions policies naturally produce a multi-year age gap between the American respondents and the two European groups.

As for the occupational profiles and trajectories of their partners, several different processes lie at the root of the observed cross-national divergences. First, the contrast between the educational/occupational profiles of the French consultants' partners versus the Norwegian consultants' partners has to do with the different sorting and matching mechanisms shaping the partner selections of the two groups. Because the (male) consultants are subjected to contrasting sorting processes as they travel through the educational system, they are likely to encounter somewhat different prospective partners. Second, the evidence suggests that the French respondents, unlike the Norwegians, voluntarily restrict their pool of potential partners to women whose educational credentials, social background, and occupational aspirations match theirs because of preconceptions about the "right kind of woman."

In the French case, many of the consultants appear to move within fairly closed social circles attached to their postsecondary schools, making it likely that institutional "propinquity" (Stevens 1991) at the postsecondary level plays a relatively large role in their partner choices. Indeed, of the ten French respondents who had partners during the initial year of their consulting stint, seven had met and courted their a partner they met at or through one of their elite *Grande Écoles*. The Norwegian case offers an intriguing contrast, insofar as six of the eight Norwegians had met their current partners either before they entered their postsecondary institution or had met the women while they were attending their postsecondary institution but in social contexts unrelated to school. One Norwegian consultant recalled that he had met his girlfriend while traveling outside of Norway after he completed his business degree. The fact that the Norwegians met their partners either before they entered these institutions or outside of any selective educational settings meant that, unlike their French counterparts, they came into contact with a more heterogeneous pool of women, many of whom did not aspire to similar kinds of high-flying business careers. Just as the French and Norwegian respondents came into contact with different pools of potential partners with different occupational aspirations by virtue of their induction into different educational systems, they were also exposed to contrasting cultural prescriptions and proscriptions regarding the class of potential "dateable" women. As one of the French respondents remarked with a chuckle, "These women are great for a fling, bit they aren't suitable for a long-term relationship." An American consultant who had worked extensively in

Paris found it shocking that his peers would not even flirt with women who lacked their sterling educational and class credentials:

I would go up to the hostess serving peanuts at parties and flirt with her, my [male] French peers here wouldn't do that. They will not talk to these women at all because they are considered subclass citizens who don't have adequate academic credentials or gray matter and aren't suitable for a long-term relationship.

Not as selective as selective as the French in terms of the educational and occupational credentials and aspirations of potential partners, the Norwegians were happy to date women following less elevated professional trajectories. One Norwegian consultant recalled meeting his current partner at a music concert the same year he started at the firm. Several others were still dating their high school sweethearts they met in their hometowns outside of Oslo. In terms of their partner profiles, the majority of the Americans approximated the Norwegians more than the French in terms of the occupational profiles of their partners. These men did not restrict themselves to women hailing from elite educational institutions or women who aspired to high-flying careers in the upper reaches of the business world. However, the three Americans who had paired up with matched women did replicate the French pattern of educationally and occupationally aligned partnering, albeit at a later age and slightly more advanced life stage.

Finally, in terms of parenting plans and aspirations, we have already seen how the three groups (and their partners) diverged when it came to their parenting plans and aspirations. This divergence is clearest in the case of the French-Norwegian contrast, as these groups are matched in terms of age. If we take the most characteristic subgroups of respondents, then the mismatch between the parenting plans of the French consultant and those of his partner appears as the inverse of the mismatch between the parenting timetables of the Norwegian consultant and his partner. As for the American consultants, they and their partners appear to have more matched parenting plans, even when these plans consist of vague ideas about having children at some point in the future.

## **Implications and Conclusions**

This chapter set out to chart and examine some of the cross-national convergences and divergences in the nonoccupational profiles and trajectories of biographically matched sets of male management consultants from France, Norway, and the United States at the exact same stage of their stints as management consultants in a global Big Three management consultancy.

The situation is complex and more intriguing with regard to the partner profiles and family trajectories of the three groups of respondents. As each national group contains multiple subgroups which vary along multiple dimensions, it is comparatively challenging to assess degrees of dissimilarity and similarity with respect to these dimensions of the life space. And yet, with the aid of the profile maps appended to this chapter, we can make inroads in the direction of identifying the most prominent divergences between the "nationally archetypal" subgroups corresponding to the three national environments under study. As these maps show, it is analytically useful to conceptualize these divergences in terms of the kinds and degree of *alignment* (i.e. *alignment profiles*) between the respondents and their partners regarding occupational trajectories and family trajectories (i.e. childbearing timetables).

First, it seems appropriate to characterize the most distinctively "French" subgroup of French respondents as a subgroup with a relatively high degree of educational and occupational alignment with their partners but a relatively minimal degree of childbearing alignment with

their partners. In their mid-twenties to late-twenties, these (male) French respondents entertained *more* aggressive childbearing timetables than their partners, women who entertained ambitious career aspirations consonant with their elite educational background. For the most distinctively "Norwegian" subgroup accounting for a majority of the Norwegian respondents, the lack of alignment with respect to occupational profiles is combined with a lack of alignment with respect to childbearing timetables. The respondents belonging to this subgroup, also in their mid to late twenties, are involved with women who do not want a big-time career for themselves and who wish to get an early start on realizing their childbearing and parenting ambitions, preferably before hitting the age of thirty. Among these Norwegians we see a "*double*" *mismatch* between the focal respondents and their (female) partners in the occupational realm and the childraising realm. These respondents are neither particularly aligned with their partners in terms of their occupational trajectories and aspirations nor are they particularly aligned in terms of their family aspirations. Thus, this dimension of cross-national dissimilarity can be conceptualized as an intra-European divergence between the alignment profiles of the distinctively French and Norwegian subgroups.

The most distinctively American subgroup presents yet another ideal type which can be distinguished both from the Norwegian subgroup and the French subgroup. In the American case, we find the only doubly aligned respondents in the sample. These doubly aligned respondents, several years older than their French and Norwegian peers, are paired with women partners who entertain very similar career trajectories and childbearing timetables (which can vary from moderately aggressive to completely undefined). This *double alignment*, although not characteristic of all the Americans, does not characterize any of the French or Norwegian respondents, and therefore qualifies as an archetypal "American" profile.

This double alignment, however, appears to last only as long as the respondent (and his partner) are childless. Once a child arrives on the scene, the partner typically experiences a radical change in employment status (i.e. an abrupt withdrawal from the corporate workforce, a shift which is unknown among the Norwegian partners who work in the more forgiving and relaxed public sector. Of the eight partnered and parenting Americans in their mid-thirties who have children by the third year of their tenure at the consultancy, five are partnered to women who quit their high-pressure and demanding corporate jobs only when they had their child. Lacking any possibility of reduced work schedules, and wanting to spend as much time with their children as possible, these parenting partners temporarily cut their ties to the corporate workforce in order to practice intensive motherhood, defying the terms of the "career devotion schema" so prevalent in the business world. This choice between competing devotions was one which the parenting Norwegian partners did not face, partially because they had the fortune of working in less all-or-nothing workplaces and partially because they could expect their coparenting husbands to work in less demanding workplaces as well.

The analysis presented in this chapter suggests that, while the three groups of respondents share very similar outlooks on their jobs and their careers, they differ markedly when it comes to their kinds and degrees of alignment they sustain with their romantic partners. Although there is plenty of overlap between the national groups, we can identify nationally "archetypal" subgroups with nationally distinctive alignment profiles. The respondents with the most distinctively "American" profile are those men whose girlfriends and wives have similar training, work in similarly demanding occupations, and entertain similarly vague and open-ended childbearing timetables. The respondents with the most "Norwegian" alignment profiles are the ones who partner with women working in less demanding occupations, and who entertain more definite

and aggressive childbearing timetables. Finally, the respondents with the most distinctively French alignment profiles are those men who entertain relatively aggressive childbearing timetables themselves, but who partner with occupationally matched women who wish to delay childbearing and family formation until they have gained a foothold in their own high-powered careers.

The differences in expectations and aspirations around childbearing implicate the strength and definiteness of the "social clocks" (Blossfeld 2009) relating to reproduction. As these social clocks reflect the cultural patterns internalized by the respondents, these differences tell us something about the expectations around childbearing and life plans characteristics of the three countries' macrocultural environments. The differences in the partner choices made by the three groups of respondents, however, originate in a combination of macrocultural and macrocultural factors. The three groups of men differ in their tastes for women with particular occupational profiles (see Gerson 1994); as a group the French men are less open to relationships with less educationally and occupationally accomplished women than their American and Norwegian counterparts. However, the well-known macrostructural factors involved in partner selection also come into play here as well, as each group of men comes into contact with different pools of potential partners through their social networks and institutional affiliations. While the majority of each group did meet their partners during their school years, the French respondents were more likely than the Norwegians and the Americans to meet the women who became their long-term romantic partner (during their tenure at the consultancy) while they were attending an elite postsecondary institution. But many of the Norwegian respondents, men who were the same age as their French counterparts, had met the woman partnered with them during their consulting tenure either during high school or after they graduated from university while they were in the workforce. Like the American respondents, they chose their partners from a less homogeneous pool of candidates, many of whom did not boast similar educational credentials and did not harbor similar occupational aspirations.



## **Chapter 6: Norwegian Exceptionalism? Counterpressures to Extreme Work in Norway, France, and the United States**

Numerous studies have explored the various causes and consequences of overwork and extreme work among business professionals working in various organizational, occupational, and societal settings. The causes and consequences of the hard work "cult" and the "schema" of work devotion are well-known, thanks to the numerous in-depth studies of professionals and managers working in the contemporary "greedy" corporate workplace (Blair-Loy 2003, Hochschild 1997, Coser 1974). The contemporary corporate manager or professional often finds herself working long and unpredictable hours, traveling out of town on a weekly basis, and generally giving unstintingly of her time and energy. As studies have shown, in many corporate workplaces, success only comes to those who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to their tasks, their job, and even their employer (Roth 2006, Sharone 2004, Blair-Loy 2003, Cooper 2000). Interactions with peers, supervisors, colleagues, clients, and others combine with internalized impulses to render "extreme work" (Hewlett 2007) a normal and taken for granted set of practices and expectations for the modern-day corporate professional and manager.

While managers' and professionals' penchant for extreme work practices has garnered substantial attention from scholars, the factors which inhibit or suppress the tendency to work extreme hours among these workers has escaped similar scrutiny. However, no examination of the nexus between working life and private life can be considered either complete or adequate without a systematic analysis of these inhibiting factors. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the social, institutional, and cultural factors which inhibit the enactment of Blair-Loy's work devotion schema, an examination of the "flip side" of overwork and extreme work is necessary. This chapter orients inquiry towards the underexamined counterpressures which *inhibit overwork* among those business professionals most susceptible to the cult of extreme work. I accomplish this task through a close examination of these suppressants and counterpressures as they play out in the lives of Norwegian professionals.

This chapter focuses on the experiences of corporate managers and professionals living and working in Norway. Given the distinctiveness of the Norwegian setting in the global context, it offers a uniquely promising societal environment and a uniquely revelatory case (Yin 1996) for an inquiry into the experiences of overwork counterpressures and overwork suppressants in the lives of workers. Bringing qualitative and quantitative data to bear on the questions under study, this chapter trains attention on the ways in which various kinds of counterpressures and suppressants impinge on the lives of successful and well-educated professional Norwegians working in a range of high-pressure high-stakes occupations. In order to explore the societal specificity of these counterpressures, the chapter also analyzes the ways in which these counterpressures do and do not impinge on the lives of non-Norwegian professionals living and working in France and the United States, two countries where long-hours work among the educated workforce is considerably more common.

The interviews with the Norwegian respondents reveal three analytically distinct types of counterpressures. As a group, these men and women experience the effects of social suppressants tied up with their social attachments and ties, institutional suppressants associated with the specific formal and informal rules structuring work life, and cultural suppressants issuing from internalized precepts and expectations regarding the importance of private life, family obligations, the multidimensional good life, and taking care of oneself.

### **Social Counterpressures in the Norwegian Context: Organized Leisure Pursuits**

Of the single Norwegian professionals, a large minority pursued time-consuming avocations and organized leisure pursuits alongside their paid jobs. Such organized leisure pursuits often consumed time and energy which would have otherwise gone to their paid work (Stebbins 2004, Meiksins & Whalley 2002: 27-38). Baldur had spent several years working as an internal consultant for a large Norwegian company after leaving a large management consulting firm. He had recently managed to secure an accommodation to work four days in week. He was thankful that his workplace afforded him the scheduling flexibility to attend to his other "very meaningful job" as an administrator at a nonprofit religious organization. This unpaid avocation gave his life "purpose and meaning" and he looked forward to devoting at least one full day a week to it. Moreover, he could not imagine allowing his paid work to consume all of his time and energy, as it was his voluntary work for the nonprofit organization which gave him the "challenges" he craved. As he put it:

I work about 45 hours a week nowadays, but actually, I don't want to spend more time at work. Fewer hours would be better. I need a job which I experience as meaningful with short days and with enough scheduling flexibility so that I can do my volunteer work on the side. Very soon I am going to accept an 80% position here at the company so that I can take Fridays off. This will give me more time for my important volunteer work.  
*This is the work which gives my life meaning.*

For an executive working at a large energy company, the dampening effect of her organized leisure pursuit on her work hours was obvious and direct. Vilde had played amateur basketball for many years while she built a career in the consulting world. Even when she worked in the Oslo office of an extremely demanding international firm, however, she never stayed in the office until 9:00 PM "out of habit" as many of her coworkers did. Now working as an HR executive at a large Norwegian risk management company, she left the office at 4:30 PM three days a week on account of her organized leisure pursuits. She played in an amateur basketball league which held practices during weekday evenings and she did not want to "disappoint" her teammates who were counting on her:

I've thought about the reasons why I've been so committed to working shorter hours. I think it's got a lot to do with my sports activities. I've played [amateur] basketball in the top division in Norway. Now I'm in the lower division, but we have fixed training sessions two or three times a week. And one has to go to the training sessions. If I don't show up, I disappoint myself and my teammates as well. Since the training sessions begin at 5:30 PM, I've got to leave here at 5:00 PM at the latest. So it's always been a clear goal of mine to leave work early. If one doesn't make this a goal, and one stays as long as one likes, then one can end up chatting with people until 7:30 PM. But if you know that you have to leave at 5:00, then you work much more efficiently. On the days when I have to train with the team, I work very industriously and efficiently. I don't want to miss training. This would be a great sacrifice for me and I would be letting the team down.

The fact that others were counting on her to attend the practice sessions meant that she had to leave the office early and work "effectively" during the core work hours between 9 AM and 3 PM.

### Short-hours Reference Individuals

Among the respondents who felt able to resist the pressures to work relatively long hours and taken on a heavy workload were several men and women who modeled their own work stances on that exhibited by their fathers. Emil, a young engineer whose parents worked for the Norwegian government, recalled that his father as well as his mother typically got off work by 4:00 PM in time to pick him up from school. His father, also an engineer, worked the very circumscribed 37.5 hour workweeks common among employees in the Norwegian public sector. Only rarely did his father work late in the office. For his own part, Emil identified himself as "the type" who put a premium on his free time, and had no wish to work long into the evenings, preferring to limit his workdays to eight hours. Hauk, another engineering manager employed by a large Norwegian firm, also considered himself someone who had an unusually easy time working shorter hours than most of his colleagues. In explaining this tendency to work shorter hours, he cited his own father's laid-back approach to work. Hauk had "learned a lot" from his father, a man who worked 6-7 hours a day as a high school principal and left in the afternoons to go skiing.

I've always worked relatively little. And it's something I've thought about often. From the first day here, I've worked less than my colleagues and peers in terms of overall hours. And when I started in this job, I was nervous because my predecessor worked quite a lot. But I learned quickly that I could handle everything in an eight-hour workday. It's really a matter of priorities and the ability to get the right things done. And to not be afraid to say 'no.' And this is something I've learned, or inherited because my father was the same way. I recall him saying many times that he couldn't understand why his colleagues at the school complained that they had so much work. He worked between six and seven hours every day, and then he went skiing. No one ever complained about him even though he wasn't a perfectionist like some of his colleagues. So I think I got this ability from him. And it's been very useful here.

Looking back at the example set by their own fathers, these two men felt empowered to defy the work hours norms in their own work environments.

For those respondents who worked in jobs and organizations where scaling back the workday was simply impossible, long work hours often provoked conflicts between them and significant others who could not understand why they had chosen to let work consume their lives. A young woman who spent four years working for Oslo office of an elite global management consultancy endured numerous criticisms and indictments of her work-centric lifestyle from her working class parents who represented a "whole different world from my job" In the eyes of her father, a bus driver, and her mother, an elementary school teacher, Inger worked so much that she was essentially "throwing away her life," as they told her. They simply could not understand, she explained, why she would back out of a family dinner at 6:30 PM on account of her work. Such collisions of work and private life happened all too often and had strained their relationship:

And so it's stressful when I have an arrangement with my parents and relatives and we have scheduled a dinner with them and I've got to cancel. In these situations the job always comes first. *And my family is from a different world and they stand for totally different values than my [consulting] job, so they have a hard time understanding why I do this. So it can be very*

stressful for me.

Astrid, another female consultant who worked the same long hours at the same demanding firm, grew increasingly dissatisfied with her long workdays when her new roommate, a woman working for a ministry of the Norwegian government, told her about all the things she got to do during the week, after her workday was finished. After hearing for over a year about her roommate's delightful experiences at her evening "poetry readings, art museums, concerts, book clubs, and restaurants," Astrid decided to call it quits at her management consulting job and move into a less demanding organization.

In another case, an effort to control work hours was prompted in part by contact with a sibling who had gone over to the public sector and left the high-pressure world of management consulting to teach high school. Terje, a male management consultant in the launching stage of his occupational and family careers (Clarkberg & Merola 2003) had decided after the birth of his second child to scale back his work schedule. He felt that he spent most of his eight year tenure at the firm working too many hours. Although the arrival of his second child had a lot to do with his decision, he might not have pursued this arrangement so eagerly had his brother not dropped out of the business world and started a more relaxed job as a high school teacher in an Oslo area high school. It was his brother's tales of his enriched personal life which led him to doubt the wisdom of working sixty or more hours per week.

And then my brother became a teacher. This really affected me and gave me bad conscience. He tells us much he gets to exercise, how many books he is able to read, and his vacations up in the mountains, and he's much more of a relaxed type of guy and he gives me a bad conscience, but he also helps me to see that work and the closest family is not all that is important in life.

The evident enjoyment his brother derived from his reserves of discretionary time inspired Terje to rethink his long workweeks and contributed to his decision to limit these workweeks.

For those Norwegian men who worked for extremely demanding international professional services firms such as corporate law firms and management consultancies, worries about the threat posed by a greedy working life vis-à-vis their intimate relationships prompted steps to resist the pull of working life. Several of the male Norwegian professionals had struck "deals" concerning their work hours and travel patterns with their supervisors and mentors so that they could free up more time for themselves and their families in the weekday evenings. Despite his responsibilities, Tore, an attorney, had reached an arrangement with his supervising partner to limit his working hours. Henceforth, he would spend no more than fifty hours in the office on a regular basis, barring any kind of crisis, and he would not take more than one business trip out of town every month. This agreement, which had the strong backing of his wife, allowed him to spend more time with his young children. This arrangement proved to be a boon to him and his family. This measure made it possible for him to see more of his wife and to pick his son up at the public kindergarten at 4:30 PM.

### **Temporal Coordination with Short-Hours Girlfriends and Wives**

For many of the male Norwegian respondents, it was the desire to participate in leisure activities in the company of a short-hours romantic partner which strengthened and affirmed the willingness to shorten work hours, scale back the time and energy allocated for work, and switch into less demanding jobs. Among many of the young Norwegian professional men, the establishment of a serious romantic relationship with a short-hours girlfriend or wife brought about the curtailment of work hours. Gaute, a former management consultant, quit his sixty hour

a week consulting job soon after establishing a romantic relationship with one of his former clients. A year into the relationship he lost his taste for working late into the evenings and readily yielded to his girlfriend's entreaties to work fewer hours. With Anna waiting at home for him in the evenings, Gaute no longer looked forward to laboring on work assignments at 8:00 PM with his buddies over a frozen pizza. With his resume he easily found a job with a company which would allow him to work substantially fewer hours. Happy to have more time for himself and his family in the evenings, he delighted in the new arrangement. Once he discovered this "whole new arena" where he could socialize with his girlfriend, hang out with his friends, "read a book or get some new ideas," there was no turning back. For Gaute, the moment when his romantic life took off was the moment when he opted out of the management consulting world.

The same kind of romantic relationships with a short-hours woman also played an important role in hastening the exit of from the high-pressure long-hours world of management consulting. A five-year veteran of one of the most prestigious consultancies, Bernt fled the consulting world for a substantially more predictable and manageable world of a large Norwegian telecom company, a workplace where a forty-five hour workweek sufficed. He was growing tired of the pressure and the lack of any private life during the week. But, even if he had enjoyed the job, he still would have to please his short-hours girlfriend, a woman employed in the public sector who chafed at his absences. He attributed the strength of their relationship in part to the much more "reasonable" hours he worked in his new position:

Yeah, it was in the cards that that I was quitting my consulting job. My now wife wanted me to quit the job and I also wanted to quit it myself. I would have quit even if I hadn't wanted to, though, for her sake. But we were pretty much of one mind about this decision. I do have other friends in the consulting firm who didn't want to quit, and they're still there, and that hurts their relationships badly. Many of these relationships are on the verge of falling apart. I never worried about my career, but I have worried about my relationships.

Other Norwegian professional men told the same story of cutting back their work hours and findings less burdensome positions in response to their romantic companions' wishes. Magne, another consultant, started dating Amalie, a public defender while he worked for a large international firm. Soon after Magne's relationship took a serious turn, strains over his tendency to work evenings quickly surfaced. Used to working shorter workdays herself, Amalie made it clear that she would like him to end his workday when she ended her workday, around 4:30 PM. After several years of tension over working hours, Magne switched into a less demanding job. Stig, a graduate of Norway's foremost engineering institutions, started off his career in a consultancy, routinely logging between fifty and sixty hours a week. Once he moved in together with his short-hours girlfriend, however, such long hours seemed inappropriate. A schoolteacher new to Oslo, she pined for his company during the evenings which she had to herself. Stig soon decided to take the "natural step" of curtailing his own workdays so he could spend time with her.

Only a couple years into his consulting job, Hugo, a younger Norwegian management consultant, had just begun what promised to be a serious romantic relationship with a dental student. Instead of leaving the office at 9:00 PM or 10:00 PM as he had done before meeting his girlfriend, he would leave the office at 7:00 PM or 8:00 PM. As Hugo explained:

I've had a girlfriend for the last couple of months now so I just need to be a little more focused on getting home earlier. It's something I make myself do,

you know. And so as a result of this choice I've had to become even more efficient at work.

Like other Norwegian professional men, Hugo claimed that his romantic relationship with a woman who "minds working all the time" boosted his own efficiency at work by forcing his work into a more restricted workday.

### **Norwegian Women Partners' Framings of Men's Long-Hours Work**

In the commentaries of the Norwegian men's women partners, legitimizing and normalizing frames were nowhere to be found. Even though the Norwegian women's partners did not work as long hours or travel as much as their American counterparts, the Norwegian women assailed even relatively mild forms of work absorption and work overcommitment as unwarranted and detrimental to their quality of life. Whereas the American women characterized their partners' live-to-work approach as necessary and even virtuous, the Norwegian women refused to rationalize what they framed as an overcommitment to job and career. These women expected to see their partners during the week, as well as the weekends. There was no good reason, they asserted, that their partners had to regularly work longer than "normal" hours and sacrifice their legitimate needs for frequent companionship. It was only because their partners had fallen under the sway of an illegitimately greedy institution, in their framing, that the men gave up so much of their private lives for work and shortchanged their relationship.

Anette could not understand what possessed her partner Matthias, a management consultant, when he allowed his client work to spill over into their evenings and weekends. In her view, there was no reason why he should make himself available to clients in the evenings when he should be spending time with her and their friends. Given that he was already working over ten hours a day at the office, she declared, he "could well afford to avoid working after the official workday was over." As she explained:

He won't let go of the endless work which the workday consists of, if you know what I mean by that. He always thinks a little bit about work and takes the laptop computer home when he arrives and works for a half-hour or so. And I don't like this. I think that when there is free time, which is my time in a way, then he shouldn't use it for work. If he works an hour per evening, it sets limits for what we can do together later on.

Annette felt duty-bound to call him on this downright "stupid" habit, behavior. It was not fair that he sometimes worked during what was "her time."

Like Annette, Hilde did not think that her partner's job warranted so much of his time, energy, and attention. She excoriated her long-time partner Gunnar for his habit of fielding phone calls from clients during the evenings and weekends and his routine of disappearing for an hour or two into his home office in the evenings in the middle of a TV show or a conversation. She didn't think that he should be "trading away" so much of his free time just to ensure that his numerous clients were happy all the time. In direct contrast to the American women who rationalized their partners' absences, Hilde refused to justify the parallel life she led in her spare time. She bemoaned the fact that "our [private] lives are independent of each other," charging that "this arrangement doesn't always work out so well." If Gunnar had worked less during evenings and weekends, she argued, then "we could have escaped to the mountains, attended cultural events, seen friends together, or gone to various restaurants and cafés around Oslo." Like Annette, she found it galling and distressing when Gunnar vanished into his home office in the evenings, claiming that he should be working since they weren't doing "anything special"

together. In her eyes, it was unreasonable of him to neglect her legitimate desire for evening companionship:

He has to remember that he doesn't live alone. He must remind himself that there is another person who also would like to spend time with him, and who in a way needs some social and physical contact with him, who needs predictability in daily life, especially during the weekends.

Instead of minimizing or suppressing her own claims on her partner's time and attention, as the American women do, Hilde framed her desire for companionship as entirely legitimate.<sup>7</sup>

The three Norwegian women who enjoyed a "reasonable" amount of companionship expressed gratitude for the couple time they had at their disposal. According to Anita, whose husband Jørgen had chosen to work for a Scandinavian management consultancy which did not require sixty-hour workweeks, a matching work schedule served as one of the primary foundations for a well-functioning partnership and a healthy family life. Anita was glad that her husband got to work "reasonable" hours and had no trouble "setting aside" enough time to spend with her and their two children. It was important for her that he return home before 6:00 PM and eat dinner with the family most nights of the week. It would be "inappropriate," she declared, if she got to see him for only an hour every night.

The Norwegian women passed over the normalizing frames which came relatively easily to their American counterparts. Whereas the American women framed their partners' twelve-hour workdays and frequent out-of-town travel as a "fact of life" to which they had to adapt, the Norwegian women perceived these hours as unreasonable infringements on their partners' private lives and, by extension, their own private lives. They could not bring themselves to represent the emotionally and temporally "downsized" relationships as entirely legitimate. This was especially true in regard to the weekday evenings. The Norwegian women were less willing to write off the weekday evenings as chunks of time where they could pursue couple-oriented activities, seeing these activities as more central to their own lives and more central to their relationships than their American counterparts. Hoping for the chance to engage in joint leisure activities during the week, the Norwegian women were unwilling to abandon their hopes for a more companionate relationship.

they upheld the women's complaints about their work habits and the women's pleas for more couple time. None of the Norwegian men defended the "weekend-only" relationship which figured prominently as a benchmark in the narratives of the American men, particularly those who had worked in management consulting. None of the Norwegian men attempted to legitimate their pursuit of big-time career success as an enterprise which deserved their partners' full commitment and support. Further, the three Norwegian men who did work relatively long hours made little effort to rationalize these long hours as a fact of life to which the women should adapt.

Even when they worked in demanding jobs, the Norwegian men expressed a sensitivity to their partners' desire for companionship and couple time. Matthias, the management consultant, found his long work hours "frustrating" because they did not allow him enough time with his partner. He appreciated her desire for more companionship in the relationship and respected her "legitimate" wish to feel "prioritized" and to "feel more important than my work." Stein, another management consultant, felt that his job, which required him to work until 9 or 10 PM, "robbed" his girlfriend of the daily couple time which she had every right to want:

I am living with a girl and she is sitting at home waiting for me a lot because she is finished at 4:00 PM so that takes a lot of energy from both of us and I

do not feel like I can satisfy her on that dimension. His inability to provide sufficient companionship bothered him.<sup>8</sup> Even Gunnar, perhaps the most work-centered of all the Norwegian men I interviewed, granted the legitimacy of Hilde's complaints about his very long working hours and his constant absorption in his work. He believed that she had "every right" to complain about his attentiveness to his clients and his neglect of her own companionship needs.

For those Norwegian men who had chosen to work at the most demanding jobs there was an intense concern over the potential harm that their work schedules could inflict on the relationship. The fragility of relationships weakened by the man's unavailability was a common theme in the narratives of the Norwegian men. Stein, for example, worried that he was endangering his relationship because he could not afford to spend any time with his partner during weekday evenings. Matthias considered himself lucky that his current job did not put his marriage at risk; he knew of at least one consultant whose relationship "hung by a thread" because he never had enough time for his girlfriend.

Several of the Norwegian men had struck "deals" concerning their work hours and travel patterns with their partners ensuring that they could enjoy several hours of couple time most workdays. Jørgen, for example, had made an agreement with his wife early on in the relationship never to work more than fifty hours per week on a regular basis and to come home by 5:30 PM unless there was a crisis at work. This agreement, he recounted, served as the "basis" of their relationship. After all, denying his wife the chance to see him for at least "an hour per day" simply wasn't "fair."

### **Involved Parenting for Women and Men in Dual-Career Couples**

If short-hours girlfriends and wives exerted a moderating effect on the work schedules and routines of partnered professional men, these effects paled in comparison to the suppressant effects of parenthood on both the male and the female parenting professionals' work routines and work schedules. Both the female and the male parenting professionals carved out weekends and weekday evenings for parenting activities, making it necessary to cut the official workday short. Because of this generalized deference to the gender-neutral ideal of time-intensive parenthood and caring practice (Johansen 2007, Blair-Loy 2003: 57), both the Norwegian women and the Norwegian men made an effort to schedule the tail end of their workdays around their domestic responsibilities rather than the other way around. All of the Norwegian professionals made it clear that there was nothing more important than being "there" [*tilstede*] for their children, whether as mother or father. For their part, with a few notable exceptions, Norwegian firms and supervisors almost always accommodated the desires of women and men who wished to leave the office early in order to spend the dinner hours with their children.

Every Norwegian respondent with young children under the age of five made an effort to curb their work hours in the afternoons and evenings. Both the female and male parenting professionals reserved these hours for intensive and involved hands-on parenting activities. For example, Jarl, a male technical consultant in his early thirties who was expecting his first child, switched jobs months before the birth of his first child in order to better reconcile his work schedule with his imminent parenting responsibilities. In this new job he was confident that he could normally get away from work by 5:00 PM in time to spend the dinner hours at home with his wife and child. As parenting professional, Jarl explained, he could not expect to work the same hours as he did when he had no children and no parenting duties:



One *must* have more flexibility in one's work schedule when one has a family than when one is 21 without any kids so that one can spend more time at home. When my child arrives, my work hours will of course go down and I will definitely reorganize my workday so that I can go home earlier.

Jarl was committed to being at home in the evenings "when the children are awake." If he changed employers in the future, he would only accept a job which would allow him to keep to this schedule. He was thankful that he had turned down the offer from a prestigious global consultancy because it would have meant a job which was "incompatible" with a "thriving family life." The men as well as the women expected to work fewer hours in the office once they assumed childrearing responsibilities. Even young and ambitious male professionals looked forward to restructuring their workdays upon the arrival of children. Haldur, a young male consultant at least five years away from fatherhood, predicted a transformation of his work schedule following the appearance of his first child. Though he worked long evenings as a bachelor professional, he was prepared to carve out a three-hour parenting window in the evenings to ensure that he could "bond" with his children. As he explained:

Q: But if you decide to have kids in the future, would you continue working the same number hours as you do now?

A: No. I guess I'd take the evenings off, between 5 PM and 7-8 pm, and spend time with my kids to develop a bond with them. Take a 3 hour break with my kids in the evenings. And then I'd continue working after that from home. So one must spend some time with one's children. It's really important. It's really obvious that if one has children, one cannot work long days at the office.

Women in childless couples expected that their partners would not hesitate to cut back on their work hours once they became fathers, in part because they were not prepared to give up their own jobs and careers. Considering what would happen to her boyfriend's work schedule once children arrived on the scene, Hannah announced emphatically that her workaholic boyfriend would have to give up his habit of staying in the office until 8:00 PM. As far as she was concerned, he had only one option because she was not prepared to relinquish her own job and step into a homemaker role:

He knows that if we were to have children, he would have to quit [working such long hours]. If there are children in the picture, he can't work until 8:00 or 9:00 PM. I am not interested in being a stay-at-home mom and taking care of them by myself...taking them to kindergarten, picking them up from kindergarten..making lunch, putting them to bed. This would not be good at all.

Jesper, another male Norwegian management consultant in his early thirties, had already experienced the joys and burdens of parenthood for several years. Like the other Norwegian professional dads, Jesper made a point of coming home in time to take part in the family dinner. In addition, at least twice a week he shared "dropoff" [*bringing*] and "pickup" [*henting*] duties with his wife, a woman who also worked in a Norwegian company and enjoyed a relatively short workday. Only during the most pressured part of the project cycle would Jesper stay in the office during the treasured dinner hours. Generally, if there were more tasks to be completed after 5:00 PM, he would work on them at home after putting his children to bed at 8:30 PM. Voicing a vision of his marriage as an egalitarian partnership founded on reciprocity, he expressed his commitment to an egalitarian division of both childrearing activities and income-generating activities.

For me it's natural to say that our children are our shared responsibility, since we have had children together. But I know that she doesn't want to stay at home with the kids, she wants to work. She has no interest in staying at home all the time...she feels it's good for her own self-development to have a job. If I opposed this, it would have harmed her own self-development. And she wouldn't be very happy either. So it would have created problems for me and the family too. So I've got to give her as much freedom as she gives me.

There was no way he would consider asking his wife to cut down on her work simply so that he could work more himself. In his mind, she had every right to pursue her occupational interests, just as he had every right to participate in the childrearing activities which he evidently enjoyed.

The other male professionals also approached childrearing as a time-intensive activity which deserved a substantial allotment of their time and energy, particularly in the evenings and weekends. The arrival of a child a few months prior to the interview had led a male associate at one of Norway's top corporate law firms to rethink his work schedule. Kjetil decided that he would henceforth follow the example of his colleagues and leave the office by 5:00 PM so that he could be home in time for the family meal between 4:00 PM and 5:00 PM. As he explained, "when you've got kids and a family, you need to be able to call it a day before 5:00 PM."<sup>35</sup> To work past 5:00 PM on a regular basis was not "compatible" [*forenlig*] with childrearing and family life. Because his young children required his presence, Kjetil made a habit of picking them their kindergarten even if they extended their opening hours past their 4:30 PM closing time. Echoing the comments of other Norwegian professional men and women, Kjetil questioned the appropriateness of allowing children to spend "11-12 hours a day" away from their parents:

Q: But if they were open later, would you work differently?

A: But the question is whether it's good for them, you know, if you drop your kid off at 7:30 am, and he's there until 4 or 5 pm. Then the question is if I as a parent would have the conscience to, say, have the kids stay in kindergarten for, like, 11 or 12 hours, you know. I mean, I've chosen to have kids, so then I need to take responsibility for them too. There's a limit - *kids can only be in kindergarten for so long*. I don't think my wife and I would let the kid spend that much time in kindergarten. I don't think we would have liked that at all.

The Norwegian women professionals made even greater efforts to spend the evenings with their children than the male professionals. Lisbet had worked long days during her childless twenties, sometimes staying in the office past 7:00 PM. Working "extra hours" at this job, she recalled, did not pose a big problem as she had no childrearing responsibilities during this period. However, when she returned to work after her year-long maternity leave, she scaled back her workdays so that she could leave before 4:30 PM. Other female professionals followed the same strategy. Berit, a very successful professional woman working as a strategy executive for a large telecom company, shortened her workday by an average of two hours. Picking up her daughter from kindergarten constituted a pivotal moment in Berit's daily round, as was the parenting time afterwards. She felt strongly that her responsibilities as a parent required her to

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<sup>35</sup> A comparatively large proportion of the professional and nonprofessional working population between the ages of 30 and 40 in Oslo had young children of the right age for these kindergartens. The prevalence of parenting professionals, together with the aversion to paid childcare and the rigid opening hours of the barnehager, meant that a relatively large proportion of professionals in this age group (both women and men) frequently left the office at 4:00 in time to pick up their children.

spend evenings in the company of her child. In the absence of such opportunities, Berit would have given serious thought to remaining childless. The aspiration to be an involved and "hands-on" parent and this aversion to the outsourcing of carework was ubiquitous among the parenting Norwegian professionals of both sexes.

At the same time, Norwegian employers also took the wishes of parenting professionals very seriously, and reflexively honored their parenting employees' wish to leave the office early to see their children. Jonas had chosen to remain with his Scandinavian consultancy and turned down several offers from elite international consultancies in large measure because of the "freedom" he enjoyed to plan his workdays in accordance with his family obligations. Jonas considered himself fortunate to work in a firm which observed the Norwegian working time regulations, particularly where they concerned the rights of parenting professionals to leave the office to take care of their children. He found it comforting that, once he became a father, he had a free hand to leave the office when necessary. In the view of Kaia, a management consultant who had worked in the Oslo and New York offices of a global management consultancy, the stance of the Oslo office reflected a distinctively Scandinavian emphasis on accommodating the needs of working parents:

When you have kids here in Norway, you are supposed to look after them. Here in Oslo it is quite unacceptable for parents to leave the kids [at daycare] from 8 AM to 6 PM, whereas in New York City that was a common practice. But this is very unacceptable in Norway. Also, the management here accepts that you have other responsibilities besides work, and they want people to have balanced lives here in Oslo, so it's also more acceptable to work reduced schedules, especially for women with young children, so there is an ideal of providing options like reduced work schedules. And even if you aren't likely to reach the top working one of these schedules, they can't fire you for working an 80% schedule either. *Norwegian employment law is quite strict on this point.*

Sverre, a mid-level executive at a large Norwegian energy company conveyed the guidelines his organization followed in regards to working scheduling and work hours. These policies were designed to make it possible for people to observe the "general Norwegian working rhythm." This rhythms was tailored to the demands of parenting professionals raising young children, as he explained:

The philosophy at this firm is that we should not be available at all times after 5:00 PM during the week or during the weekends. As a general rule we should not be available after 5:00 PM, *we almost never schedule meetings which might break into this part of the day.* It's sometimes hard to live by this rule, but it's a good ambition. It applies to management all the way up and down the hierarchy.

Even though Sverre's own children were in their teenage years and did not require that much intensive parenting, he felt "relaxed" enough about his career in the company to leave the office even earlier than the norm. But he also left early to "signal" to his subordinates that they could fulfill all of their work obligations without staying late in the office.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The idea that employees would not "produce" as well unless they had the resources to attend to their family commitments was popular among many Norwegian managers and professionals. The best supervisors were those people who "are aware of their own time and the time of the consultants working under them," in the words of one of my consultant respondents.

## **Institutional Counterpressures in the Norwegian Context**

The institutional type of overwork suppressant is connected with the formal rules governing working time under the Norwegian employment system. One can distinguish four different types of rules and regulations which come into play as overwork suppressants: rules governing overtime pay, rules connected to leaves, rules connected to employment and employment security, taxation schemes applying to marginal income in the higher reaches of the income distribution, and organizational timetables. As one of my respondents summarized the situation, "No one in Norway today is forced to work 80 hours a week. No employer can make you work 80 hours a week if you do not want to do so."

For the younger Norwegian professionals without supervisory responsibilities working in large companies, a number of bureaucratic hurdles stood in the way of long work hours. First, if a junior professional wanted to work paid hours over and above the hours specified in the Norwegian Work Environment Act [*Arbeidsmiljøloven*], the company had to apply for an exemption from the government on his or her behalf. One technical consultant working in a large Norwegian risk management company used to apply for this exemption every year, as he averaged 42+ hour workweeks, meaning that he worked more than 200 hours of annual overtime above and beyond the statutory limit of 40 hours per week. Working more than 400 hours of overtime during the course of the year without an explicit waiver could lead to fines and, potentially, jail time. Further, those who exceeded this limit on a regular basis were entitled to take their overtime hours out as paid vacation time once they had accumulated more than 100 hours worth of this overtime. When this happened, it was often possible to add the combined overtime hours to the annual fixed vacation allotment. Using this stratagem, a number of the junior Norwegian professionals had turned their five weeks of guaranteed annual vacation time into six or even seven weeks.

Some companies followed slightly different work hours guidelines. Supervisors of junior professionals working at a large Norwegian energy company were barred from requiring their subordinates to work more than 8 hours in a single day. While the junior consultant was free to work these extra hours on a "voluntary" basis, they could not be penalized for refusing to work the extra time and they had to obtain permission from their supervisor to work these hours. Ole, a young analyst at the company, recalled times when he did work on the weekends, but only on this voluntary basis:

At this company anything more than 8 hours is considered overtime. It's a strange system because we have overtime and flexitime...overtime is not optional, you have to use the extra hours, but flexitime is optional and you don't get extra pay. Some other managers are stricter on this, that you have to check with them whenever you want to work over the 8 hours. My first boss saw that I was ready to work and so she would ask me to come over on Sunday night and go over some data, but it was always voluntary and I sometimes said "no."

If the junior professional did work more than 42 hours per week on a regular basis, he or she was entitled to overtime payments [*overtidsbetaling*]. For this reason, many supervisors at this firm hesitated to grant exemptions to their subordinates because the extra money would have to come out of their budgets. According to a junior strategy consultant at a Norwegian telecom company, his supervisor only asked him to work extra hours when he could pass on some of the costs to other departments.

Just as these overtime regulations exercised a moderating influence on the work hours of nonsupervisory Norwegian professionals working in large companies, the policies around leaves and termination created a strong sense of employment security which also contributed to containing work hours. As one banking executive explained, the general sense of "job security is very high in Norway." In his company, a large Norwegian bank, one could take up to twelve paid sick days off every calendar year without a physician's note. Anyone taking these days enjoyed protection from sanctioning and reprisals:

I think that there are twelve sick days one can take without a doctor's note. And these days are considered extra vacation days. And if one takes sick days now and then, this doesn't lead to any retaliation or negative consequences for one's career. Of course, if one does this all the time, it can happen that you don't get rewarded as much as others, but at the same time you aren't ever punished either.

He availed himself of these options at least five or six days out of every year.

All of the respondents who with children availed themselves of the generous Norwegian leave policies connected to parenthood. According to the amendments legislated in 2006, the parents of a newborn have the right to paid leave from work (a total of 54 weeks at 80% of salary or 44 weeks at 100% of salary) with guaranteed right of reinstatement. Four months is reserved for the mother and 6 weeks for the father while the remainder of the leave can be divided up between the father and the mother as they see fit. In keeping with findings from other studies, the "daddy leave" was very popular with the younger male parenting respondents.

Finally, the extremely progressive tax system in Norway fixed the terms of the time versus money calculus in ways that made longer work hours economically unattractive. For those Norwegians who already earned a high salary in the Norwegian context, usually considered anything over 800,000 NOK gross income, it made little sense to climb into the ranks of top management. As high-level executives and managers, they would be working sixty-plus hour workweeks but most of their salary gains would be eaten away by taxes. Thorstein, a successful management consultant at a Scandinavian consultancy worked around 50 hours a week on average, but brought home a salary of very high 1.1 million NOK (= roughly \$175K). If he secured a position in the firm's management, he might add an extra 500 K NOK to this total, but more than half of this increase would go to the state:

In Norway there aren't any incentives to work a lot, because you will pay 55% of the increase in taxes. That's why the economic motivation to work a lot is weak. If I wanted to become a leader in a company, it would be entirely possible, but what would I have gotten out of it? I would be working 60 hours a week or even more. I imagine it's a lot more work to be a CEO than a consultant. But I would be earning only a slightly higher income, much of which would have disappeared in taxes. So why bother?

The management consultant Knut also saw little point to taking on more responsibilities and larger workloads in return for marginal increases in pay. Why should one work more hours, Knut asked rhetorically, if "out of every additional 200 K NOK in salary, one immediately loses 130K NOK in taxes?" In the Norwegian system, as he explained, because of the high rates of taxation on high incomes, the majority of people who already earn a decent salary have little economic incentive to ascend to a more demanding position which gives them much more work but a only a few NOK more in additional income.

Just as these tax-related institutional factors exercised suppressant effects on the hours of some Norwegian professionals, other institutional factors connected to organizational timetables (Zeruvabel 1981) had similar effects. Most prominent among these timetables were the rigid and constrained timetables of the widely utilized state-sponsored kindergartens [*barnehager*]. For parenting professionals with children between one and five years of age, the timetables of these state-sponsored kindergartens had a strong suppressant effect on the hours spent at the workplace. Every one of the parenting Norwegian respondents with young children, both women and men, availed themselves of these centers for extended periods of time. In doing so, they imposed constraints on their own workdays. Because a time-consuming form of intensive parenting (Blair-Loy 2003) was embraced by both sexes, and even professional parents took responsibility for picking up the children from kindergarten, workdays could legitimately end as early as 4:00 PM whenever young children were involved because the parents came "on duty" at 4:30 PM. Arvid, a male technical consultant working at a large Norwegian energy company, describes the constraining effects of the *barnehager's* limited opening hours:

In Norway people generally leave the office early and our workday grows even shorter when you need to pick your kid up in kindergarten at, say, 4 pm, or 4:30 pm. And that leaves you in a situation where you just need to bring out your laptop at home at 8 pm. So you go home, have dinner, put the kids to bed, and then work from 8 to 10 pm. Because you need to pick up the kid they need to be picked up from their kindergarten at 4 or 4:30 PM either by mom or dad.

Anders, an executive at a small software development company, explained that he usually picked up his son two to three days a week and consequently got home no later than 5:30 PM. Open only between 8 AM and 4 PM, these daycare centers insisted that parents pick up their charges by 4:30 PM at the latest. Failure to pick up one's child at 4:30 PM could trigger the imposition of a substantial fine. Coupled with the rarity of paid childcare and the tendency of Norwegian men to share pickup duties with their spouses, the early closing hours of the state-sponsored kindergartens [*barnehager*] ensured that leaving the office at 4:00 PM was a common practice among parenting professionals with young children.

### **Cultural Counterpressures**

So far we have examined two types of overwork suppressants: social overwork suppressants and institutional overwork suppressants. The first type comes into play by virtue of the respondents' social activities and ties, whether to their family of origin, their significant others, or their own children. The institutional type of overwork suppressant, however, is connected with the formal rules governing working time under the Norwegian employment system. Now, we turn our attention to the cultural idealizations which appear as overwork counterpressures among the Norwegian respondents. These cultural suppressants, as I show, take the form of internalized cultural ideals and idealizations relating to the proper disposition of time and energy, the importance of efficient working, the desirability of the multidimensional life, and the necessity of self-care.

### **Leading the Multidimensional Life**

The ideal of *the multidimensional life* exerts a strong grip in the Norwegian environment. While Stian, a consultant at the Oslo office of a global consultancy, had chosen to spend the better part of his twenties working sixty-plus hour workweeks, he did not have anything against

the many Norwegians his age who worked the "normal" Norwegian eight hour day. When Stian told his Norwegian friends and his American friends about his prestigious and remunerative job, he encountered two very different responses:

Here when I tell people about my [demanding and prestigious] consulting job, I always get the question "do you have time for your family, your friends?." This is the first question I get when I meet family or friends, "OK, you work there, but do you have time for your girlfriend, time for your family, time for sports?" But I never get this question from the Americans I know.

While Stian's American friends applauded him for his enterprising spirit, his Norwegian friends worried about his personal life. After regaling his friends with stories about his marathon workweeks, Kristian, another Norwegian consultant, became accustomed to hearing his friends ask "why are you so eager to kill yourself?" and "have you lost your mind?" For Norwegians, he explains, what is "hardest to understand," is that he "lives his life at work rather than outside it." This approach offered a stark contrast to the attitude he had encountered in the United States.

Practically all of the Norwegians paid at least lip service to this ideal. Many of them took the ideal to heart in orchestrating their everyday lives. A surprising number of these hardworking and successful business professionals made an effort to lead a multidimensional "good life" in which work took its place alongside an equally important or more important personal life. Arne, a Norwegian consultant turned executive explained that he consulted this ideal when he shifted from a very demanding position in an international consultancy to a less demanding job at a Norwegian telecom company. Arne's decision to switch jobs was the fruit of careful consideration concerning the meaning and requirements of the "good life."

My main goal has never been to have a high-flying career. My main goal is to live a good life. I want to live a good life, job-wise, but also family-wise and personal interest-wise. I think I have a very well-thought out sense of exactly what this means. And I have put this principle into practice.

Even Norwegian professional men and women without any children treated their free time as their main source of meaning in life. For Erlend, a young male engineer who worked around 45-50 hours per week at a Scandinavian civil engineering firm, his what he did in his free time counted as a greater priority than what he did at work.

Even single consultants could take steps to contain their working hours in the interest of making time for private life. One single male management consultant took a "very strict" line regarding working hours despite the tremendous pressures of his pressure-packed job in a particularly demanding management consultancy. Even though he was single at the time of the interview, Einar endeavored to keep work in its place by keeping his weekends completely free of work. One of his former colleagues, a consultant who had endured five years of this grueling pace before switching to a job with a less onerous schedule, explained that he had always made his personal life his "highest" priority even when he found himself working around the clock during the week. Free time was Einar's "alpha and omega" and he was delighted to work in a job which gave him his weekday evenings back. He could not understand why anyone "normal" would choose to spend their adult lives toiling away at the consultancy. In his view it was a sign of "insanity" to work a job where one never could plan one's evenings or even a "family vacation" for fear that it would fall victim to an unanticipated crisis.

Many of the Norwegian professional men and women practiced what one woman called the "art" of leading a full and rich private life alongside a demanding and rewarding work life.

During a typical week, Elise, a manager at a large bank, got all of her work done in forty-five hours or less. Though childless, she was determined to leave time for other activities in her life besides work. Anyone foolish enough to work twelve hours a day and permit their work to swallow up all of their time and energy, she pointed out, risked becoming dull and "one-sided" [*ensidig*].

I think that one becomes somewhat narrow if one spends twelve hours at work every day. It would be hard to know that is going on in the wider society. One might know a lot about one's own job, but one will lose one's perspective on other parts of life. So I think it's important to have other things in one's life. When one leads a more balanced life, one becomes a "better" person and one does a better job at work.

Elise and her live-in boyfriend both succeeded in keeping their work hours down and escaping this ugly fate. She used her free time to take French lessons, to travel, and to hang out with her friends. Giving up these activities would harm the quality of her life:

J: So if you increased your work hours by ten hours per week, what kind of effect would this have on your private life?

E: It would have a harmful influence on my life in the sense that I would have less time for leisure activities, to do the things that I find interesting *as a person*.

The things outside work. So it would not be good.

This boyfriend, also a manager at a bank, made a point of broadening his horizons in order to sustain a good "mental outlook" and to have "something pleasurable to look forward to and something pleasurable to reflect upon afterwards." He could not imagine leading a life which consisted of nothing more than "getting up, going to work, going home, eating, and sleeping." Another childless professional, a woman who had worked at a large technology company and a large bank, explained why she did not want to add another ten hours to her workweek, which oscillated between forty-five and fifty-five hours. Elise's fifty hour workweek left her enough free time to take part in the many invigorating activities which enriched her private life: exercising, socializing with her friends, writing, traveling, and so forth. She would not want to give up these activities simply so that she could "work all the time":

If I worked sixty hours or more a week on a regular basis I'd become kind of narrow. I don't think I would've liked it, because I'd felt like my involvement with other things that I like to do was too low. That's why I can't work a lot over longer periods of time. I don't have that kind of one-track mind, you know. There's nothing at work that I'm passionate about to the degree that I would stop doing other stuff outside work. If I didn't have any spare time, I'd miss reading the chapter, I'd miss spending time with my friends, I'd miss working out. So I wouldn't like this situation very much. There are just so many other things I want to do with that flexibility than just working all the time.

For the Norwegian parenting professionals caught in the often punishing life cycle squeeze (Wilensky 2002: 198), the lack of personal time often caused intense consternation and disappointment. The severe lack of personal time troubled one male management consultant raising a young child, who asserted that this "was no way to live." A life where he lacked the time to see his friends or exercise was not meeting his most basic needs:

So I have needs related to exercise and other things besides work and parenting. Outside of work I spend a lot of time with my son, of course, but he doesn't take



up all of my spare time, I usually exercise three times a week and I want to maintain a social life. I want to have good vacations. *It's not just work and kids, there are other important things in life.*

This ideal guided many of the Norwegians in their efforts to channel their time and energies where they would do the most good. The parenting Norwegians voiced misgivings about their inability to attend to their "personal" interests. Lars, a manager at the Norwegian branch of an international accounting firm revealed, he chafed because of his inability to make time for his personal interests. Giving up these interests was tantamount to denying part of his "existence."

It's hard to take care of all the parts of one's existence [*tilværelsen*]. So if I had more free time, I would of course make sure that I spent more time with my son, but I would also try to develop the personal sides of myself, develop myself outside of work by spending time with friends, doing organized leisure activities, and other stuff. There are many interests outside of work which I have never really cultivated, never done anything with. And these things could help me to transform myself, develop myself. *I'm really concerned about this issue, actually.*

However, like the other Norwegian professionals enduring the life cycle squeeze, this man put this dream of living the multidimensional life on the shelf, deferring it to the period following the launching phase.

It was common for Norwegian managers to encourage their subordinates to work as "efficiently" as possible so that they could leave the office at a decent hour. One manager at a large Norway-based risk management firm routinely berated subordinates, particularly subordinates with children, who "spent inordinate amounts of time here in the office." He urged these women and men to finish their tasks "at a reasonable time" so that they could get home in time to enjoy the family dinner. He felt that the good morale the company created when it respected employees' desires to spend time with their children more than compensated for the reduction in working time. Another manager with a long career behind him put the case for short work hours particularly forcefully. He pointed to some of the workaholics in the office whose careers had sputtered despite the "incredible" amounts of time they had logged in the office over the years. Such people, he judged, were actually undermining their own occupational careers by shortchanging themselves in their personal lives and depriving themselves of the enriching experiences which would give them a "broad perspective" and enable them to "relate to clients."

I don't want people here who spend 100% of their time at work. In fact, I need people who can be open to other impressions and who have a surplus of energy and who can talk about things outside work. So when I see people working here all the time, I ask them "why are you spending all that time at work? Don't you have friends, don't you have a social life outside work?"

And so I encourage them to spend more time away from work.

His ideal employee, as he explained, was someone who had a thriving private life beyond the office walls and who could invigorate his working life with the energy and "impressions" he brought from the nonwork sphere.

### **Self-Care, Sustainability, and Vital Energy**

As a group, the Norwegian professionals acted as self-appointed stewards and caretakers of their own supplies of vital energy. Careful not to "overdo it" at work, these women and men made a point of using their working time as efficiently as possible and putting what one called "a

hard stop" to the workday. They aspired to leave the office at the end of the workday with an "energy surplus" [*overskudd*] which would enable them to get the most out of their private lives and greet the next workday with loads of energy to spare. Assuming responsibility for their own mental and physical well-being, they tried to husband their vital energies when they were at work and they endeavored to deploy these energies as efficiently as possible to accomplish their work-related objectives. For instance, Alf, a Norwegian management consultant and father to a small boy, generally worked 50 hour workweeks. He had no wish to ratchet up his workweeks, even if this would accelerate his career, because it would endanger the surplus of energy he needed to fulfill his parenting obligations and to continue to work effectively at his job. As he explained, "it's not only about having enough time, but it's about having enough energy [*overskudd*] for one's family, oneself, and one's future work commitments." To Alf, it just didn't make any sense to "consume" so much of his energies that he could not muster enough for the next round of work, let alone his private life:

When I'm at work, I don't want to consume so much of my energies and motivation that I undermine my ability to go to work the next day or take away the mental energy [*overskudd*] to really produce at work then next day.

This way of doing things just doesn't make any sense.

Stian, the younger nonparenting consultant, echoed these comments. For him, there was no point in overconsuming one's energy in the current work cycle, because one would invariably pay a price in the future. Putting in a tremendous amount of hours during one work cycle, Stian remarked, would not necessarily make him a more productive worker during the next work cycle:

I don't believe that I would have gotten more done with these hours. If I were to go up to sixty hours per week, it would interfere with the activities I get *my energy from outside work* and it would ultimately lower my effectiveness. Because the hours I get off from work make me ready for the next workday.

This association between excessively long work hours and ineffectiveness at work was a common theme in the narratives of the Norwegians.

A sensitivity to physical and mental tiredness and fatigue was common among the Norwegian respondents. As one financial officer at an investment fund explained: "if I start to feel worn out, I listen to my body and I do what it wants..." The Norwegian respondents kept a close watch on their energy levels, and enlisted a variety of regenerative and restorative strategies in order to sustain a positive balance in their energy accounts (see also Widerberg 2000). Many other Norwegian professionals exhibited the same sensitivity to the physical limitations imposed by their body's demands for rest and renewal. In the absence of truly pressing deadlines, many of the Norwegians put a "hard stop" on the workday and workweek, typically after 50 hours per week, so as to keep their own energy reserves well-stocked. Olsen, the young technical consultant, explained how he would quit work whenever his energy levels started to slip and the quality of his work began to drop. As he explained:

I know my limits and when I can't use my time productively anymore, I just say 'stop,' and I do stop. I have a certain threshold and I know how much I can do before I get tired and I stop producing much of value. I would say that, if I go beyond fifty-five hours of work in a week, then what I do at work beyond these hours will not be useful for anything. And working beyond these limits would also not be good for the company because I

would just be wasting their time and money.

For these Norwegians, it was simply irresponsible to work extreme hours. Working eighty hours a week regularly was an excessive investment of time and energy in work that would ultimately impair the worker's capacity to continue. In keeping with the cultural ideal of self-care, they sought to spare enough time outside work to conserve their energies, both for their own personal well-being and their future effectiveness as workers.

### **Individual Characteristics, the Life Course, and Overwork Counterpressures**

As we have seen, business professionals living and working in Norway contend with a variety of overwork counterpressures. While it is important to distinguish the three types of overwork counterpressures for analytical purposes, it is also critical to note the fact that they often appeared bundled together. In concrete empirical cases, social, institutional, and cultural counterpressures often reinforce and stabilize each other. Social suppressants operate primarily through temporal coordination pressures (Southerton 2003) created when male professionals working in demanding long-hours jobs form intimate ties with short-hours women and with their own children. These temporal coordination pressures also impinge on unattached professionals of both sexes by virtue of their participation in organized leisure pursuits which impose constraints on their work schedules. Such social counterpressures exercise an immediate suppressant effect if the individual in question works in an employing organization which allows him or her some control over his or her work scheduling. If the individual works in a "deviant" employing organization which does not permit such control (such as an international management consultancy), then strong enough counterpressures may lead to a change in jobs.

Moreover, social ties and relationships such as couplehood and parenthood exert their inhibiting effects on devotional orientations and behavior only because they are coupled with culturally specific frames and expectations about companionship and care, for example. Likewise, cultural counterpressures relating to the imperative of self-care and institutional suppressants such as rules limiting overtime, leave policies, and taxation schemes for high incomes often lend support to one another. Moreover, the three varieties of counterpressure work hand in hand to moderate the effects of the overwork cult among professionals; the stronger the institutional limits to overwork and the cultural ideals militating against overwork, for instance, the more likely the individual is to forge social ties which establish additional barriers to overwork.

Unlike cultural counterpressures, social and institutional counterpressures and suppressants wax and wane over the span of the "launching" and "establishment" parts of the respondents' occupational and family careers (Moen et al 2003). While the cultural inhibitors exercise their influence throughout these phases of the life course, and impact the lives of respondents during their twenties and thirties, the social counterpressures, as well as many of the institutional counterpressures, exert their effects during particular phases of the individual's family careers. The social overwork suppressants connected to couplehood make their presence felt during the twenties, when most of the male professionals are in the midst of forging their first serious romantic relationships. Those overwork suppressants relating to involved parenthood surface during the respondents' thirties, the years when both the male and female respondents begin their parenting careers. Many of the institutional overwork counterpressures and overwork suppressants, however, only kick in during particular stages of the individual's occupational career. The impact of rules and regulations mandating paid overtime, for example, are felt only by professionals without supervisory responsibilities, men and women at the early

stages of their occupational careers. On the other hand, institutional inhibitors relating to tax rates on high salaries come into play later on in the individual's occupational career, typically after the individual has worked in the business world for at least seven or eight years and attained a well-paid position placed higher on the corporate ladder.

### **Societal Context and Overwork Counterpressures**

For some of the Norwegian professionals, the twenties and thirties abound with a wide variety of these counterpressures.<sup>37</sup> For others, a much smaller selection of counterpressures make their appearance. Moreover, in some cases the counterpressures assume a particularly potent form while in others they do not gain much traction. And yet this inter-individual variability masks the important fact that the Norwegian professionals, as a group, experience stronger and more varied counterpressures than their American and French counterparts. In order to show the distinctiveness of the Norwegian case with regard to these counterpressures, I contrast the experiences of my Norwegian respondents with those of their French and American peers as they relate to overwork counterpressures. This cross-national evidence lends support to the supposition that the Norwegian societal environment differs from the French and American societal environments in terms of what I call the social, institutional, and cultural *structures of constraint* relative to overwork and extreme work.

### **Societal Context and Social Counterpressures**

It is obvious that institutional counterpressures are in some sense necessarily societally specific because they depend on a legal-institutional environment established by nation-specific collective actors such as the state and labor unions. In the United States, for example, overtime rules are practically nonexistent and taxation schemes do not create the same disincentives to extreme work as they do in Norway. But other kinds of counterpressures unrelated to the formal legal context also exhibit a high degree of societal specificity. In fact, as we will see, the Norwegian context spawns more intense social counterpressures than the French and American societal contexts for the simple reason that Norwegian professionals are likely to develop social ties and attachments less compatible with extreme work.

While none of the Norwegians had allowed their work to derail or retard their romantic lives, several of the American men had spent a large part of their twenties working such long and unpredictable hours that they simply did not have any opportunities to cultivate romantic ties. For several of the American bachelors and bachelorettes, their work lives had absorbed such a large chunk of their twenties and thirties that it proved next to impossible to forge an enduring romantic partnership. Whether by choice or circumstance, their all-consuming work life forced these men and women to defer their romantic life during their twenties and sometimes their thirties.

Even though these men (and women) had already accumulated the financial resources to make themselves attractive prospects on the marriage market, they nevertheless postponed their romantic life to an potential life consigned to an indefinite future (Hochschild 1997). Max, a

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<sup>37</sup> As we have seen, socially based overwork suppressants tend to affect sociodemographically distinct subgroups in different ways, varying along the faultlines of gender, age, and parenting status. Institutionally based suppressants vary along the boundaries of administrative categories established by the Norwegian government. Those counterpressures connected with internalized cultural strictures and expectations diffuse across these sociodemographic and administrative boundaries. Their effects were felt by professionals belonging to all of these categories.

bachelor professional in his mid-thirties, serves as a good illustration of this phenomenon. At the time of the interview, Max was regularly working over sixty-five hours a week as a project manager at a large Silicon Valley software firm. His life as a bachelor workaholic was not entirely satisfying to him, but he wanted to invest himself in his demanding job, a job which he found extremely rewarding and meaningful. Max was not averse to the idea of a family, but, in his current life phase, he defined himself as someone who "lived to work." Of course, he realized that it was no simple matter to go out and find himself a significant other, given his 24-7 work schedule. As he remarked:

It's pretty difficult to meet somebody when you're in the office from seven-thirty in the morning until eleven o'clock at night and you're working every weekend. How much time do you really have to go on dates in this situation?

On the other hand, there was no way Max would give up the job just because it ate up too much of his time and energy and he could bear his monkish life for the time being. Moreover, he did not anticipate either scaling back his work commitments or switching to a less demanding position any time in the near future.

While none of the Norwegians were caught in what several Americans called the "i-banker's trap," this syndrome touched the lives of at least eight of the American male professionals. Manuel, a single professional software developer in his early thirties working in the high-tech sector admitted that his personal life was not "where it should be." As Manuel explained, his social life outside of work, deprived of nourishment for so long, had withered to the point where it had little to offer. The more anemic his private life, however, the more his work life appeared as the appropriate central life interest which had legitimate claims on all of his time, energy, and attention:

I feel like, for me, I don't have much going on in my personal life. A lot of the time I feel like I am working so much because it's easier to work than to proactively go out and build up something from scratch in my personal life.

Thus, even though Manuel was convinced that any kind of extra-work activity or relationship would enhance his life and make him "happier overall," he appeared reluctant to consider altering his work commitments in order to make room for a richer personal life. He balked at the effort it would take to jump start something so listless and depleted.

At the same time, the relative occupational distribution of men and women in Norway means that the Norwegian male professional is more likely to come into contact and establish a relationship with a woman who holds a full-time job but does not work extreme hours herself. Fewer than 1% of all women with full-time jobs regularly work more than fifty hours per week, and a large proportion of women work in the Norwegian state sector where constrained work hours are near universal (Kjølsrød, Lise 2005, Birkelund & Sandnes 2003). In the American and French environments, however, it is likelier that the American or French professional man will find a romantic companion in an occupationally ambitious woman pursuing her own high-flying business career and working in a long-hours job. This cross-societal divergence becomes clear when we examine the career profiles of the romantic partners chosen by the French, Norwegian, and American professional men. While roughly 35% of the American and French male professionals with partners had been involved with long-hours women professionals, not a single Norwegian male professional had been involved with a long-hours professional woman.

Many of the American men established romantic relationships with women who dedicated almost as much time and energy to work as they did. While none of the Norwegian professional men became romantically involved with women working at long-hours professional jobs, a significant minority of the American and French partnered professional men belonged to symmetric long-hours dual-earner couples. They and their partners worked long and unpredictable hours at pressure-packed jobs which came with large paychecks. Two of the American men who worked the longest hours and traveled out-of-town the most frequently became romantically involved with women who avidly pursued their own high-flying careers in the business world. Caleb, an American investment banker, had always dated professional women with demanding careers. When Caleb eventually settled down and got married in his early thirties, it was to a woman MBA who worked long hours herself for one of the big four accounting firms. Even though they did not have any children, Caleb and his wife had grown accustomed to having very little joint leisure time at their disposal. Just as he worked twelve-hour workdays and traveled out of town extensively as an investment banker, she worked 60+ hour workweeks as a tax advisor employed by a large professional services firm. As a result, neither Caleb nor his wife could count on much companionship except on Saturdays. However, by operating as an income-maximizing team, they accelerated their progress towards their joint goal of amassing several million dollars in savings by the time they reached their late forties.

Both Caleb and his wife were prepared to sacrifice a lot of joint leisure time to reach this objective, potentially at the expense of children. Interestingly, several of the French professional men also became romantically involved with ambitious and successful women pursuing demanding careers in long-hours fields. Most of these unions were formed at the elite Grande Écoles where they met each other. Arnaud, a French management consultant, for example, married a star student attending Ecole Polytechnique, the most prestigious technical school in the country. While Arnaud went on to work sixty-plus hour weeks at an elite management consultancy, his girlfriend turned wife logged even longer workweeks for an elite investment banking firm. Throughout her twenties and into her early thirties, she worked marathon days doing M&A transactions. None of the Norwegian male respondents had partners with these kinds of careers or working lives.

Legitimizing and normalizing framings predominated in the American women's commentaries on their partners' work commitments, the consequences of these commitments for the relationships, and their own adaptations to their partners' work-related unavailability. Doing without long stretches of couple time was a burden that some of the American women found hard to bear. While they did not wish for a temporally "downsized" (Hochschild 1997) relationship and a romantic life without much couple time, they viewed these drawbacks as a price well worth paying. Their partners' unavailability was interpreted as an inevitable byproduct of a demanding business career in which they had a large stake. Many of the American women also cast their partners' working life as a legitimately all-consuming domain which had rightful claims on a large share of their partners' time, energy, and attention.

For the American women who enjoyed substantially more leisure time than their spouses, the man's success in his high-flying business career was an objective which necessarily entailed long hours and frequent travel. Nancy, a corporate manager married to Victor, a management consultant, "understood" the imperative to put in many late nights at the office. She wanted to see Victor, a person she described as "driven," succeed in his high-powered management consulting job. He had "always wanted the job," she explained, so she "owed it to him" to support his efforts in the career department. And she knew well that management consulting was

the kind of extreme profession where one has to "prove oneself" by putting in the "time and the sweat equity." Revisiting the period before their child, Nancy remembered that she managed to keep herself occupied during the evenings while her husband Victor toiled at the office. Even when Victor had arrived home after 10:00 PM on a regular basis, she was "fine with being on her own." She could "go hang out with friends or exercise or read, go to bed early, or watch TV." His evening absences did not constitute a "big issue" for her.

The ability to amuse oneself was also a point of pride for Cara, the younger partner of Nick, a management consultant at a high-powered firm. Because of Nick's frequent travel out of town, Cara was accustomed to very long and frequent periods of separation, some of them over five weeks. As she had worked herself in the same firm, Cara knew the lifestyle of the management consultant well. She realized she knew that she could not "realistically" expect to see Nick much during the week. But this unavailability was not a "big deal." After all, she declared, his absences during the week made her more "productive" and left her time to hang out with her friends and family.

Other American women also devalued leisure time companionship as a dispensable aspect of the relationship far less important than their partners' career success and job-related contentment. For Wilma, a highly successful corporate attorney married to Allen, an entrepreneur who often worked deep into the night, her husband's career success trumped her desire for leisure time companionship. The priority for her was that her husband would do "whatever it took" to succeed in his work, even if this meant filling his evenings and weekends with work instead of spending the time with her. Wilma was not "terribly unhappy" about losing out on couple time in the evenings and weekends. What was critical for her was that her partner was "into his job" and wanted to succeed in it. Even though Wilma wanted his company during her leisure time, she cared much more about his willingness to work long hours than his ability to provide companionship.

Just as the American women normalized their partners' demanding jobs and their work devotion and tried to minimize the importance of couple time in their relationship, they framed their own acquiescence to this lack of togetherness as a justifiable and even rational response to the situation. This reflexive framing was particularly apparent in the commentary of Sara, a voluble woman in her early thirties with her own demanding career in the fashion world. Sara came closer than any of the other American women to acknowledging the problematic character of her partner's working life. During the entire lifetime of the relationship, from dating through marriage, her husband Stan had traveled extensively on out-of-town assignments. As a result, they had rarely spent more than two consecutive days together at a time. She remembered back to the early stages of the relationship when she barely saw him one day out of every week and she was not even certain whether he was keeping "another family" in the Texas city where he spent the Monday through Thursday portion of the week.

Despite these weekly disappearing acts, Sara was very "patient" with Stan's absences in the beginning of the relationship. However, as the relationship progressed, however, she did eventually tire of his unavailability. She found it increasingly difficult to resign herself to occupying "second" place behind his career. Now that they were a married couple sharing a residence and planning a joint future, Stan's absences had become increasingly vexatious. She wondered whether they would ever be in a position to have children or even a dog on account of Stan's working hours and travel schedule. She dreaded her future as a "bosses' wife widowed by the company." But she had not pushed him to change jobs. She rationalized her own hesitancy to force the issue, explaining: "I'm not gonna push him [to get a more relaxed job at Sedate Corp.]. I

don't know. I'm not going to ask for ridiculous things. I'm not an *irrational* person" From her perspective, by accommodating his work absorption she was not only adapting to an immutable reality, but also validating her own character as a rational person.

As we can see from these commentaries, the American women varied in their emotional responses to their common predicament. For these women, their partners' career aspirations, however disruptive to their relationship, deserved their deference. And yet, in their framings of both their partners' working life and their relationships, they all enlisted frames which rendered greedy jobs and downsized intimate relationships both normal and legitimate. Such was not the case with their Norwegian counterparts.<sup>38</sup>

The American men echoed their partners in carrying out framing work designed to normalize and legitimize their immersion in their working lives and their inattentiveness to their partners' desire for companionship and couple time. Like the women, they represented their greedy working lives and robust work ethics as facts of life to which their partners had to adapt. Nick, the management consultant who rarely saw his partner Cara for more than a weekend at a time, complained that Cara had made "unwarranted" requests for him to reduce his work hours. He was particularly taken aback by these requests because she had worked in the same firm herself. It should have been obvious to her, he argued, that his success as a consultant was contingent on his ability to travel and work long hours without her interference. After a few "discussions," he had gotten her to realize that he was not about to "fuck up the work for the next day" by leaving the office before he had completed his work. A weekend-based relationship, he felt, "should be enough for her." Victor, another consultant, manifested the same kind of intransigence over his work hours. Explaining the "facts of life" to his wife with respect to his work responsibilities as a management consultant, he made it clear that he could not simply cut down his hours because "this [effort] is what the job calls for and this is what it takes to do the job."

The American men also expended a great deal of effort rationalizing their partners' acceptance of their work absorption and frequent absences. Imputing a pragmatic framing to their partners, these men explained that the women were invested in their careers, both for altruistic and selfish reasons. As a result, they claimed, the women wisely overlooked the deficiencies of their temporally downsized relationships and focused on the many advantages of a relationship the men likened to an exchange or deal.

These legitimizing frames concerned the women's purported interest in seeing their partners excel in their demanding long-hours occupations, as well as the futility of trying to alter the men's relationship with his work. Stan knew that his partner Sara was uneasy with his work absorption and his open-ended commitment of time and energy to his work and career. In his view, however, Sara was a "pragmatic person" who had married him knowing full well that he

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<sup>38</sup> My interviews suggest that the partnered male Norwegian professional involved with a short-hours woman makes an effort to limit his work hours in the interest of freeing up more couple time and satisfying the woman's desire for more companionship in the evening and weekends. But his American counterpart is more likely to conduct himself differently in regard to work hours. More likely to approach his career as a legitimately greedy enterprise deserving of large amount of time and energy, and more likely to perceive the couple's joint leisure time as a luxury rather than a necessity, his American peer is more likely to stand firm against his partner's pleas to curtail his work hours, cut back on his business travel, or give up his long-hours job in exchange for a position at once less remunerative and more relaxed. Unlike the Norwegian men, none of the partnered American or French male professionals in their twenties reported curtailing their work hours in order to spend time with their significant others prior to having children.



would never relinquish his devotional attachment to work and career. Well-acquainted with this facet of his personality, she had "come to terms" with her role as the "best other thing" in his life: [In the beginning of our relationship] she quickly understood that, ok, I'm just that way. [Working really hard] is something I have to do. So, what she was thinking was, 'I'm not going to make him choose between me and the job. I'm just going to try my best to be the other thing in his life.'

Moreover, in Stan's eyes, Sara had a stake in his own high-flying business career. His rise in the business world gave them a level of financial security and affluence which "she enjoyed every bit as much" as he did. For Sara, he indicated, the scarcity of companionship was a relatively small price to pay in view of these tangible benefits.

For the American men, it was only "sensible" for their partner to swallow her discontent with his work hours and job commitment. One of the clearest examples of this normalizing framing surfaced in the comments of Carl, an American investment banker married to an accountant. His perspective was that Kathy, his wife, wanted to see him succeed in his remunerative line of work, both for his sake and for her own sake. Moreover, she knew "what she was getting into" when she married him several years into this demanding banking career. For Victor, a management consultant with a baby, it was the bargaining frame which took center stage in his commentary. In Victor's eyes, his wife was willing to trade companionship during the week for a higher standard of living for them and their child. She had a stake in his career and knew what the family "stood to lose" if he gave up his lucrative but demanding management consultant position. Characterizing his wife Nancy as a woman primarily concerned with the economic well-being of the family unit, he spoke of the economic exigencies they faced as a couple with a young child to support and the importance of a large paycheck:

We're at a point where she's great, she definitely understands the lifestyle and, you know, getting a good salary is very important to the family. Now she realizes that if I take a more relaxed job I'll be taking a 30% pay cut. So, even if I can get home by 6:30, we'll have less money. Now she's like 'hah, maybe it's worth it for him to stay.'

Chris, another American management consultant, framed his partner's interest in his career as a matter of her own desire for "more flexibility" in her life. By allowing him to work "whenever" the occasion demanded, he pointed out, his wife put herself in an economic position where she could afford to work less herself. Her acceptance of the "deal" between them was thus a matter of simple self-interest, as well as a recognition of his own devotional approach to work. As he put it:

My wife wanted to only work four or three days in a row, so part of the deal was 'Ok, my husband will have the high-powered job, he'll get paid a lot and he'll have to work when he'll have to work. And I'll get to live a more flexible life that I want.'

Like the other American men, Chris rationalized his partner's accommodating stance towards his own work absorption, underscoring her pragmatism as well as her own self-interest.

The same cross-national divergence can be observed with respect to the inhibiting effects of parenthood and parenting, particularly among men. The Norwegian parenting men, without any exceptions, all fit the template of the "superdad" who assumes the duties of a hands-on parent (Aarseth 2007). With respect to the balance they struck between working life and childraising, these professional men behaved like American male professionals studied by Cooper. Many of their American and French counterparts manifested a similar commitment to

such parenting practices. However, whereas the Norwegian parenting men did not include a single traditionalist man, the French and American groups contained a minority of traditionalist men who saw fit to practice fatherhood in a manner that did not impose constraints on their work. These traditionalist American men and French men did not bother to modify their work hours upon the arrival of children. Many of the French men in particular continued to stay work in their offices past their children's bedtimes. Sometimes, their intransigence provoked conflict with their spouses. More often, however, they and their spouses both acquiesced to the demands of their long-hours jobs.<sup>39</sup> Vincent, an American management consultant, serves as a good illustration of this orientation. When his first child was born, Vincent worked thirteen hour days as very well-paid management consultant working long hours at an elite firm. It was common for him to leave for work at 6:30 AM and return from work after 8:00 PM, a pattern which disturbed his working wife even though she had hired a nanny to look after the child. Although Vincent did try to rearrange his work hours and "work more creatively," he had no desire to cut down on the time and energy he expended on his work. As he explained, "you can't work less hard just because you have a baby." Jérôme, a Parisian attorney, worked twelve hour days at his corporate law firm. Although he would have liked to see his infant son every weekday evening or morning, Jérôme could not bring himself to shorten his workday. Such a move would jeopardize his career prospects, he feared:

Because I get home a bit later, it isn't really easy to see my kids. It's true that we don't often get the chance to have dinner together. Having a kid didn't really change my lifestyle in terms of my *organization of time at work*. Now I get home late at night and I don't get to see them, but what can I do? *I still can't just leave after eight hours if I want a good career here.*

While the majority of the French and American men who took this approach framed it as a matter of deferring to the ineluctable demands of their high-paying jobs, some of the French group actually confessed that they were happy to stay at work while their wives took care of the more tedious aspects of childrearing. Rémy, a French consultant with young children confessed that he did not feel the need to be around for the "administrative-logistical work" involved in hands-on parenting. Rémy preferred to be the one earning the money that kept the family afloat. While he enjoyed the company of his sons, he was happy to leave the tasks which required a lot of "patience" to his wife. He declared "I have no desire to bathe them and help them with their homework."

### **Societal Context and Cultural Counterpressures**

Just as the Norwegian context presents an environment congenial to strong social overwork counterpressures and overwork suppressants, it also presents the business professional with cultural resources which can be used to resist the hard work cult and the schema of work devotion. This embrace of private life as a vital source of personal enrichment and self-development appears in a stronger form among the Norwegians than the French and especially the Americans. In this respect, the Norwegian context approximates the French setting more than the American setting. Like the Norwegians, all of the French respondents extolled the importance of leading a "full" life. Giving up this aspect of life constituted a "great sacrifice," in the words of Matthieu, a French management consultant. Given another day in the week, all of

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<sup>39</sup> As these male "traditionalists" define their parenting duties solely in terms their fitness as good providers rather than providers of care, they seek to maximize their earnings at the expense of family time (Gerson 2010, Orange 2007, Blair-Loy & Jacobs 2003).

the French respondents professed a desire to spend the day pursuing their personal or family-based leisure interests. Sébastien, a single French banker, would use the day to enrich his personal life with cultural activities, social activities, and recreational sports. And yet, for the French respondents, such ideals rarely informed their actual work practices.

While the vast majority of the Norwegian and French respondents pointed out the indispensability of a multidimensional life with "anchorages" outside of work and a healthy balance between working life and private life, only three of their American peers praised the virtues of the multidimensional life. In fact, a minority of the American respondents did not idealize the multidimensional life or observe the imperative of self-care. Even those parenting American respondents who looked forward to spending time with their families and participating in family-based leisure activities outside of work (Orrange 2007: 150-160) did not explicitly address the importance of nonwork activities and interests as a necessary ingredient of the good life. Further, when asked whether they would use an extra (eighth) day in the week for work or for something else, assuming their workload stayed fixed, the majority of the Americans replied that they would allocate this day for work.

If the multidimensional life ideal exerts a stronger grip in the Norwegian (and French) contexts than in the American context, so did the idea of working efficiently, taking care of oneself, and conserving one's vital energies for private life. The Americans did not express an allegiance to any ideals about the multidimensional life.<sup>40</sup> Nor did they voice a concern with conserving their vital energy, deploying their work time efficiently, or creating a healthy balance between working life and private life. Rather than attempting to use their limited working time efficiently and conserving their energies for private life (and for the next work cycle), the majority of the Americans made very little effort to either work efficiently or husband their energies at work. Several of them occupied themselves with the task of consuming as much energy as they could muster in their work lives, even if they had nothing left over for the next work cycle. The idea was to have "nothing left behind" at the end of the workday. Milton, an American project manager at a large high-tech firm who often worked thirteen hour days, took evident pride in pushing himself "to the limit" at work. Milton's goal was to arrive at the end of a project with his resources "exhausted." Sam, the self-described "hardcore" management consultant described his approach to work as "doing things to death." Sam was proud of his reputation as the "burner" among his colleagues. He wanted to be known as the person "in the trenches at 2 AM when everyone else had gone home" and prided himself on his ability to outperform many of his more talented peers through sheer effort.<sup>41</sup> After a twelve to fourteen

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<sup>40</sup> Many of the Americans did lead lives one could consider unidimensional for long stretches of time. Danny, a corporate litigator who had a prodigious appetite for work and "didn't have much trouble" working fourteen and fifteen hour days on a regular basis. There were many months when he "didn't talk to anybody, not my friends, not my parents.." He became so engrossed in his work that there he felt unable to spare five minutes during the workday to send an Email to his friends and family members. While this unidimensional life was not the ideal to which he aspired and made him "crabby and edgy" at times, it was a price he considered fair and reasonable, considering the pecuniary and nonpecuniary rewards of his work. Sometimes, he declared, one has to "make sacrifices" in order to "scale the heights."

<sup>41</sup> When he joined the consultancy out of business school, he was determined to work harder than all the other junior consultants. It came as little surprise that his consulting coworkers quickly began to see him as the "hardcore burner" able to work eighty hours a week for weeks on end. As a result of his experience at the consultancy, which ultimately imperiled his health, he was excited to discover that he had the physical ability to "burn very hard day in and day out." This self-discovery made him "really happy." After several years of this grueling pace, his mind and body were worn out, and he confessed that he was looking forward to a slower-paced job. And yet, despite looking

hours workday, he announced, "I don't want to have thing left in reserve." This propensity for giving his all to his work had long roots extending back to his adolescence, as he explained:

The attitude since the beginning of college really was 'I will not be successful unless I push with all *my might and spend every ounce of energy I have.*' Luckily I can set myself up to burn really hard both mentally and physically so I can work really long hours for long periods of time without killing myself healthwise.

Rather than putting limits on the amount of time and energy he was willing to dedicate to work, and trying to work as intensively as possible within these limits, Sam worked double shifts and fourteen hour days, even as his body protested and he struggled with fatigue-induced symptoms.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter surveys the varied social, institutional, and cultural overwork counterpressures which impinge on the work lives of successful and ambitious Norwegian businesspeople prone to overwork. This overview reveals the existence of three major types of analytically distinct factors, namely social, institutional, and cultural counterpressures. In their various combinations, these three factors create a particular structure of constraint in relation to overwork and extreme work among professionals. To varying degrees, this structure of constraint curbs the practices and orientations constitutive of overwork. The evidence relating to the Norwegian case suggests that, relative to the French and especially the American environment, the Norwegian context offers a particularly robust and multidimensional structure of constraint when it comes to the work orientations and practices of successful business professionals, particularly male business professionals. This structure of constraint is at its strongest when the institutional, social, and cultural elements all come in to play at once. From the evidence presented in this chapter, it seems that this structure of constraint is more robust in the Norwegian environment than in countries like France and particularly the United States. The comparative evidence presented at the conclusion of this chapter suggests that the modal Norwegian professional has a greater likelihood of exposure to social and institutional counterpressures than his American (or French) counterparts. At the same time, the Norwegian business professional lives and works in a cultural environment which affords him or her a more varied and abundant stock of cultural resources he can use to resist work devotion. Unlike his American or French peers, he can call upon cultural repertoires (Lamont 1992) hostile to work devotion. Some of these cultural frames cast extreme work in an unfavorable light, while others extol the importance of life anchorages outside of the work realm.

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forward to the day when he could get "off the treadmill," Sam did not devise or implement any strategies to combat his tiredness or keep himself in better mental and physical shape.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications**

This dissertation sets a new course for cross-national studies of working life and private life by carrying out an interview-based in-depth multisite case study of comparable French, Norwegian, and American elite business professionals' modes of working and living. In doing so, it opens up a new window onto the similarities and differences between the modes of working and living characteristic of American and Western European managers and professionals, men and women who have attained an elevated and advantaged socioeconomic status in their respective societies. Probing these ways of working and living from many different analytical perspectives, and drawing from a diversity of descriptive and explanatory "theory frames" (Rueschemeyer 2009), the study supplies many new insights into the ways in which comparable French, Norwegian, and American managers and professionals go about their professional and personal lives.

Broad in its scope, the dissertation exploits the richness and multidimensionality of its evidentiary base in order to compare and contrast the three groups of respondents along a panoply of analytical dimensions. These dimensions of similarity and dissimilarity include the architecture of respondents' daily routines, their temporal "boundary work," their styles of "work talk," their self-identifications in relation to realms of work, leisure, and family, their relationship to the cultures of their employing organizations, their strategies for the short-term and long-term allocation of time and energy, their interactions with significant others around work and family issues, their pathways through their countries' educational and employment regimes, their lifestyle preferences and expectations, the occupational trajectories and childbearing aspirations of their romantic partners, and the kinds of alignments and mismatches they experience between them and these partners.

Synthesizing the dissertation's findings, we can now see how various factors in the French, Norwegian, and American societal environments work together and separately to produce cross-group differences in the ways in which respondents organize and experience both their work lives and their nonwork lives. Viewing these findings through the analytical lens of the workscape, we can see how various society-specific cultural, social, and institutional factors come into play in shaping nationally distinctive worksapes experienced by these three groups of comparable managers and professional workers. A quick review of the core features of these society-specific worksapes is in order, as it will set the stage for a presentation of the dissertation's theoretical and empirical implications.

### **The Norwegian Managerial-Professional Workscape**

The analyses of the extreme work counterpressures, temporal zoning practices, hard work talk, job stances, lifestyle preferences, and romantic ties of the Norwegian respondents point to a very particular managerial-professional workscape qualitatively different than the managerial-professional worksapes experienced by the French or American respondents. In the vast majority of its dimensions and aspects, this workscape is antithetical to the orientations associated with extreme work and identity of the unconditional worker.

First, the Norwegian workscape is one in which the national institutional infrastructure, particularly the Norwegian government's policies vis-à-vis working hours and conditions, throws up numerous institutional barriers to extreme work, even among managerial and professional employees. Norwegian state policies mandate universal restrictions on working time applicable not only to nonmanagerial employees (as is the case in many other European countries), but also to junior managerial employees. While these restrictions are enforced particularly stringently for

managers and professionals working in the public sector and those working in large firms where the state has an ownership stake, they can apply even to the Norwegian offices of global firms. In many firms, "overtime" hours worked by managerial and professional employees must be compensated on an hourly basis at a high rate. Thus, at the very moment when these managers and professional are motivated to work very hard to launch their careers into the highest orbit possible (Bartolomé & Evans 1979), their employers have incentives to limit their hours. Secondly, like other European managers and professionals, Norwegian managers and professionals enjoy guaranteed access to statutory and collectively agreed minimum paid vacations (Alesina et al 2005). Thirdly, as we saw in Chapter six, the Norwegian national institutional regime creates disincentives for individuals to work very hard for economic reasons. They recognize that a large proportion of whatever income gains they secure as a result of their exertions will end up in the hands of the government. Finally, the childcare policies of the Norwegian government (much less so the French government) exert a profound effect on working schedules because of the very limited opening hours of the subsidized state-run daycare system, a system which has a large constituency among parenting managers and professionals with young children.

Reinforcing these institutional barriers are cultural forces which compromise the appeal and social acceptability of work centrism, work devotion, and extreme work routines. As we have seen throughout the dissertation, the Norwegian respondents' inner workscape is strongly inflected by a variety of ideological forces which militate against a totalizing devotion to work, a commitment to career success at any cost, and the open-ended investment of time and energy in work-related activities. Internalized to varying degrees by the Norwegian respondents on an emotional, cognitive, and conative level, these cultural forces come in a variety of forms and inhibit extreme work in a variety of ways. Internalized ideological constructs such as the ideal of the multidimensional life, the concern with self-care and the preservation of vital energy, the interest in the efficient use of work time, the universality of childbearing among women and men, and the understanding of romantic relationships as time-intensive conspire together to undermine the appeal of extreme work and to erode its social acceptability and desirability. These cultural forces predispose the Norwegians to look for life anchorages outside work and to nurture these nonwork life anchorages with time and energy which would otherwise go to work.

Not only do the Norwegian respondents entertain alternative identity commitments which divert time and energy from work, but they do not adhere to an identity code which prescribes occupational success as the royal road to self-realization. As is clear from the analysis of the Norwegian' hard work talk, the male Norwegian respondents, even those who work hours which are long and arduous by Norwegian standards, do not approach their inner work ethic as a vital element of their self-identity and a vital precondition for social and personal self-fulfillment. Rather than constructing a self-identity built around their work ethic, viewed as a penchant for hard and unrelenting work effort, they articulate a self-identity built around their interest in realizing themselves through their dedicated engagement with the work's intellectually enriching tasks. For the Norwegians, the commitment to hard work had to be understood solely as a commitment to a kind of intellectual self-realization. Such behavior could not be legitimated through a quest for mere wealth and externally validated occupational status. Further, the Norwegian's commitment to hard work is to a large extent a conditional and revocable commitment, because it springs from his or her intellectual engagement with the particular tasks which best advance his or her interest in self-realization. This commitment to hard work,

therefore, can be suspended when work tasks become tedious and cease to engage one's intellectual faculties sufficiently.

At the same time, other features of the Norwegians' workscape constrain their allocations of time and energy and the claims their employing organizations can make on their expenditures of these inputs. This constraining aspects of their workscape can be seen clearly in the chapter dealing with the temporal benchmarking and temporal zoning practices and orientations relating to the evening hours between 5 PM and 9 PM, prime working hours for the work-centric professional. Both the Norwegian respondents and the Norwegian employers, as we learned in this chapter, tend to zone these hours as private time rather than work time. Further, Norwegian managerial and professional employees tend to benchmark their evening routines against the evening routines of idealized worker-caretakers, even when they did not have children of their own. Given these findings, it is fair to characterize the Norwegian workscape as one which incorporates macrotemporal conventions binding both workers and employers and constraining their allocation of the evening hours as working time.<sup>42</sup>

As we saw in this chapter, the Norwegian professional whether female or male, current parent or future parent, is expected to recognize the legitimacy and authority of the early departure norm. This distinctively "Scandinavian" norm applies to workers across all economic sectors and social classes. Because of the existence of this very general and diffuse temporal convention around the evening hours, the Norwegian professional conforms to typical working time conventions when he or she leaves work at 4:30 PM and works efficiently during the day to make this early departure possible. The dispensation which the Norwegian professional man or woman enjoys to leave his or her workplace before 5:00 PM in order to enjoy his or her private life is a dispensation which is encoded in informal organizational mandates as well as conventions and norms diffused through his or her local and remote social milieu. In fact, this norm binds the organization and limits the claims it can legitimately make on the time of its professional and managerial employees. Thus, unlike the American employer, the Norwegian employer is not at liberty to institute a late-hours "temporal regime" (Sabelis 2007) for its managerial and professional workers without becoming deviant in the eyes of the society at large.

Extreme work also goes against the grain of the Norwegian managerial-professional workscape in its outer aspects, as the immediate life contexts of the Norwegian respondents afford relatively few incentives to put work at the center of life. First, the relative paucity of managerial and professional positions in Norway requiring extreme work means that the person bent on devoting himself or herself to work and pursuing an extremely time-intensive and energy-intensive career will have relatively few opportunities to work in such jobs within the country. From a structural perspective, this dearth of very demanding managerial and professional jobs is first and foremost due to the occupational composition of the Norwegian economy, particularly the lack of the kinds of professional services jobs which typically require the longest hours (see Perlow & Porter 2009). But, the study shows that, even when Norwegian men and women do wind up working in the positions and organizations which put them at the most "risk" of work devotion and extreme work, they nevertheless are likely to find themselves enmeshed in social relationships with other individuals, particularly romantic companions, who stand firm against the encroachments of greedy work and make things uncomfortable at home for

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<sup>42</sup> Even if some of the Norwegian professionals end up compensating for the private use of the early evening hours by allocating the late evening hours (8-11 PM) to work tasks, they still consider themselves removed from the workplace environment.

the work-consumed male partner. Paired with women who neither have demanding long-hours jobs themselves nor are preoccupied with the economic and status dividends which their male partner reap from these jobs, the Norwegian male managers and professionals most prone to the seductions of their relatively intense jobs experience very strong countervailing pressures from their girlfriends and wives. These partners insist that their men make themselves available as romantic partners, particularly in the early evening hours and over the work-free weekend.

These counterpressures only intensify with the arrival of children, at which point both these women and the men come into contact with very strong norms dictating time-intensive and gender-egalitarian parenting. These norms proscribe paid childcare and prescribe time-intensive mothering and fathering for young children. Finally, the male Norwegian professionals who partner with Norwegian women wind up with family-oriented women who entertain relatively aggressive childbearing timetables, given their educational backgrounds. For their part, female Norwegian managers and professionals face quite strong pressures from friends and families to have children of their own, closing off the childfree route to work devotion open to women in other countries (see Blair-Loy 2003).

### **The American Workscape**

While the Norwegian manager or professional encounters a workscape which renders extreme work impractical, unappealing, and undesirable on a variety of ideological, social, and institutional fronts, his or her American counterpart faces a workscape with a very different extreme work "gradient." First, American managers and professionals lead their work lives in an unregulated institutional environment which does not impose any restrictions on working hours or create economic disincentives for long work hours. Firms and companies operating in this laissez-faire environment enjoy a free hand to work their managerial and professional employees as hard as they wish. Conversely, the American government does not levy financial penalties on firms or companies when their managerial and professional employees work twelve-hour days or sixty-plus hour workweeks; overtime pay rules only apply to employees without managerial responsibilities or qualifications. Although many American managers and professionals do receive paid leaves through their employers, American managers and professionals cannot count on statutory or collectively agreed guaranteed minimum paid leaves like Norwegian and French counterparts. Finally, because the American government does not tax marginal incomes at a particularly high rate when these incomes are high, the American professional who secures the financial benefits of working longer hours gains a larger share of the economic payoff than his Norwegian or European counterparts.

Secondly, as the interviews with the American respondents vividly reveal, the kinds of internalized ideals, orientations, and outlooks which blunt the appeal and acceptability of extreme work in the Norwegian context exert a much weaker grip in the American context. The American respondents rarely approached working time as a resource to be consumed efficiently in the interest of a full, thriving, and fulfilling private life. The ideological concern with self-care, the emphasis on the preservation of vital energy, and the interest in putting work "in its place" were either suppressed, weak, or absent among the American respondents. Among the childless Americans, for example, those who sought to keep work's claims on their time, energy, and attention contained and made an effort to nurture other life anchorages were the ones who had met with some kind of disappointment in the professional careers or had wearied of their work lives in some respect. Whereas the Norwegian professional men had taken steps to avoid a



situation where their job monopolized their time and energy, many of the American professional men allowed work to take over their lives to a much larger extent.

The male American professionals also distinguished themselves from the Norwegians in the way they talk about their self-identities they formed in relationship to both work and leisure. The Americans did identify themselves as individuals interested in harvesting intellectual stimulation from their work tasks in order to realize their inner capacities and affirm their individuality in the same way as the Norwegians. But they also portrayed themselves as driven "overachievers." They approached their demanding and remunerative jobs not only as sources of intellectual stimulation, but also as sources of externally validated status (most often symbolized by the monetary rewards of the job) and as vehicles for the mobilization of their drive, an essential element of their personalities and character with roots in their past. As far as leisure time was concerned, particularly unstructured leisure time (Orrange 2007), the American male professionals engaged in de-legitimizing talk. These Americans disavow any interest in leisure. They cast aspersions on leisure time, particularly long stretches of leisure time, depicting these temporal voids as breeding grounds for an idleness which could undermine their identities as driven overachievers. In all of this self-presentation and posturing talk, the male American professionals do exactly what the Norwegian male professionals avoid. They cast themselves as people motivated in their work lives by the lure of extrinsic rewards, the desire to outdo their peers, and, most importantly, a longstanding need to succeed in the occupational realm. This need has nothing to do with the character of their work tasks. Instead, it is rooted in the unchanging bedrock of their personalities.

Here we can see how the American workscape, in its internalized cultural aspects, is void of the kinds of ideological and practical counter-affordances (Levi Martin 2003: 41) which the Norwegian workscape makes available to Norwegian managers and professionals who wish to contain their working hours. This lack of "inhibitory" ideological and motivational resources also extends to the kinds of intersubjective and often externalized cultural resources encoded in temporal zoning and benchmarking practices of both individuals and organizations. The data concerning the temporal zoning and temporal benchmarking practices of American managers and professionals in Chapter 3 makes clear the extent to which the American professional is entirely at the mercy of an autonomous corporate culture when it comes to his evening routines and the timing of his departure from the office. While the Norwegian managerial or professional employee can avail himself of the socially general dispensation to leave the workplace before 5:00 PM, an American wishing to do so must be working for a very relaxed supervisor or better yet a company which has a "family-friendly" early departure norm. Some of the American early-leavers did in fact work in such environments, and did benefit from company-specific or even department-specific dispensation to leave the office early. But many others working in late-hours firms could only vacate the office 6:00 PM if they were prepared to be seen as individual "time-dissidents" (Fuchs Epstein 1999).

In the American context, then, the decision to extend or compress the workday has everything to do with the local workplace milieu and the specificities of the individual's personal and family situation. In the absence of general transorganizational prescriptions about the temporal zoning of the evening hours, some professionals wind up working later than they would like in their late-hour organizations, while others go home as early as they want. In this where organizations wield considerable control over their employees' work schedules and do not contend with strong societal conventions around the structure of the daily round, local influences

hold sway when it comes to the disposition of the evening hours and the extension or compression of the managerial and professional workday.

It is clear that the American manager and professional works and lives in an ideological and motivational "field" (Rueschemeyer 2009: 156, Levi Martin 2003) where neither internalized ideals nor externalized routines stand in the way of extreme working schedules and a totalizing commitment to the job, is not in a position to resist the seductions of work or push back against external pressures emanating from his or her workplace milieu as the same way as his or her Norwegian counterpart.

Just as the American professional finds cultural resources useful for resisting work devotion scarce in his cultural environment, he also must contend with a scarcity of social ties which mitigate extreme work. This scarcity is most evident with respect to the partnered childless male professional who finds himself romantically involved with an American woman. First, it is likely that his partner is pursuing her own demanding and time-consuming career in the business world, and has less time to spare than her Norwegian counterpart. Spared the temporal coordination pressures bearing down on the partnered male Norwegian professional from his girlfriend or wife (even in the absence of children) who pines for his company at 5:00 PM on a weekday evening, the partnered but childless American male professional cheerfully spends his evenings working. Even those American professional men partnered to women working in short-hours jobs appear to escape the strains experienced by their American counterparts caught in a tug-of-war between their jobs and their significant others. In fact, as interviews with these professionals and their partners reveal, the Americans' female partners often clear the way for their partners to adhere to the identity of the unconditional worker. Legitimizing their partners' long work hours as signs of an admirable dedication to work and career, the Americans' girlfriends and wives, whether or not they were pursuing demanding careers of their own, characterized their boyfriends' and husbands' absences from home as a necessary evil. They were prepared to overlook this absences in the interest of facilitating their partners' pursuit of professional success and the monetary rewards flowing from such success. Thus, the very people who act as counter-affordances in the Norwegian case play a very different role in the American case.

For many of the male American's partners, the forgiving stance towards job absorption carried over into postures towards childbearing and childraising. The Norwegian partners entertained fairly aggressive timetables for childbearing and expected to return to full-time work directly after maternity leave. At the same time, they insisted on an egalitarian and symmetric sharing of childcare responsibilities and rejected the use of paid childminders and other forms of commodified childcare arrangements.<sup>43</sup> While a few of their American counterparts adopted these same stances, the majority deviated from this pattern in one respect or another. Many of the American women partners, some in their thirties, had put their childbearing aspirations on hold for the sake of their own careers. Others who already had children had taken a substantial amount of time off work to become stay-at-home moms. Or they had remained at work and hired paid childminders while their husbands slaved away at the office. As a result, a large proportion of the parenting American respondents of both genders, even those who subscribed to

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<sup>43</sup> This reluctance to exploit commodified childcare arrangements may also be peculiarly Norwegian, as I did not find it to be the case among either my American or French respondents. Single-country research among American families has uncovered a widespread willingness to commodify many household services including in-home and out-of-home childcare services (Stuenkel 2005).

egalitarian gender ideologies, had drifted into the "neotraditional" division of household labor (Gerson 2010, Orrange 2007, Hochschild 1989).

### **The French Workscape**

The French managerial-professional workscape offers an interesting counterpoint to both the Norwegian managerial-professional workscape and the American managerial-professional workscape. Institutionally, it resembles the Norwegian workscape in many ways. For example, like the Norwegian firm, the French firm is not legally free to work its nonexecutive managerial and professional employees as many hours as it wants (Lallement 2003). Further, the French managers and professionals did avail themselves of the generous leave policies of their firms and companies and they took five or six weeks off work during the course of the year.

Yet, at the same time, because the elite French manager or professional is part of a special class set apart from the rest of French society, the society of the 35-hour workweek (Viard 2004), he or she actually lives and works in a subcultural environment much more hospitable to extreme work. As a result, not only did the French respondents work a longer workday than the Norwegians, but they allowed work to absorb a larger proportion of their time, energy, and attention. While the French respondents did distinguish themselves from the American respondents in some of their discursive behaviors, professing a concern with living a full and rich life outside work, and largely avoiding references to career success and moneymaking in their hard work talk, they did not try to restrict their investments of time and energy in their jobs with the same zeal or success as the Norwegians. This lack of anti-overwork zeal stemmed in large measure from the French respondents' deep identification with their elevated status as *cadres supérieurs* and the indispensability of long work hours and workdays as testaments to this status. Thus, even if the French professionals were not willing to make the same sacrifices as the Americans in pursuit of career success *per se*, they were obliged to work hard and stretch out their workdays simply in order to live up to their elevated status. Thus, as we saw in chapter 3, the French respondents felt obligated to work late hours. By working late hours, they took part in a workplace status-group ritual required of French *cadres supérieurs*. In this societal context, the mandate for working long hours, a mandate targeting a very specific occupationally defined status group, trumps the French emphasis on the *vie privéé*. Thus, even though the bulk of the French workforce works limited working hours, the people at the top of the occupational pyramid face a very different cultural workscape.

In its social dimensions, the workscape faced by the French respondents resembled the workscape faced by the Americans more than the Norwegians. This resemblance is particularly clear in the case of the partnered male professionals without children. Whether these men had long-hours or short-hours partners, they did not experience much pushback from their girlfriends or wives. Unlike their Norwegian counterparts, the French partners accepted their lot without much protest. Moreover, as in the American case, a sizeable proportion of these women were pursuing demanding and rewarding business careers of their own. Because of this occupational alignment, the French male professionals escaped the temporal coordination pressures their Norwegian counterparts endured from their short-hours partners. Finally, those French professional men with young children were content to leave almost all of the parenting to their children's mother. By contrast with their more gender-egalitarian Norwegian peers, these men did not see themselves as equal partners in the joint venture of childraising. As a consequence, the French parenting professional men did not seek to organize their work schedules around the needs of their children in the way that the Norwegian parenting professionals did.

### **Cross-National Divergences in Workscapes**

So how does this inquiry advance the quest to pinpoint the distinctiveness of the American and Western European workscapes? What does it tell us about the ways in which these workscapes facilitate and inhibit extreme work among these elite managers and professionals?

Relative to both France and the United States, the Norwegian workscape presents the elite manager or professional with a constellation of interrelated conditions that militate against extreme work in many different ways. First, the incentive environment in Norway, with its employment security, high taxes on outside incomes, strict work hours regulations, and large public sector, makes it less likely that the manager or professional will either work in a very greedy workplace or feel compelled to "push it" in order to secure the money and status which accompanies big-time career success. Second, the practice of working all the time and making work one's "central life interest" (Stebbins 2004) just does not make a lot of cultural sense in the Norwegian cultural context. Even if the Norwegian manager or professional works hard, it is only for the sake of intellectual enrichment, not career success as such. In this cultural context, respect and appreciation come to women and men who stand with "one foot in the work realm and the other foot outside it," as one of my Norwegian respondents put it. Third, the work-centric Norwegian manager who does work extreme hours and adopts a work-centric posture risks acquiring a reputation as a "narrow" deviant with misplaced priorities. If he or she has a partner, then he or she may also have to cope with considerable pushback from an unhappy partner who feels entitled to significant amounts of couple time. Given all of these findings, it is fair to say that, contrasted with the American and French managerial-professional workscapes, the Norwegian managerial-professional workscape offers many different kinds of counter-affordances for those managers and professionals who do encounter pressures to work long hours and conduct themselves as unconditional workers.

The French respondents share some of their Norwegian counterparts' presumptions and ideals favoring the multidimensional life and the importance of life anchorages outside of work. Like the institutional components of the Norwegian respondents' workscape, the institutional components of the French respondents' workscape does create some barriers to extreme work. Like their Norwegian counterparts, the French respondents enjoy generous paid leave and protections against unwarranted dismissals. They also work in organizations which cannot legally demand extreme work schedules from their nonexecutive managerial and professional employees (although these rules were not enforced in most of the French workplaces).

However, from the standpoint of elite managers and professionals, the French workscape differs considerably from the Norwegian workscape. As an elite worker, the elite French manager or professional does not enjoy the same ideological dispensations to impose limits on their temporal, emotional, and attentional investments in work as his or her Norwegian peer. Working extreme hours does not make him a deviant in the way that it does in Norway. Moreover, the elite French manager or professional comes into contact with many cultural and social influences that incline him or her in the other direction, towards a devotional engagement with work. It was incumbent upon many of the French respondents to signal their membership in an elevated social group who practiced a distinguished *métier* by working hard and long hours, particularly in the evening. Both men and women did not hesitate to work long and hard hours, particularly during the evenings, no matter where they worked and even if it did not suit their personal proclivities, because of their membership in this very special occupational-social

category. Thus, long workdays were common across occupational fields and employers. However, to the extent that the French respondents conduct themselves as unconditional workers, they exhibit a "group-oriented" kind of workplace-centrism explicitly oriented to their membership in the elevated social category of the *cadre supérieur*.

When the French professionals did work extreme hours, they did so without precipitating much pushback from their intimate partners. For whatever reason, the French girlfriends and wives did not stake their claim on their partner's temporal, emotional, and attentional resources anywhere near as forcefully as their Norwegian counterparts. This was true of parenting partners and childless partners alike. Both types of French women partners did not feel entitled to the same amount of couple time as their Norwegian counterparts.

The workscape facing the elite American business professional presents a different mix of inducements to extreme work than the workscape facing the elite French business professional. In many ways, the inducements evident in the American context exert an even stronger grip on the elite manager or professional than the inducements evident in the French context.

First, the elite American business professional confronts what one could call an employer-centric institutional workscape. In the United States, employers have free rein to promote, mandate, and reward work-centric behaviors. American firms can demand extreme work hours and minimal vacations and stay within the bounds of the law. Unlike the Norwegian or Frenchman, the American has no statutory right to paid holidays. American employers are free to reduce the paid vacation time they offer to employees as they see fit (Schor 1992: 32). As a result, none of the American respondents could count on more than four weeks' worth of paid holiday leave every year. In terms of working hours, the American business professional has no legal recourse at all if his employer requires him to work eighty hours a week. At the same time, he or she does not have the same sense of employment security as his or her French and Norwegian peers. Finally, the fact that the American tax code imposes a lighter tax burden on high-earners than the French or Norwegian tax codes means that the well-paid American business professional can retain a greater share of his or her money at the end of the day.

While the employer-centric American workscape creates the institutional conditions conducive to extreme work among business professionals, it is important to emphasize that some American business professionals do happen to work in more relaxed workplaces where they can get away with working 9-5 or 9-6 work schedules. In this situation, they can end up working less intensively than their French counterparts. These men and women feel compelled to work long and intensive hours in order to uphold and affirm a socially legitimated occupational-social status which applies to them irrespective of their occupation or employer's organizational culture.

We also see differences between the inner workscape of the French versus the inner workscape of the American business professional. Rather than a mere outward pattern of conduct which signals a strategic conformity to behaviors ascribed to an idealized social category, as in the French case, in the American case such behaviors and orientations are treated as an integral part of the person's constitution. The American respondents practice a kind of job-centrism at once personalized and organizationally-oriented. In many cases, the long work hours of the American professional serves as proof of his or her drive to succeed, an important constituent in his or her personal identity. Thus, the self-identified "overachievers" and driven people were all American. These respondents related to work as the primary experiential arena where they could prove this identity to themselves and to others. Compared to the French form of workplace-

centrism, therefore, the American form of extreme work can be characterized as a very specific kind of job-centrism tightly coupled to personal identity.

The male American professionals' predisposition to adopt a work-centric posture is strengthened and reinforced by the welcoming posture of their female partners. Unlike the Norwegian partners, these American women by and large tolerate their partners' absences from home, approaching these absences as a necessary price of a career success which they prize. Moreover, as we have seen, a significant proportion of the partnered male American professionals were romantically involved with occupationally matched women pursuing their own big-time careers, women whose work schedules aligned with theirs. This alignment minimizes the temporal coordination pressures felt so acutely by the Norwegian men partnered with short-hours women. Thus, the social ties which acted as brakes on extreme work in the Norwegian context did nothing to blunt the same form of behavior in the American context.

### **Implications: Multiple Exceptionalisms**

This comparative three-way case study examines extreme work and greedy jobs among some of the most work-oriented individuals to be found, namely elite male and female business professionals working in the stimulating fields of consulting, finance, law, and engineering management. Within this group of privileged workers, societal context makes an enormous difference when it comes to the pull of work as a potentially all-consuming life realm. It also makes a difference with respect to the way in which individuals engage with this life realm. The American respondents distinguish themselves from their Western European counterparts not necessarily in the extent of their extreme work, as many of the French respondents work hours as long and hard as theirs, but in their relationship to work, as an arena where they prove their worth as individuals.

These findings invite the inevitable question about the origins and antecedents of these cross-national and cross-societal differences.<sup>44</sup> In this kind of ecological account the chain of causation which eventuates in the observed variation in articulated cultural forms always

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<sup>44</sup> Fortunately, a ready-made point of departure can be found in the convincing explanatory efforts undertaken by the practitioners of the "ecological" tradition within American sociology of culture (Kaufman 2004: 336). Perhaps the most useful of these attempts was made in Lamont's study of the boundary-marking discourses of French and American upper-middle class male managers and professionals. Seeking to advance beyond explanations rooted in differences between indefinable "national characters," Lamont proposes a multilevel ecological explanation for the discrepancies she observes between the cultural repertoires characteristic of her two groups of respondents. This ecological explanation begins with an inventory of all the societal and "subsocietal" (Smelser 1997) differences between French and American society potentially relevant to the ways in which her respondents talk about social categories and personal worth. These factors include society-wide cultural traditions with historical roots, educational systems, stratificational systems, and the division of labor between the public sector and the private sector (Lamont 1992). Because the French and American respondents are exposed to contrasting macrocultural influences circulating within their respective social environments, they confront contrasting cultural menus. Moreover, as these patterns are widely diffused across the various parts of social space within each society, individuals from many different occupations, class positions, and generations come into contact with them. Thus, the American respondents and French respondents part ways when it comes to their discourses and their cultural repertoires. It is for this reason, and not because of their "autonomous moral and existential programs," as Lamont writes (Lamont 1992: 134-7), that the French and American respondents wind up giving voice to contrasting cultural menus when they talk about their feelings of superiority, inferiority, and distinctiveness. To put it slightly differently, the two groups favor different kinds of scripts when addressing the same dimensions of social difference and similarity simply because they have been exposed to different reservoirs of cultural forms by virtue of their embeddedness in different macrosocial environments.

originates in variations between "higher-level" social and cultural formations. Thus, the real explanatory weight is borne by the features of the macrosocial landscape "remote" from the individual. At the same time, the factor most directly responsible for the observed variation in the cultural forms produced by the individual respondents is their societal emplacement. In deference to the ecological model's mandate to explore variation in the macrocultural landscapes of the respondents' host societies, I submit that we can understand the observed differences in the ways the respondent engage with work as a function of societal-level differences between Western Europe and the United States considered as the settings for alternative and contrasting forms of individualism.

Over four decades ago comparativists interested in the cultural dimensions of the transatlantic divide identified a profound difference between the forms of individualism prevailing in the European "corporatist" environment and the form of individualism dominant in the Anglo-American "associationalist" environment (Swanson 1967). These different forms of individualism constitute the individuals' involvement with his occupational and nonoccupational roles in markedly different ways. This deep-seated difference has important implications for the way in which occupational engagements are tied to the self. As an "ex parte" society, American society provides a distinctive identity template for social actors seeking to realize and enact their individuality, autonomy, and authenticity (Jepperson 1992, Baum 1979, Swanson 1967). In the United States the search for authentic individuality is premised on the fusion of personal identity with social-positional identity acquired as a result of participation in the work world. In Baum's formulation, the modal individual socialized in American society internalizes an "identity code" which privileges working life as a primary locus of his self-identity and, at the same time, makes work a deeply personal affair (Baum 1979: 98-107). This tendency is particularly strong, one might expect, for those upper-middle class professional men individuals who invest much of themselves in their work (Meiksins & Whalley 2002).

Thus, the American individualist who succeeds in the work world is likely to look to his or her accomplishments in the occupational sphere rather than his or her achievements in the private sphere as evidence and proof of his or her fully realized autonomous individuality (Thomson 2000, Hewitt 1989). The modal Frenchman or Norwegian, however, lives in a societal context where a different identity template prevails. In these societal contexts different kinds of self-identities are prescribed for the individualist. In France and Norway, on this account, the deep identification with one's occupational role and one's career which is taken for granted in an American context becomes problematic. As we saw, the French professionals exhibit a kind of shallow and group-oriented workplace-centrism premised on their membership in a publicly consecrated social-occupational elite, but eschew the personalized identification with the job characteristic of the Americans. As Baum observes, in corporatist societies such as France and Norway the social-positional self and the personal self are meant to stand apart (Baum 1979: 98-107). In these societies, the task of the individualist is to disengage his personal self from the role-mediated realm of work and find the materials for his authentic self outside of work (Jepperson 1992). For the modal Frenchman or Norwegian, then, an unwillingness or inability to dissociate one's personal self from the social self manifested in the world of work betrays an overinvestment in an inauthentic and artificial identity. An individualist who identifies too closely with his occupational role thus mistakes his true self for a mere persona created for others.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> We could add another dimension of cultural dissimilarity more closely tied to the material aspects of the respondents' lives, namely the differing framings of economic incentives and economic insecurity in American

This cross-societal difference in the articulation between self-identity and work goes a long way towards explaining the transatlantic gulf in forms of engagement with working life. It explains why so many of the French and Norwegian respondents hesitate to cite internal sources (i.e. their character, their personality, their drive) as the motivational fuel propelling their desire to work hard and why their American counterparts so readily implicate exactly these sources when making sense of their propensity to apply themselves at work. For the Americans, the authentic overachieving self emerges from the union of the personal self and the outwardly defined occupational self whereas for the Europeans it emerges from the union of the personal self and a work self defined by "romantic subjectivisms" (Jepperson 1992), chiefly the desire to develop one's intellectual and moral capacities in directions uniquely one's own.

The characteristically American way of relating to work, then, arises from an exposure to a form of individualism which insists on the fusion of the personal self and the positional self tied to job and career. The Norwegian and French way of relating to work comes about because of an exposure to a different kind of individualism which dissociates the social-positional self and the authentic personal self. Thus, the American professional man or woman is most prone to engage in extreme work precisely when he or she approaches this extreme work as his or her passport to a high-flying and remunerative career.

If the American professional stands in a distinctive relationship to the realm of working life, the Norwegian professionals do so as well, except in a different way. This Norwegian exceptionalism comes across clearly in the contrast between the French professional's embrace of extreme work and the Norwegian professional's aversion to it. As we saw, the Norwegian professional, unlike either the American or French professional, strives to keep his or her distance from the orientations and behaviors associated with extreme work. This aversion to extreme work has to do with their socialization within the very gender-egalitarian and class-egalitarian Norwegian culture. As Hofstede's surveys suggest, like other Scandinavians Norwegians live in a relatively "tender" society where career success and career ambitions count for less than they do in more "masculinist" and "performance-oriented" societies (a category which includes both France and the United States) (Hofstede 2003, 1998). In this tender society where living to work seems particularly unreasonable, both women and men feel more comfortable investing their time and energies in traditionally feminine life goals relating to family and community. Thus, men in high-commitment careers cannot opt out of coparenting as

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society vis-à-vis French and Norwegian society. In the American context, economic incentives and disincentives seem to be invested with a motivational power they lack in the two European contexts. As the Americans' comfort with the career success and moneymaking scripts attests, the Americans are used to the idea that money can fuel the motivational engine. In this environment, the notion that economic incentives can spark work effort is almost an article of faith, at least in the business world. The Europeans, contrast, do not harbor such a strong faith in the incentive effects of money. This cultural contrast between what one could call the American "incentive culture" and the incentive culture characteristic of France and Norway is intimately related to the differing material conditions under which the respondents work. Although all of the respondents earn far more than the median income in their countries, the American respondents command even more lavish remuneration than their European counterparts. As contrasted with their counterparts in the same lines of work at the same level of seniority, the Americans bring home substantially larger paychecks, particularly in comparison with the Norwegians. During the period of the interviews, a boom market in professional services across the Western world, an American corporate attorney with five years experience working for an elite corporate law firm in San Francisco could easily earn \$230K, while an equally well experienced French attorney would earn the equivalent of \$160K and a Norwegian attorney \$135K. These salary gaps are even more striking outside the professional services context. The Norwegian engineering managers earned a good 25% less than their American counterparts working for equivalent companies and the Americans paid less of their income in taxes than their European counterparts.



easily as their French and American brothers and working women in dual-earner families cannot outsource their childcare as easily as their French or American sisters. But Norway is also a class-egalitarian and solidaristic society where women as well as men feel obliged to pursue full-time employment of one kind or another, even as if they caught between demanding work and family obligations. Further, relative to both France and the United States, the Norwegian professional of both sexes has a harder time eluding the pressure to have children. Thus, the Norwegian societal context is also exceptional with respect to extreme work within the managerial and professional class, but in a very different way.

## **Appendix D**

### **Venn Diagrams (Crisp-Set Visualizations) for Chapters 4 & 5**

The patterns identified and described in the preceding discussion can be clarified with the aid of the Venn diagram mapping techniques used in QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis).<sup>46</sup> The visualizations have been created with the aid of the Tosmana QCA program.<sup>47</sup> In each visualization, each individual counts as a single case whose location in the Venn diagram is defined by the conditions specified. Thus, by locating each of the respondents within the diagram, we can see exactly which combinations of dichotomous conditions characterizes each person. Specifically, each diagram draws on a specified set of dichotomous conditions. Each of the specified conditions splits the universe of cases (respondents) into two categories (1 or 0, positive or negative).

Thus, in the sample Venn diagrams in this paragraph (Rihoux & De Meur 2009: 38), each respondent is positioned in a zone that defines a case type. Each zone is defined in a binary fashion: cases are included when they meet the specified inclusion criterion and excluded when do fail to meet this same criterion. In this example, there are three possible dichotomous conditions. For the sake of argument, let us imagine that they are 1) college prestige index: high/low, 2) college GPA over 3.5: yes/no, and 3) LSAT score > 160: Yes/No. Given these conditions, the Venn diagram must contain zones for  $2^3=8$  eight possible configurations or case types. These zones are listed below:

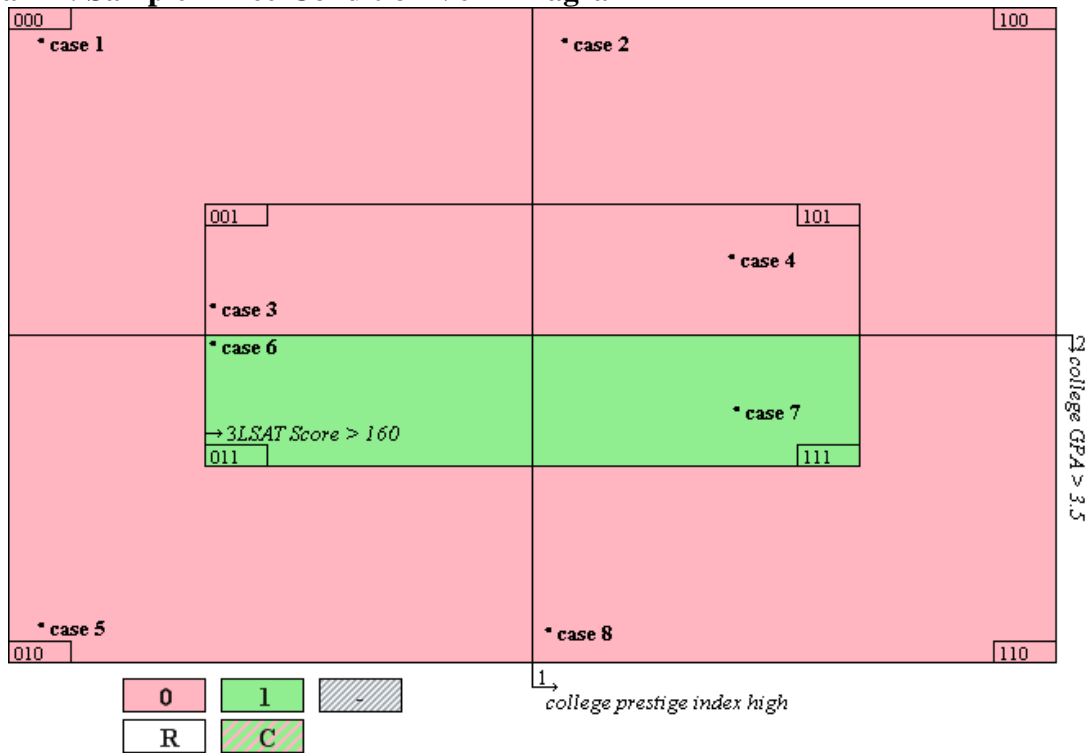
1. (0,0,0) college prestige index low, college GPA < 3.5, LSAT score < 160
2. (1,0,0) college prestige index high, college GPA < 3.5, LSAT score < 160
3. (0,0,1) college prestige index low, college GPA < 3.5, LSAT score > 160
4. (1,0,1) college prestige index high, college GPA < 3.5, LSAT score > 160
5. (0,1,0) college prestige index low, college GPA > 3.5, LSAT score < 160
6. (0,1,1) college prestige index low, college GPA > 3.5, LSAT score > 160
7. (1,1,1) college prestige index high, college GPA > 3.5, LSAT score > 160
8. (1,1,0) college prestige index high, college GPA > 3.5, LSAT score < 160

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<sup>46</sup> Ragin (2000) describes these techniques as a bridge between in-depth "intensive" analysis and variable-oriented "extensive" analysis (see Ragin 2009, 2000, 1987).

<sup>47</sup> This program makes it possible to produce visualizations of property spaces and condition spaces where the properties and conditions are coded dichotomously (assigned either 1 or 0). The Tosmana program was developed by Lasse Cronquist at the University of Trier in Germany.

**Diagram 1: Sample Three-Condition Venn Diagram**



The exterior lower left quadrant "010" or **case 5** is comprised of those individuals who have a low college prestige index, a college GPA above 3.5, and an LSAT score below 160. The interior lower left quadrant "011" or **case 6** is comprised of those individuals who have a low college prestige index, a college GPA above 3.5, and an LSAT score above 160. The exterior upper left quadrant "000" or **case 1** is comprised of those individuals who have a low college prestige index low, a college GPA below 3.5, and an LSAT score under 160. The interior upper left quadrant "001" or **case 3** is comprised of those who individuals who have a low college prestige index, a college GPA below 3.5, and an LSAT score above 160. The exterior upper right quadrant "100" or **case 2** is comprised of those individuals who have a high college prestige index, a college GPA below 3.5, and an LSAT score below 160. The interior upper right quadrant "101" or **case 4** is comprised of those individuals who have a high college prestige index, a college GPA below 3.5, and an LSAT score above 160. The exterior lower right quadrant "110" or **case 8** is comprised of those individuals who have a high college prestige index high, a college GPA above 3.5, and an LSAT score below 160. The interior lower right-hand quadrant "111" or **case 7** contains those individuals who have a high college prestige index high, a college GPA above 3.5, and an LSAT score above 160. From this we can see how to interpret the configuration of conditions represented in each elementary zones. Finally, the Venn diagram enables us to see which of the eight zones contains cases coded either negative (0) or positive (1) on the outcome condition. In the Tosmana visualizations zones which contain only negative cases are colored green while those zones which contain only positive cases are colored pink. Those zones inhabited by negative and positive cases are marked by diagonal stripes.

The first set of visualizations, which deals with the work conditions discussed in Chapter 4, is slightly more complex than the example above, as it has four antecedent conditions as well as an outcome condition, meaning that the visualization must display  $16 = 2^4$  elementary zones.

In addition, a population of forty-six (15 French respondents, 15 Norwegian respondents, and 16 American respondents) cases are distributed within these various zones. Each of the forty-six individual respondents in this component of the study is located in a particular elementary zone of this profile space and, as the reader will notice, some zones are more "crowded" than others as some conditions are better represented in the universe of cases than other conditions.

In the following visualizations, the basic zones are constructed according to the following thresholds:

1. vacation duration > 3 weeks in calendar year: More/Less
2. "normal" consulting workday > 13 hours: More/Less
3. travel frequency > 5 days every 3 weeks: More/Less
4. post-consulting workweek expectation > 50 hours on average: More/Less

Given that there are four binary conditions, the total possible number of different combination is 16 ( $16 = 2^4$ ).

Even though it makes no intuitive sense to consider nationality as the result of the antecedent conditions relating to work, I have designated nationality as the de facto "outcome" condition for the purpose of these visualizations in order to make it easier to discern patterns with respect to nationality. Thus, in the following diagrams, the green-colored boxes are regions *exclusive to the designated nationality*, while the pink-colored boxes are regions *exclusive of the designated nationality*. If the region is colored green, in other words, then all of the respondents located within the region belong to the designated nationality. If the box is colored pink, then none of its inhabitants belong to the designated nationality. If the box is striped, then its inhabitants belong to both the designated nationality and at least one other nationality besides. In order to make the most out of these visualizations, I have created three separate profile maps, each with a different designated nationality. Thus, the following three profile maps correspond to the following three either-or situations:

**Map 1:** French respondents versus non-French respondents (i.e. Norwegian or American)

**Map 2:** Norwegian respondents versus non-Norwegian respondents (i.e. French or American)

**Map 3:** American respondents versus non-American respondents (i.e. French or Norwegian)

The reader will notice that, even if a particular respondent's region is colored differently in each of the three maps, each particular respondent is located in the same region in each of the three maps. To understand these three diagrams, all that is necessary is to interpret the location of the focal respondent in the same way as we did with the same diagram. For example, the American respondent **A4** expects to work over fifty hour per week after leaving consulting, currently works less than thirteen hours per day on average, travels for business at least five days every three weeks, and takes more than three weeks' worth of vacation every calendar year in a typical year.<sup>48</sup>

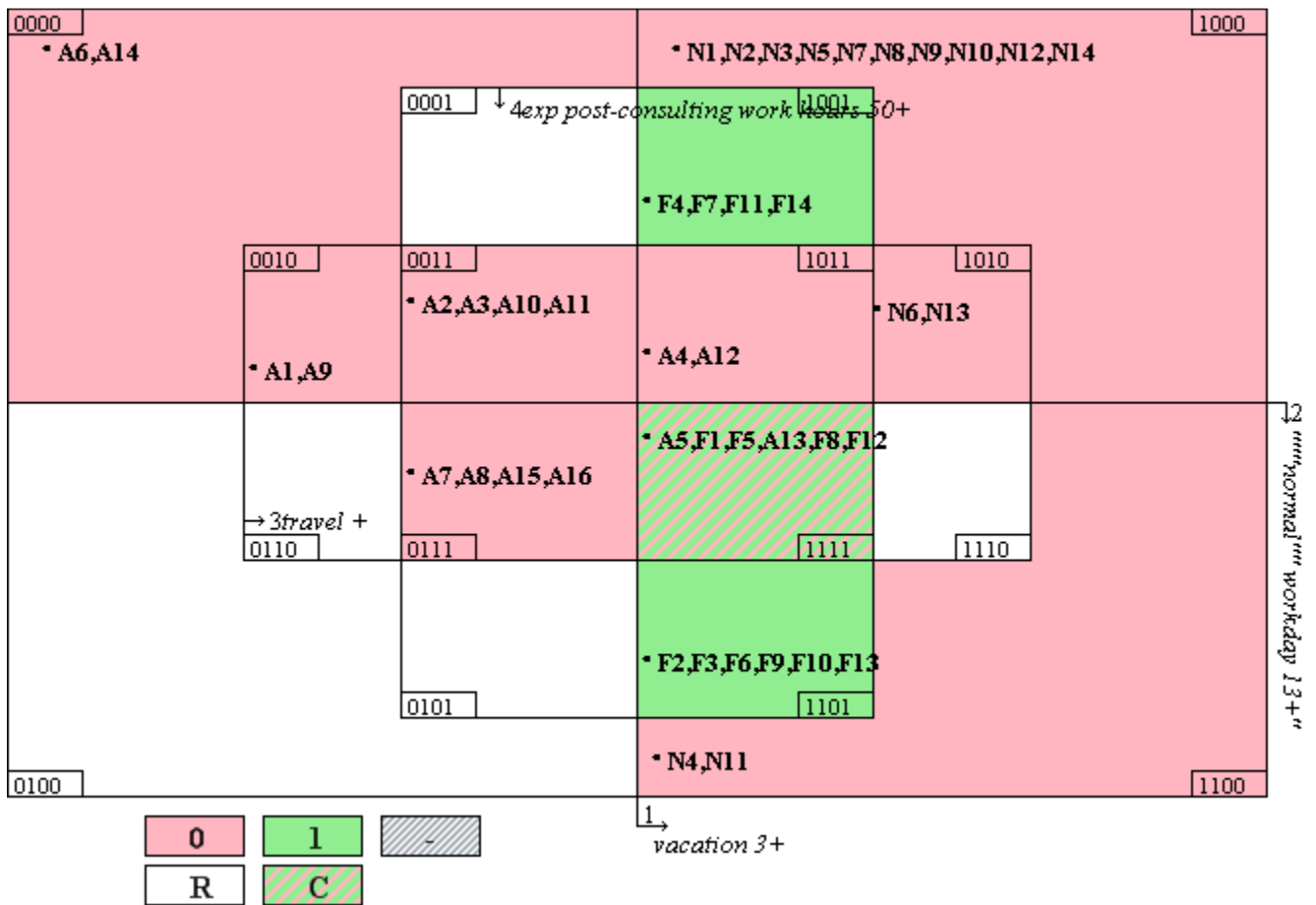
The following three diagrams complement the discussion in Chapter 4 by showing the configurations most characteristic of the three groups of respondents. When we look at Diagram 1A, it becomes clear that the French consultants expect to work long weeks after leaving

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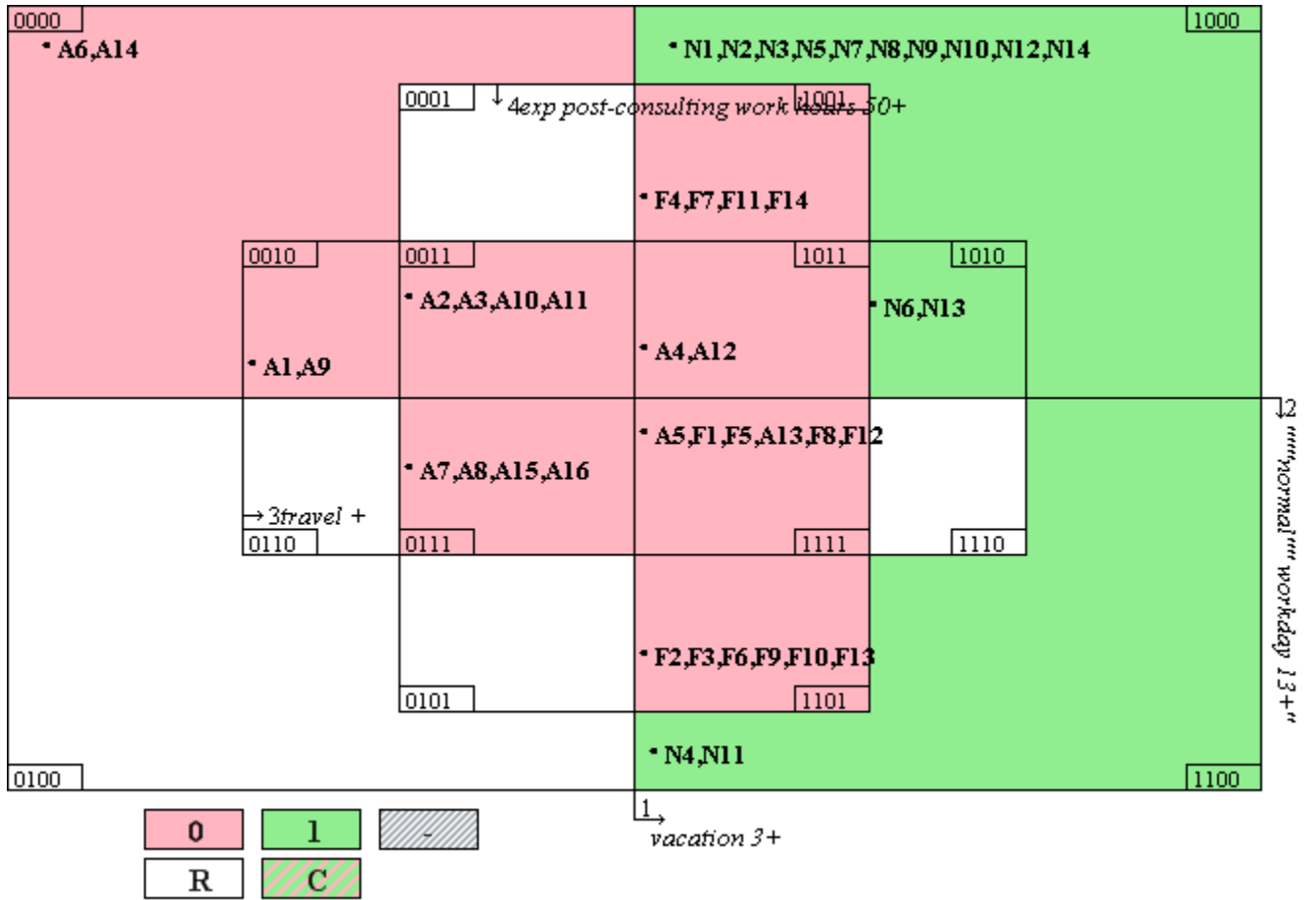
<sup>48</sup> The location of the respondent can also be described in the standard Boolean notation where \* stands in for the logical operator AND. Thus, A4, the American respondent located in zone 1011, can be characterized in the following way: respondent's expected post-consulting working hours 50+ per week \* normal workday < 13hrs \* business travel at least 5 days every 3 weeks \* vacation duration > 3 weeks in a calendar year.

consulting, but do not travel that much for work, relative to their American counterparts. A small majority of the French respondents work "extreme" days lasting over thirteen hours on average. The Norwegian consultants (Diagram 2A) cluster in the elementary zone 1000. It is rare, in other words, for the Norwegian consultant to currently log thirteen hour workdays, expect to work fifty hours plus after leaving consulting, travel extensively, and get little vacation time. Finally, when we look at Diagram 3A, it is clear that the American consultants are more widely distributed throughout the condition space or profile space. Yet, two of the elementary zones (0011 & 0111) account for the majority of the sixteen American respondents. This is because ten of the sixteen Americans expect to work over fifty hours per week after leaving consulting.

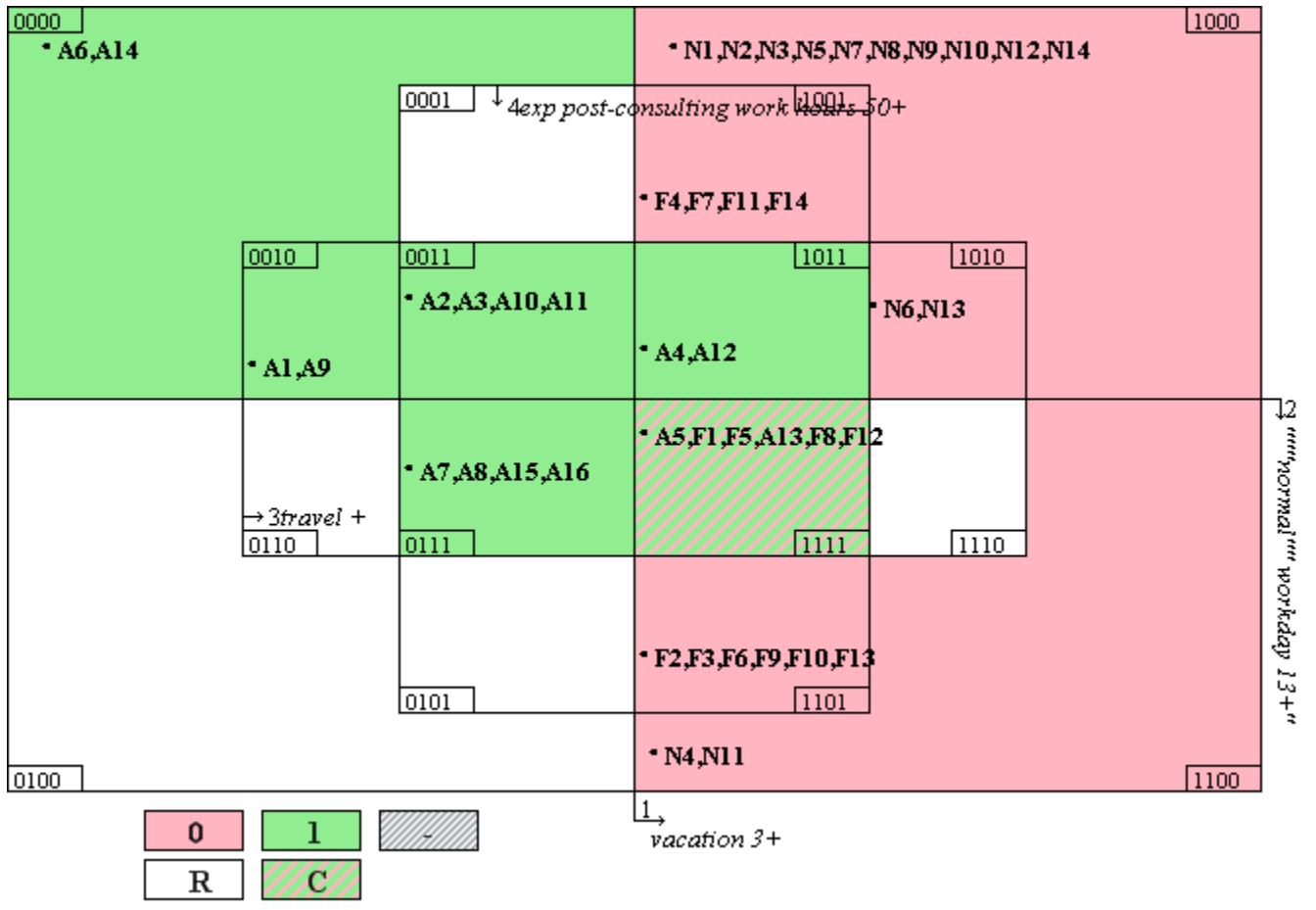
### Venn Diagram 1A: French versus non-French Respondents



Venn Diagram 2A: Norwegian versus non-Norwegian Respondents



Venn Diagram 3A: American versus non-American Respondents



The next series of diagrams complements the discussion in Chapter 5 and deals with those aspects of the respondents' lives unrelated to work, namely the respondent's age, his partnership status, occupational profile of his partner, and his parenting status. Built around five dichotomous conditions rather than four conditions, these diagrams are slightly more complex than the preceding series of diagrams, as they include  $32 = 2^5$  elementary zones. These five conditions are listed below:

1. age >28: Older/Younger
2. partnered to serious romantic partner: Yes/No
3. partner works > 40 hours per week in full-time job: More/Less
4. partner works > 50 hours per week in full-time job: More/Less
5. parent to at least one child: Yes/No

The first cross-national divergence which these diagrams illustrate is the age gap between the French and the Norwegians, on the one hand, and the Americans, on the other hand. A glance at all six diagrams reveals that, with two exceptions, the respondents who congregate in the "young" half (the left-hand side) of the profile space are Norwegian and French and the respondents who cluster in the "old" half of the space are American. Thus, in the first set of three diagrams, the pink-colored regions located on the exterior parts of the right hand half of the map (respondents older than 28) are bereft of French or Norwegian respondents, as these respondents are all above the threshold age of 28. In the second set of diagrams, the Americans occupy the zones to the right of the threshold age of 31 and the French and Norwegians occupy the zones to the left of this cutoff age.

Of the six diagrams in this series, the first set of three (diagrams 1B, 2B, and 3B) represents the distribution of profiles at year 1 of the respondents' tenure at the consultancy and the second set of three represents the distribution of profiles during the third year of the respondents' tenure at the consultancy. Thus, not only do these diagrams show the patterns of cross-national divergence and convergence at a given time, but they enable the reader to see how these profiles change over a three-year period.

The diagrams are equally revealing when it comes to the occupational profiles of the respondents' female partners. As we can see in the first set of diagrams, approximately equal proportions of the three respondent groups are unpartnered at the time of their hiring (roughly five of fifteen). Of those American respondents who do have partners at this juncture (the respondents located in the lower half of the diagrams), two thirds of the Americans have working partners while more than half of the Norwegians have nonworking partners. Of the partnered French respondents, all have working partners, even at this comparatively young age. Conversely, none of the partnered French respondents have nonworking partners or partners who work less than forty hours per week (i.e. work a part-time schedule). In fact, a substantial fraction of the partnered French respondents, along among the three groups of partnered respondents, are paired with wives or girlfriends working a minimum of fifty hours per week.

These visualizations shows that a substantial minority of the partnered French respondents have partners who hold relatively long-hours jobs, in contradistinction to the American and Norwegian partners. As the diagram makes clear, while none of the Norwegian or American respondents are in an occupationally "symmetric" relationship during the initial year of their consulting tenure, a substantial proportion of the French respondents are in such relationships at this moment in their careers. As far as parenting status goes, the only two parents in the entire pool of respondents are the two Americans **A2** and **A10**. None of the Norwegians or the French have children at this moment in their careers.

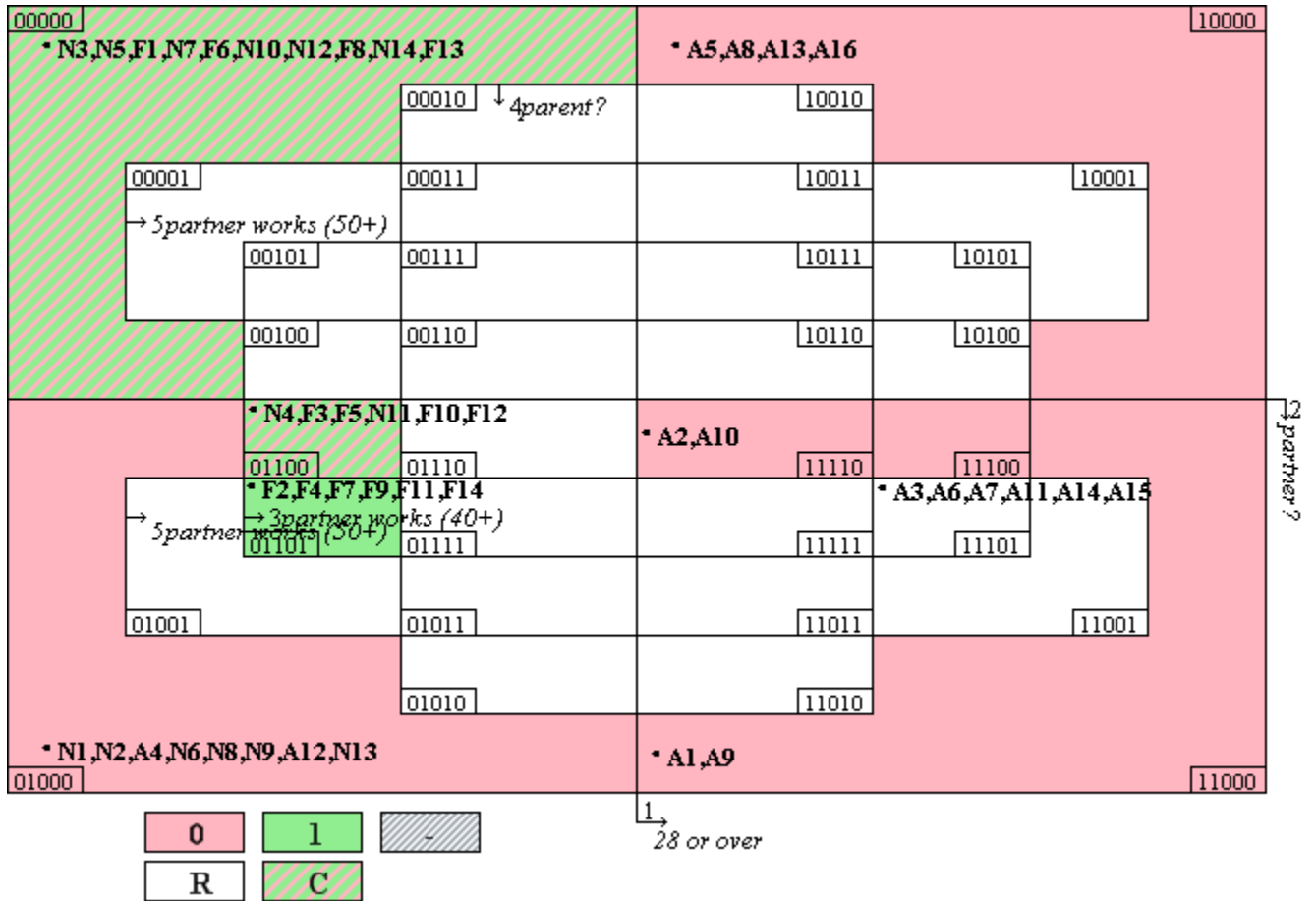


The second set of diagrams (diagrams 4B, 5B, and 6B) depicts the respondents' profiles during their third year as consultants at the firm. As far as the respondents' age profiles are concerned, these three maps replicate the previous three maps, as the Americans are again older than their European counterparts. However, the two sets differ when it comes to the other elements of the profiles.

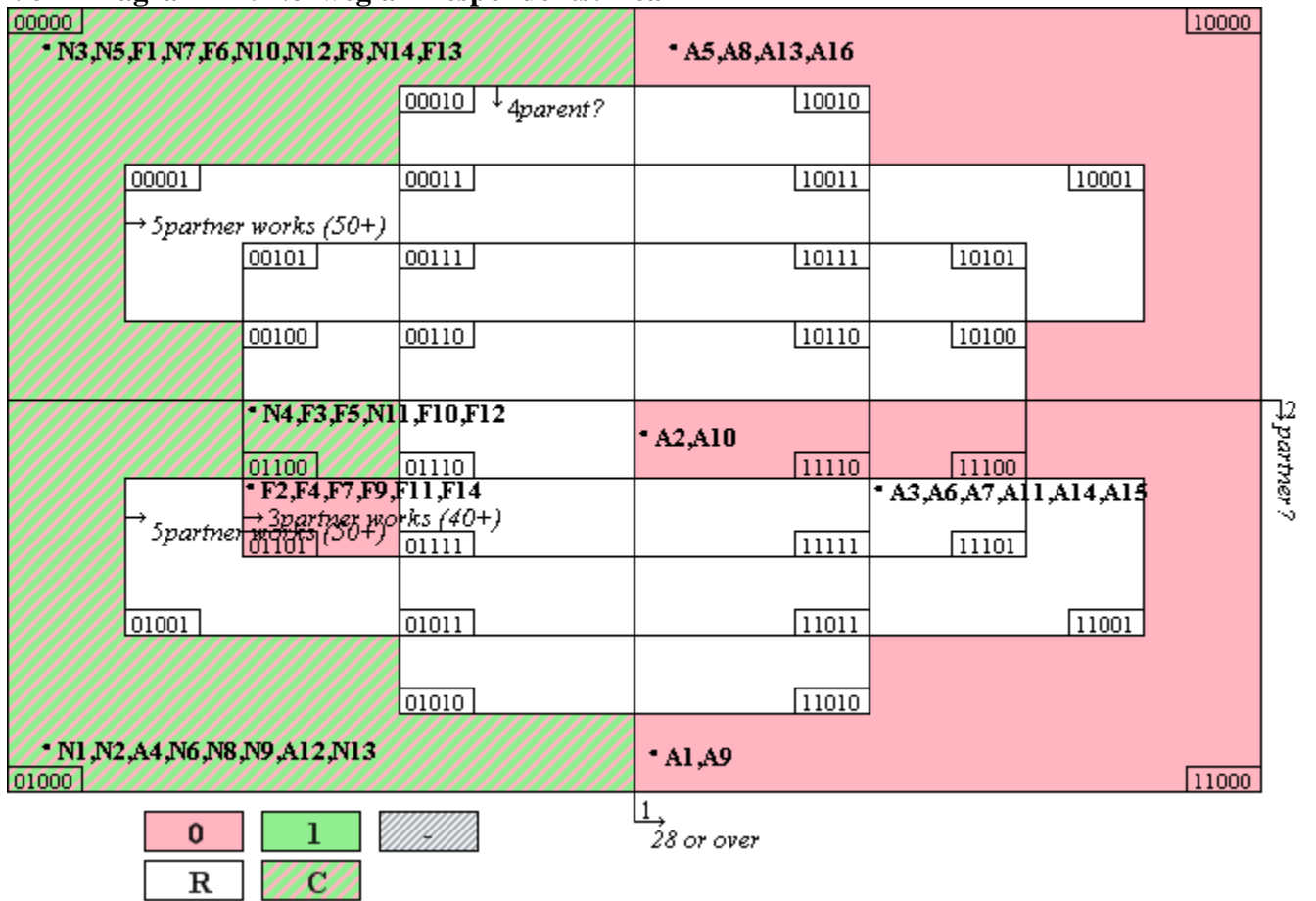
With respect to the partnership status of the respondents, it seems that the vast majority of each group makes the transition from unpartnered to partnered during their tenure at the firm. While one of the Norwegians went from partnered to unpartnered, only four Norwegians and two Americans are single at year 3 of their tenure at the consultancy. Of the two partnered Americans (**A6** and **A10**) who had children and working partners when they started at the firm, both have moved into the zone reserved for respondents with nonworking partners. This zone has American and French respondents, but no Norwegian respondents. The absence of Norwegian respondents indicates that, even among this group of very hardworking Norwegian fathers, it is common to have a partner who works full-time. Finally, two of the American respondents (A4 and A12) have joined the numerous French respondents (F2, F3, F4, F6, F7, F9, F10, F11, F13, F14) as occupants of the zone reserved for respondents in symmetric relationships where the partner works more than fifty hours a week on average.

Another cross-national divergence which these diagrams illustrate has to do with the timing of fatherhood among the respondents. When compared with their French peers, all of whom have yet to become fathers, the Norwegian respondents are following a more aggressive childbearing timetable. The French, in other words, appear to lag behind the Norwegians in their transition into fatherhood.

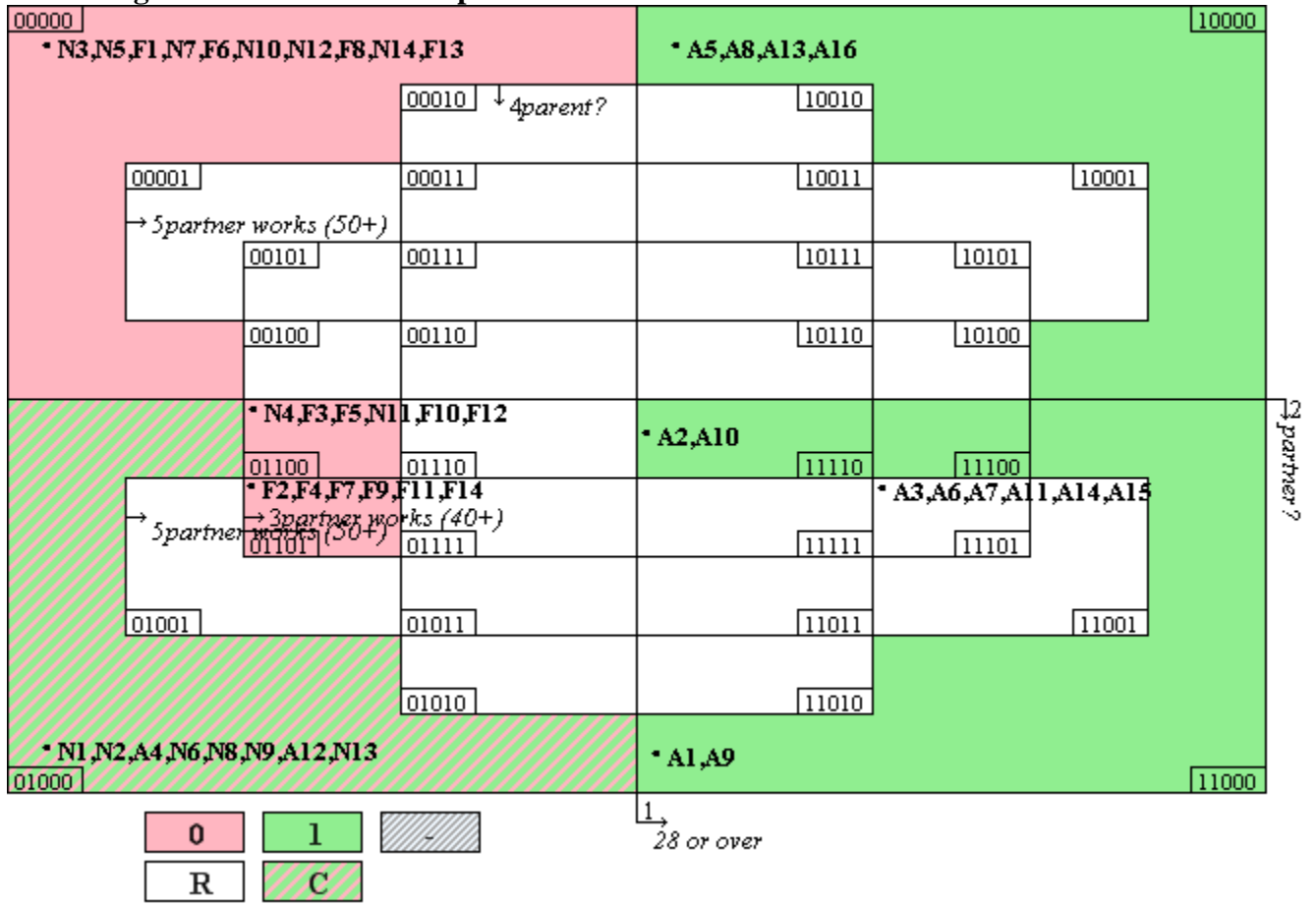
**Chapter 5 Age-Partner Profile Maps**  
**Venn Diagram 1B: French Respondents: Year 1**



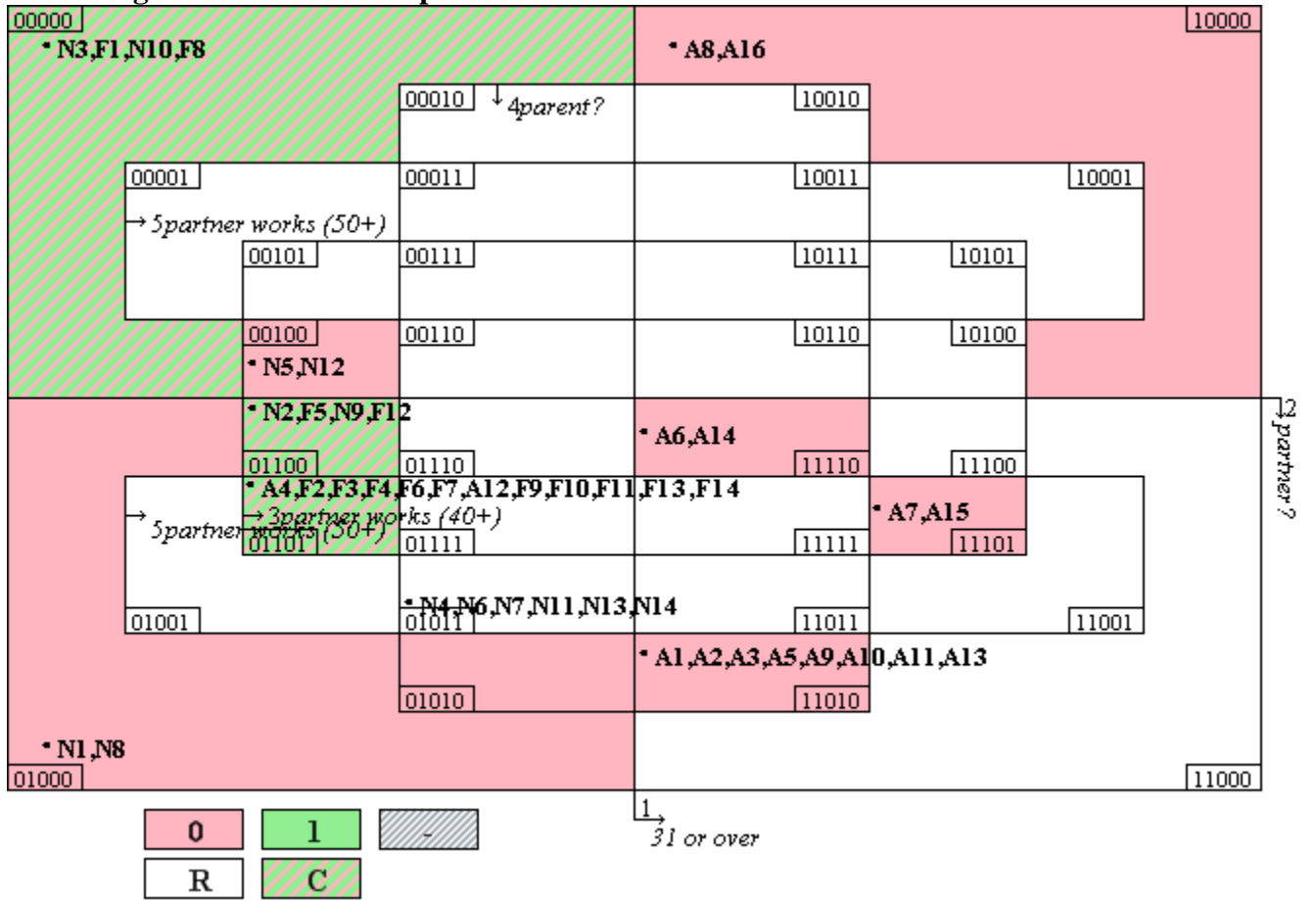
Venn Diagram 2B: Norwegian Respondents: Year 1



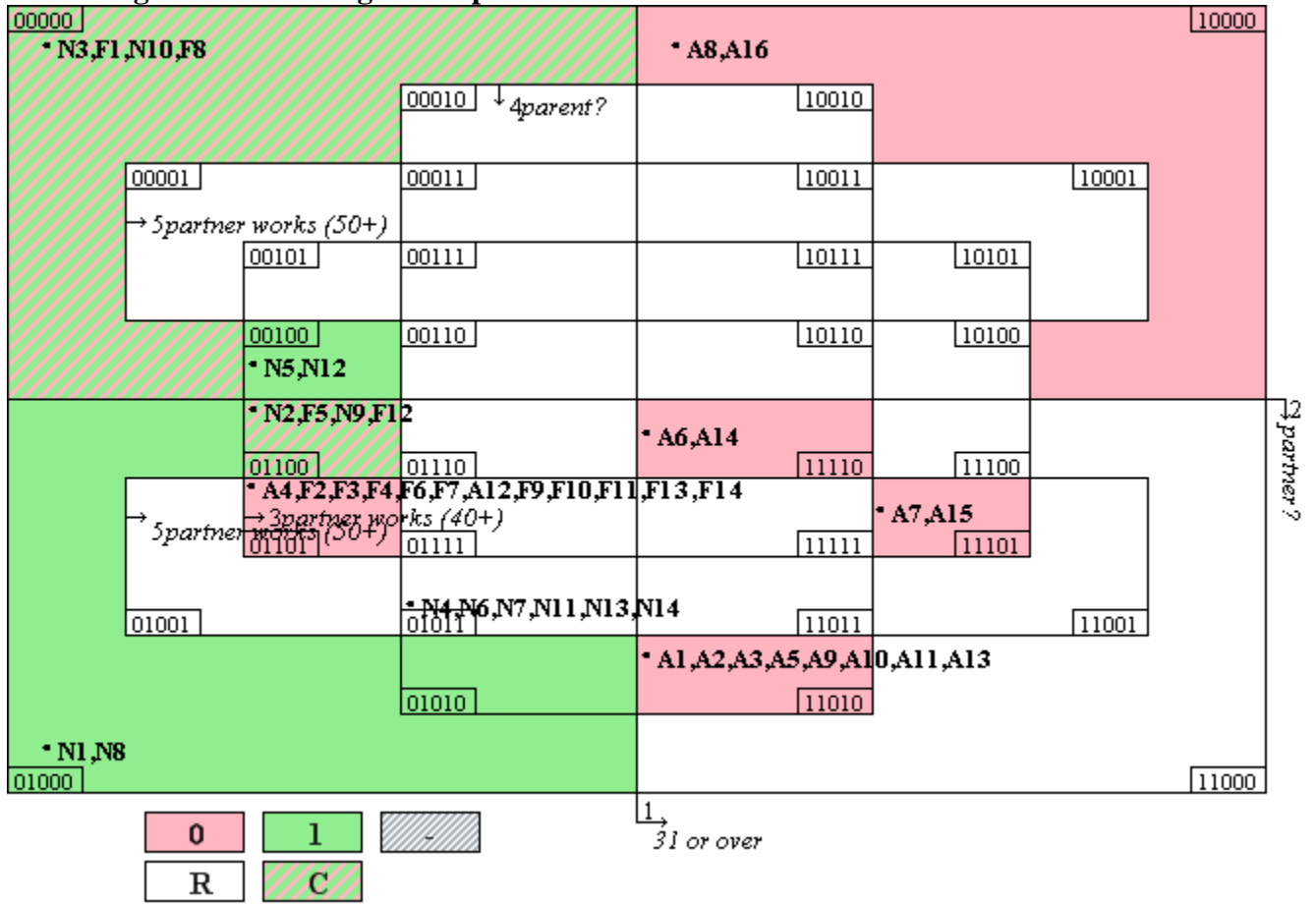
Venn Diagram 3B: American Respondents: Year 1



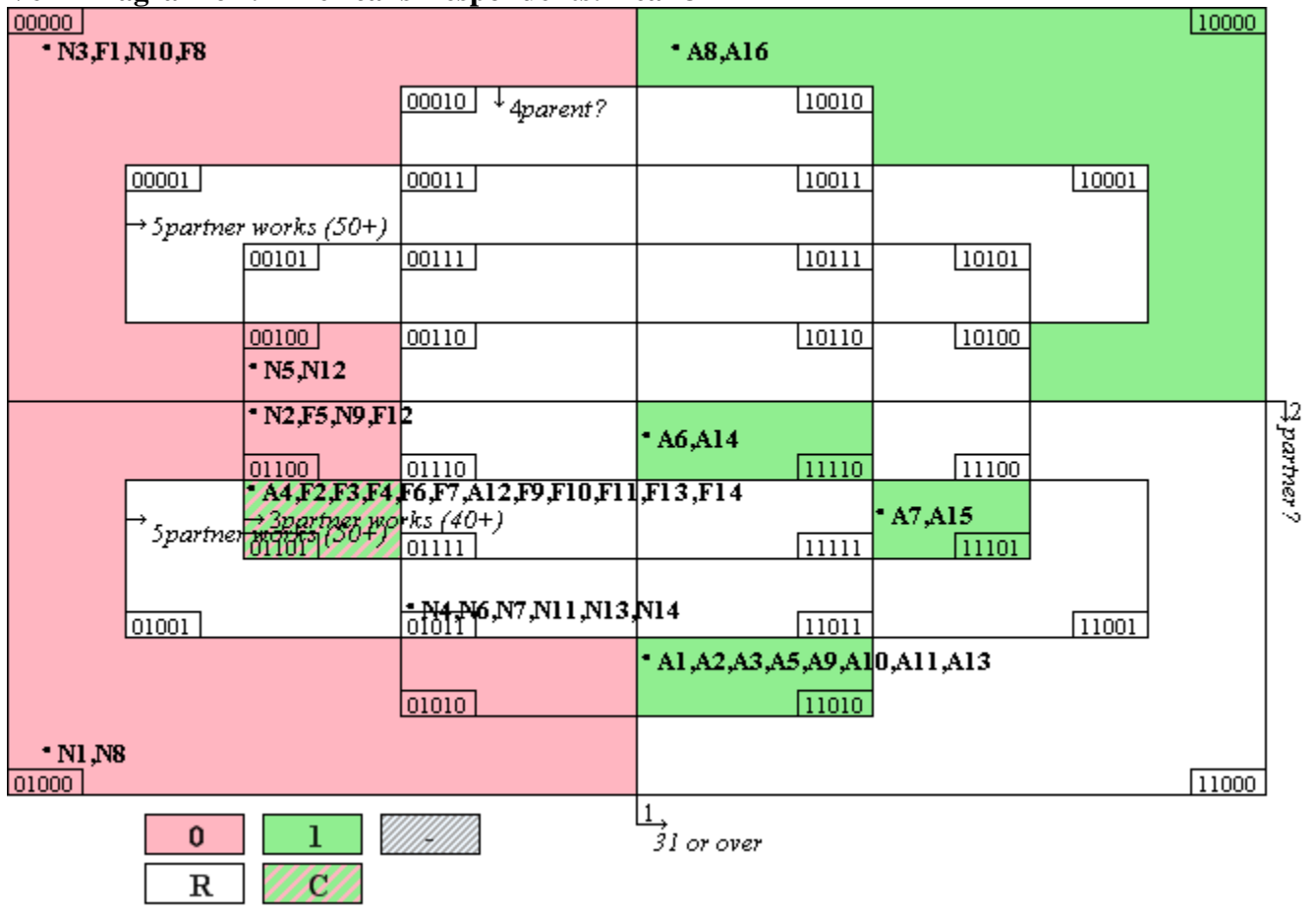
### Venn Diagram 4B: French Respondents: Year 3



### Venn Diagram 5B: Norwegian Respondents: Year 3



**Venn Diagram 6B: Americans Respondents: Year 3**



## **Appendix B**

### **Research Sites: Comparing the French, Norwegian, and American Macrocontexts**

Transatlantic studies based on aggregate behavioral and orientational data have without doubt revealed important contrasts between Western European, treated as a single entity, and American allocations of time, work habits, attitudes towards work and private life, and a host of other dimensions of transatlantic variation (see Martinelli 2007). At the same time, however, these studies have underlined the very significant intra-European differences which any comparative study must take into account.<sup>49</sup> If one defines Western Europe as the original EU 15 (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, the Netherlands, Greece, the UK, Finland, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg) plus the Western Schengen countries Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway, then Western Europe indeed lacks the macrostructural and macrocultural coherence which makes the United States a significantly more unified cultural and social entity, despite the unifying influence of such supra-national structures as the European Unions (Fligstein 2008, Martinelli 2007).

Indeed, recent cross-national research has shown that, even in terms of many basic societal and subsocietal characteristics, the United States falls smack in the middle of a "European" distribution bounded by Western European countries. This is the case for such indicators as absolute poverty, for example. In regards to at least one measurement of absolute poverty only Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, and Luxembourg come out ahead of the United States, with the rest of Western Europe lagging significantly behind (Baldwin 2009: 194).

The internally heterogeneous character of Western Europe also asserts itself with respect to societal characteristics relevant to this project. In terms of working time patterns, the Western European zone appears internally variegated along several different dimensions of cross-national variation. As Burgoon and Baxandall explain in their article on working time patterns in the industrialized world, when one charts these eighteen countries according to their aggregate work hours profiles, they actually cluster into a number of distinct subgroups (Burgoon & Baxandall 2004: 446-458). The largest subgroup contains the "continental" countries of Germany, France, Austria, Italy and Belgium. In these countries, average annual hours per working-age person are low, in part because the labor participation rate is low, and, of those who do hold full-time jobs, work hours are also low. The country which ranks the lowest on both axes is the Netherlands, a country with a somewhat distinctive working time profile, mostly because of its large number of female part-time workers (Cousins & Tang 2004: 533). In the next cluster, which contains the Nordic countries, we find slightly different work hours profiles. In these countries, the average annual hours per working-age person are higher than in the continental countries, mostly because of the higher labor force participation rates in these countries. But workers with full-time jobs do not work particularly long hours either (particularly in Norway). The UK lies at the intersection of the Nordic cluster and the English-speaking cluster composed of the English settler societies (the US, along with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Cross-national surveys comparing the work centrality of British workers have found them to be slightly more work-centric than their peers in other European countries, most notably Spain (Hakim 2003: 55).

These intra-European differences can have a significant effect on the distribution of working hours between sociodemographically defined subgroups. In the Netherlands, for example, neither employed women nor employed men work particularly long hours. However,

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<sup>49</sup> Even Martinelli admits that critics have a point when they describe the European Union as a "sum of heterogeneous cultural areas" (Martinelli pg. 21) rather than a culturally unified entity analogous to the United States.

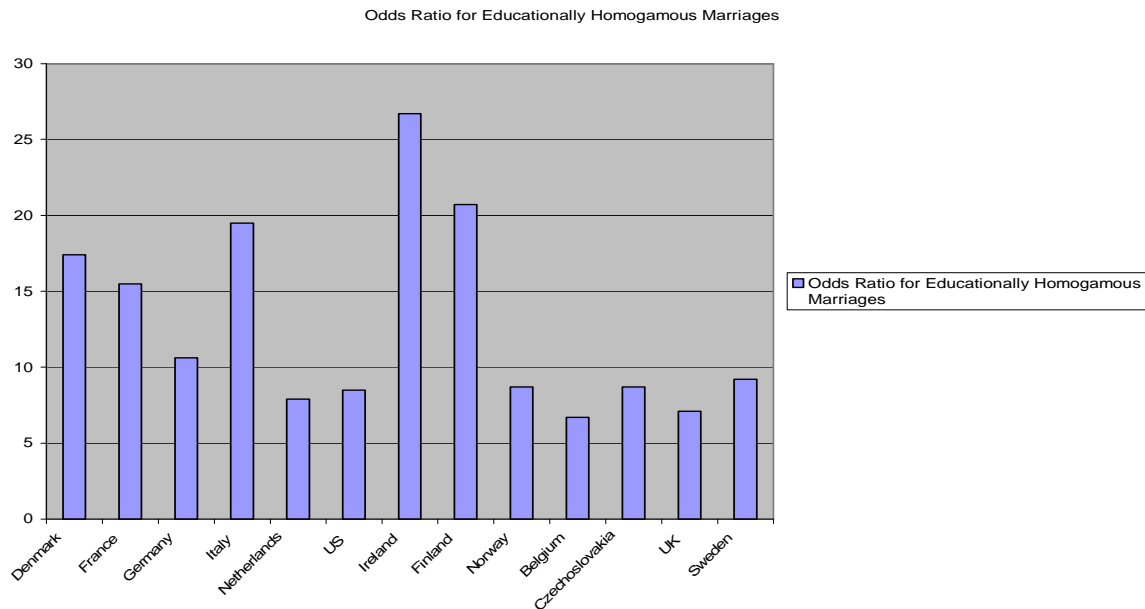


there is also relatively large gap between men's and women's working hours, as well as a large gap between the working hours of mothers and nonmothers (Cousins & Tang 2004: 234). When we juxtapose the general work hours profiles of the Netherlands and Sweden by aggregating working hours across the population or the workforce, the resulting profiles look very much alike. However, when we break the work hours data down by the gender and parenting status of the worker, suddenly the two countries look very different, as Sweden is a country where a much larger share of women work at least forty hours a week and women's work hours account for a much larger share of total work hours. This discrepancy follows from the fact that Swedish working time policies are more oriented towards facilitating women's participation in the labor market than Dutch working time policies, which are designed to accommodate women who want to work part-time. When comparing the working lives (and private lives) of Americans and Western Europeans, it is important not to overlook these intra-European dissimilarities in working time patterns and regimes. In fact, on some dimensions of cross-national variation, the gap between any two Western European countries may surpass the gap between any one of the Western European countries and the United States. To take one example, the proportion of long-hours men in Germany comes close to the proportion in the US, while far exceeding the proportion in the Netherlands, as the following chart shows:



It is also essential to appreciate the differences between Western European countries with regards to other relevant dimensions of variation, particularly those relating to partnerships and family life. In terms of their sex-role preferences within marriage, for example, British men and women find an egalitarian "family model" more appealing than their counterparts in Spain, although very few of British or the Spanish married couples manage to put these egalitarian ideals into practice (Hakim 2003: 74-76).

As far as educational homogamy goes, Western European individuals living and working in some European societies appear to have more in common with their counterparts across the Atlantic than they do with their peers in other European countries. On this dimension the transatlantic divide is overshadowed by the divide between low-homogamy countries like the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium and high-homogamy countries like Denmark, Ireland, and Finland, countries which far eclipse the United States on this measure of societal openness, as can be seen in the following chart (Smits 2003):



Here the transatlantic divide pales in comparison to the intra-European divide within between high-homogamy and low-homogamy countries.

### Paris, Oslo, and San Francisco

Given these intra-societal differences between Western European countries, it seems reasonable to choose two different European countries as research sites for this comparative study. The two "revelatory" (Yin 1994: 40-5) European research sites chosen for the study are Paris and Oslo, the two biggest metropolitan areas within France and Norway respectively. Paris and Oslo, along with the San Francisco Bay Area in the United States, make for a promising trio of research sites well-suited for a discovery-oriented multi-site case study such as this one. While all three countries clearly belong to the "Atlantic family" of nations (Baldwin 2009), France, Norway, and the United States offer both contrasts and similarities along a number of dimensions of variation potentially relevant to the dissertation and to the study of its central topics. In order to get a sense of where these three countries differ and where they coincide, it is very helpful to map out the potentially relevant features of each country in comparative perspective.

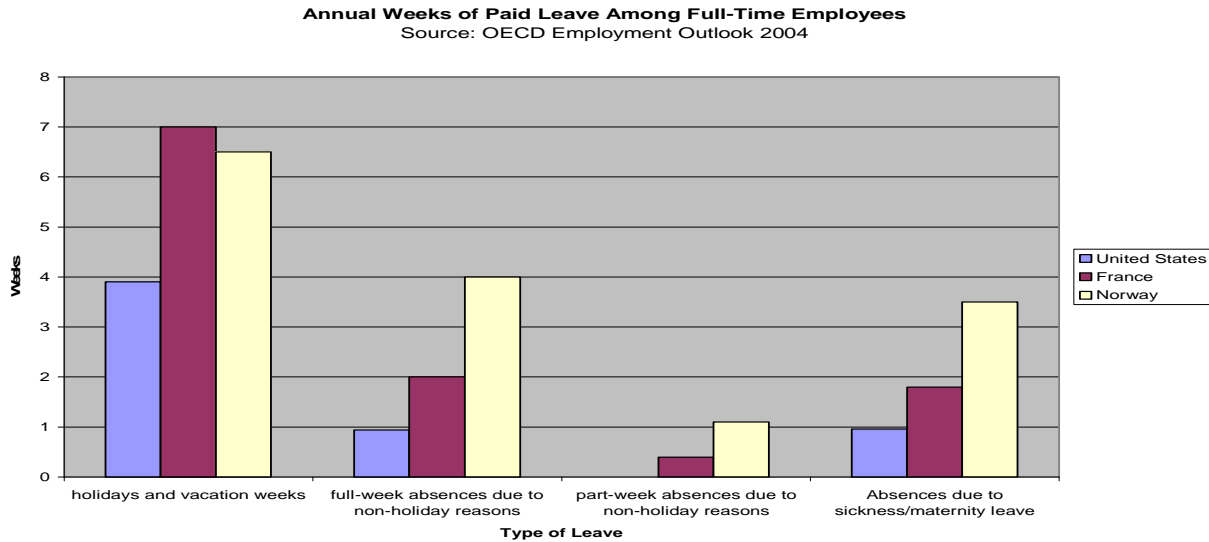
### Aggregate Working Time Profiles of France, Norway, and the United States

Cross-national studies of these working time regimes provide evidence which suggests that each of these countries has a distinctive working time profile. At least one comparative study has placed Norway and France, in this order, at the very bottom of the distribution of long-hours workers (defined as the percentage of workers in the labor force averaging >48 hours per workweek) among all of the OECD countries (including Western and Eastern European countries) (see Parent-Thirion 2007: 18, OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> By 2000, both Norway and France have extensive statutory and nonstatutory legal frameworks governing working hours. However, in France industry-specific "conventions" dictate work-hours ceilings (both annual and weekly) for various classes of managers (Lallement 2003). In Norway, the Norwegian Work Environment Act [*Arbeidsmiljøloven*] specifies a weekly ceiling of 40 hours per week for all nonsupervisory workers. In most industries, however, this ceiling is superseded by the 37.5 hour weekly limit negotiated between the employers and

Although this survey did not record the percentage of workers exceeding this threshold in the United States, it is safe to say that this percentage far exceeds the percentage in either of these short-hours countries (Medalia & Jacobs 2008, Jacobs & Gerson 2006). ILO data from 2000 shows that significant numbers of American workers exceed even much higher work-hour thresholds. According to their statistics, while only 4% of employed French men and 2% of employed Norwegian men routinely log over 60 hours a week at work, this is true of almost 10% of employed American men (ILO).

The three countries also differ in the amount of different kinds of paid leave which full-time employees get on an annual basis, as is illustrated in the following chart:



Here we can see that the modal French and Norwegian full-time employee far surpasses the modal American full-time employee in terms of the amount of paid leave they take on an annual basis. Further, the Norwegian worker comes out ahead of the French worker in most categories of leave, even though the French worker gets slightly more holiday leave.

### Rhythms of Working Life and Private Life in The Three Countries

Just as the three countries differ from each other in terms of basic working time patterns, they also represent three different kinds of general social rhythms. This is apparent when we compare the ending times of the occupational group which tends to adhere to fixed work schedules, namely the administrative and clerical workers. In Norway, these workers tend to start leaving the office around 3:00 PM and the majority of clerical workers have departed by 4:30 PM. In the United States, however, the exodus begins around 4:00 PM and it takes until 6:00 PM for the majority of clerical workers to commence their journeys home. In France, the administrative exodus also starts around 4:00 PM, but it takes until almost 7:00 PM before the majority of these clerical workers have left the office. What is particularly noteworthy about the French case is that, during the "transitional" period between the hours of 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM (Nippert-Eng 1995), the number of managers and professionals at work exceeds the number of clerical and administrative workers by a larger margin than is the case in either Norway or the United States. The Norwegian and American professional workday bears a stronger resemblance

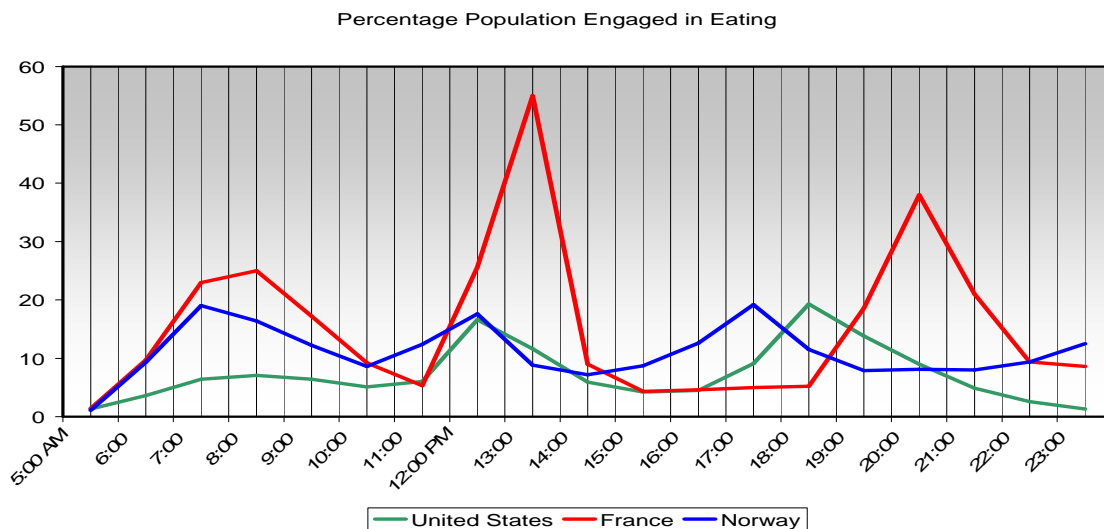
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the employees' representatives. Overtime is capped at 10 hours per week and 200 hours a year by statute, but companies may apply for exemptions from the body charged with overseeing work hours (Torp & Barth 2001).

to the administrative workday, as there is a greater degree of inter-class synchronization in each of these two countries.

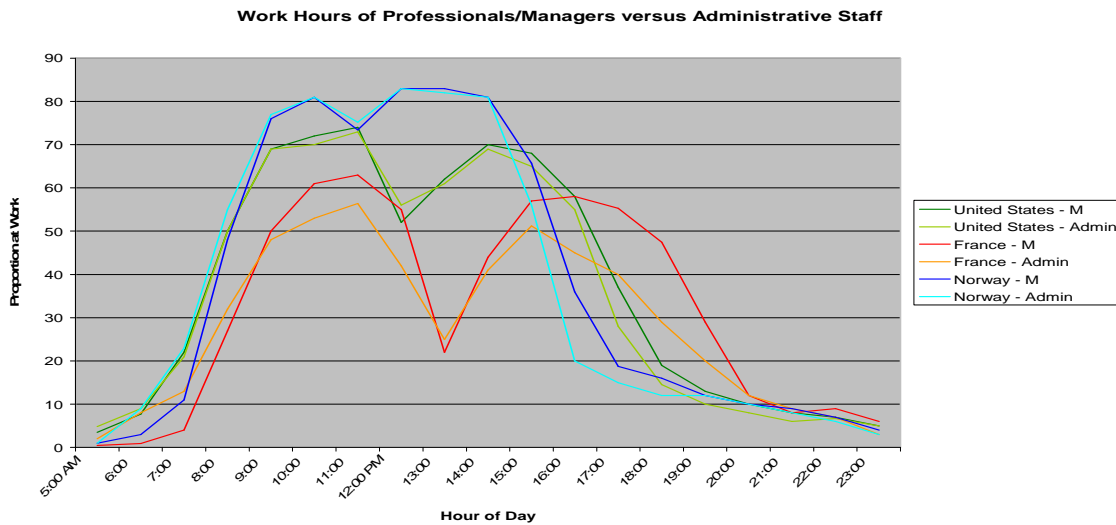
This gap in the temporal rhythms is apparent when we compare the ending times of the occupational group which tends to adhere to fixed work schedules, namely the administrative and clerical workers. In Norway, these workers tend to start leaving the office around 3:00 PM and the majority of clerical workers have departed by 4:30 PM. In the United States, however, the exodus begins around 4:00 PM, and it takes until 6:00 PM for the majority of clerical workers to commence their journeys home. In France, the exodus also starts around 4:00 PM, but it takes until almost 7:00 PM before the majority of these clerical workers have left the office. In the French context the number of managers and professionals at work during the period between 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM period exceeds the number of clerical and administrative workers by a larger margin than is the case in either Norway or the United States. Thus, the workdays of the Norwegian and American professionals bears a stronger resemblance to the administrative workday, as there is a greater degree of inter-class synchronization in each of these two countries.

As time diary data regarding the timing of meals lends further support to the idea of a cross-national divergence in social rhythms. Meals, as sociologists have noted, qualify as a central social event in the daily rounds of most individuals in any given society (Warde et al 2007, DeVault 1991). The divergence in the timing of major meals throughout the weekday in the three countries can be seen clearly in the following "tempogram" showing the proportion of the population engaged in eating during the hours of the day.

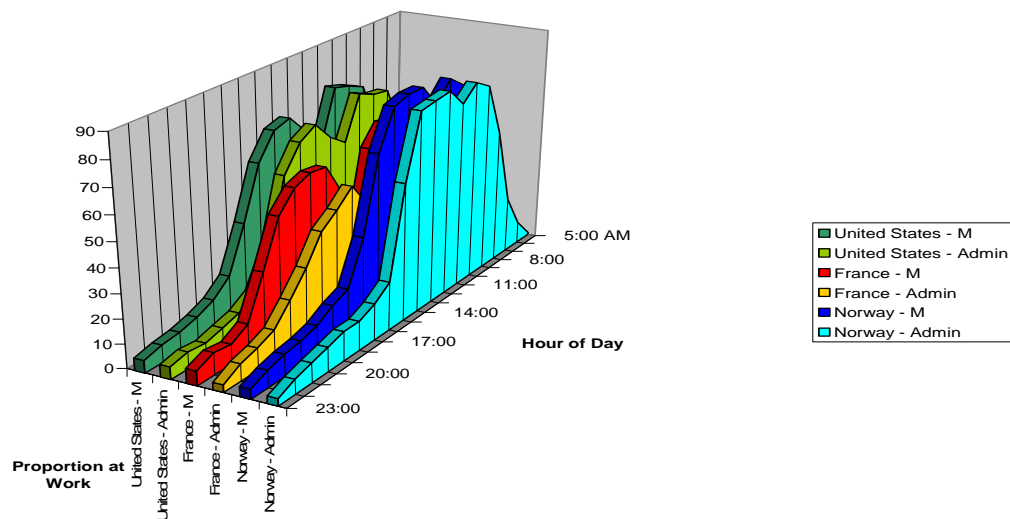


Cross-national time diary data shows that the majority of evening eating sessions take place at different hours in each of the countries under study; in Norway, the percentage of the population consuming a meal peaks at 5:30 PM, in the US, this proportion peaks at 6:30 PM, and in France, a "late-hours" country, the proportion peaks at 8:30 PM. Further, as compared to the Norwegian and the American cases, the French case stands out on account of the relatively large proportion of the French population which consumes the evening meal at this time of day. Similarly, as the following work hours tempogram shows, in each of the three countries the end of the "modal" workday (as well as the beginning and middle) takes place at a different hour, both for

occupational groups which tend to have fixed work hours and those with unspecified work hours:



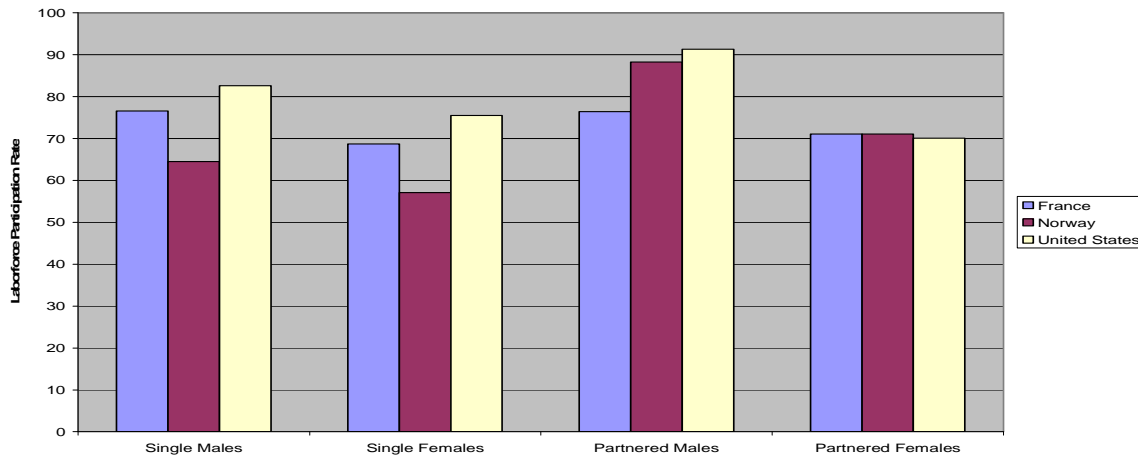
**Tempogram of Workday: Professionals and Administrative Staff**



## Labor Market, Employment, and Occupational Patterns in France, Norway, and the United States

These divergences between France, Norway, and the United States persist when it comes to the basic contours of their employment and occupational patterns. First, although they look almost identical with regard to the laborforce participation patterns of partnered females, the group which presumably carried the heaviest responsibilities for childraising and household maintenance (Goodin 2008, Gershuny 2000), they part company in relation to the laborforce participation rates of three other major sociodemographic groups, namely single men, single women, and partnered men. With respect to single men and single women, Norway stands out for its unusually low laborforce participation rate relative to France, and particularly the United States. This divergence is evident from the following chart:

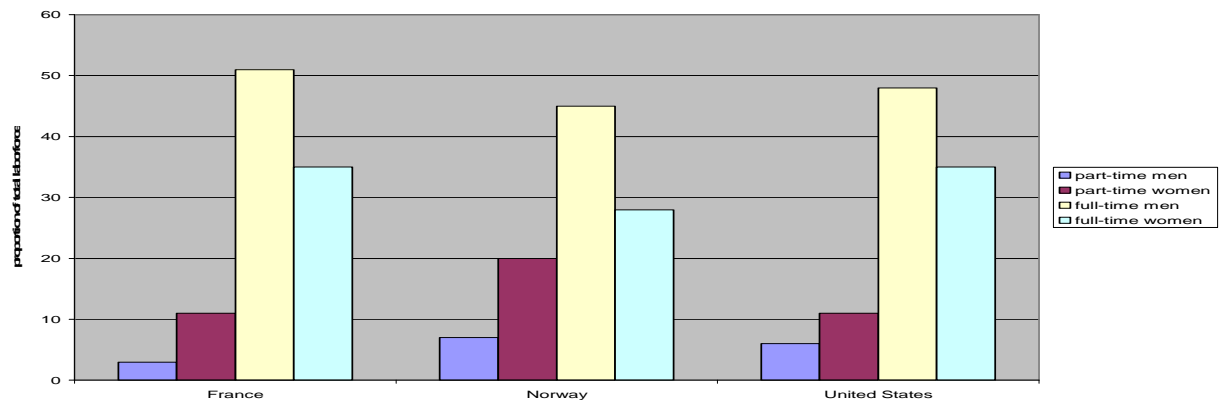
**Laborforce Participation Rates by Sociodemographic Group**  
 Source: Medalia & Jacobs 2008: 145



However, when we look exclusively at men and women in dual-earner couples, Norway has by far the highest employment rate of the three countries. Some 98.9% of all Norwegian couples where at least one person is employed are dual-earner couples. This rate which far eclipses the rate of France (52%) and the United States (50.8%) and tops even the other Scandinavian countries (80% for Sweden) (see Medalia & Jacobs 2008: 149).

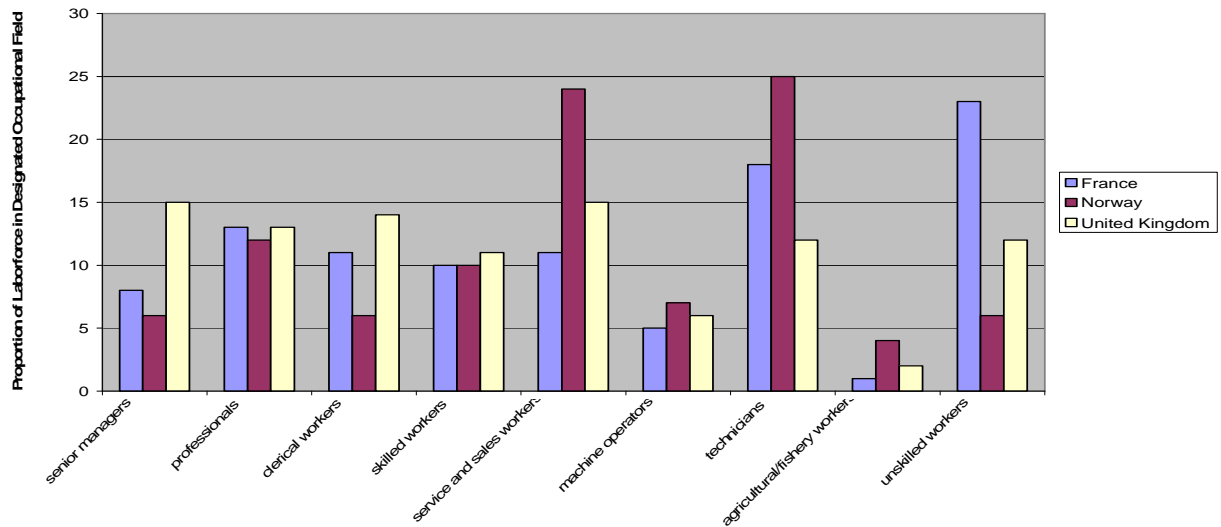
Just as they differ with regard to the participation rates of various sociodemographic groups within the general population, these three countries also differ with regard to the sociodemographic composition of the laborforce. The laborforces in France, Norway, and the United States present distinctive profiles in terms of their employment status and gender composition. As the following chart illustrates, while full-time men predominate in the laborforces of all three countries, a greater share of the French laborforce is composed of fulltime men than the laborforces of either the United States or Norway. Norway distinguishes itself from France and the United States on account of its large population of women working on a part-time basis (defined as women who work an average of 37.5 hours per week or less):

**Composition of Labor force by Employment Status and Gender (2005)**  
 Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4th Survey of European Working Conditions



Finally, the three countries diverge with regard to the occupational distribution of employment across the various sectors. The following chart shows the occupational distribution of employment in France, Norway, and the UK (unfortunately, I could not locate matched data for the US, so I used the UK as the best approximation).

**Occupational Distribution of Employment in France, Norway, UK**  
 Source: Fourth European Working Conditions Survey



What is immediately apparent from an inspection of the left-hand categories (senior managers and professionals) is that the UK ("standing in" for the US) has a very high relative number of senior managers relative to Norway. This preponderance of managers is also reflected in comparisons between the official statistics from the US and Norwegian governments. According to these figures, the "managerial gap" between the two countries is quite significant: as recently as 1998 the US laborforce had nearly twice the number of "managers" as the Norwegian laborforce (Birkelund & Sandnes 2003: 212).

### Occupational and Educational Gender Segregation Patterns in the Three Countries

France, the US, and Norway can also be distinguished on the basis of the occupational segregation of the laborforce by gender. Norwegian women are somewhat more likely than American women to be employed in highly "gender-biased" (i.e. female-dominated) occupations, a product of what some analysts have called the unusually strong "gender-stereotyping" of workers in the avowedly gender-egalitarian Nordic countries (Melkas & Anker 1997: 200-207). In Norway, as in other Nordic countries, employed women are concentrated in female-dominated occupations to a higher degree than France or the US. This high level of gender segregation has consequences for the wage ratio between men and women. It is likely that Norwegian women earn less than their French or American counterparts, if their earnings are measured as a proportion of their husbands' earnings (Goodin et al 2008).<sup>51</sup> At the same time, because of the higher degrees of vertical occupational segregation by gender in France and especially Norway, as compared to the United States, proportionately fewer women occupy top managerial positions in private sector companies located in these two European countries than in the United States (Dolado et al 2003).

This high rate of gender segregation in Norway extends into the higher-status occupations which employ people with tertiary education. The rather high rates of occupational gender segregation among the highly educated is at least partially the consequence of the large size of the public service sector and the large number of well-educated state-employed "caretakers" such

<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, Goodin only has data for Sweden on this wage rate measure, but it stands to reason that the Norwegian rate is close to the Swedish rate.

as teachers, nurses, social workers, and the like (Birkelund & Petersen 2005: 130, Birkelund & Sandnes 2003: 211). It is also likely that Norwegian women, more than their French or American sisters, choose female-dominated fields as fields of study while attending institutions of higher learning. Among Swedish women attending tertiary institutions, the rate of gender segregation by field of study is very high, more than double that of France (Smyth and Steinmetz 2008: 272). It is likely that the same pattern exists in Norway.

### **Elite Educational Regimes in the Three Countries**

The function of selecting and channeling those individuals destined for managerial and professional positions, particularly managerial and professional positions in elite firms, is performed by three distinctive educational systems in France, Norway, and the United States. The differences between these educational systems are particularly noticeable at the tertiary level. First, the Norwegian system, as we would expect, is a relatively small-scale, decentralized, and egalitarian system. In this country, students bound for managerial and professional positions in the business world can choose from three universities, one private (BI in Oslo), and the other two public (NTNU in Trondheim & NHH in Bergen). None of these universities is extremely selective in their admissions policies. NHH, the most selective of the three schools, admits roughly 19% of its yearly applicants to the Business Economics program.

The French system is built along entirely different lines. First, the system encompasses two very different subsystems, one exclusively for the masses, and the other exclusively for an elite comprising roughly 6% of the entire undergraduate student population (Hage 2000: 315). Each of these two parallel systems is run by the state. Anyone with a *baccalauréat* can attend a campus belonging to the regular system of universities but only a handful of applicants are accepted into one of the Grande Écoles, particularly the top tier of Grande Écoles comprising École Polytechnique, École Normale Supérieure, École des Hautes Etude Commerciales, and École Nationale d'Administration. Even the applicants to one of these august institutions have already completed several years of rigorous preparation at the secondary level (Platt 1994). Graduation from any one of these institutions assures one a bright future within the top precincts of the French business world. The individuals who enter into the business world from one of these institutions arrive already "consecrated" as a member of the academic nobility (Bourdieu 1996 [1989]: 130-160). Indeed, specific positions within the French government are reserved for those alumni of École Polytechnique or École Nationale d'Administration who have graduated at the top of their classes.

The American system offers a contrast between both the French and the Norwegian systems, as it is extremely decentralized and encompasses a mix of public and private institutions of varying status and prestige. Because of its much larger scale, the American system presents top business students with numerous public and private tertiary institutions from which to choose. While the top undergraduate and graduate programs in the United States are significantly more selective in their admissions policies than the comparable programs in Norway, they are not nearly as selective as the French Grande Écoles. Although Harvard Business School only accepts around 12% of its applicants in any given year, it selects from a relatively heterogeneous pool of applicants; many of the people who apply to Harvard Business School are not graduates of elite institutions. In the case of École Polytechnique, however, the applicants who apply are already the products of three separate rounds of winnowing, and this



represent a miniscule proportion of those who would have been eligible as applicants under an American-style system.<sup>52</sup>

### **Employment-Parenthood Regimes in the Three Countries**

Just as the countries differ with respect to the levels of occupational and educational gender segregation evident in their educational systems and the labor markets, they also present their citizens with "welfare regimes" (Goodin et al 2008, Blossfeld & Drobnič 2001, Esping-Andersen 1999) structured around different government policies. These welfare regimes create distinctive incentive environments and opportunity structures for the various sociodemographic and occupational groups within the workforce. Norway is an example of an egalitarian social-democratic regime which treats social benefits as universal entitlements to be dispensed in equal measure to every member of society, regardless of gender, employment status, or occupational history (Goodin et al 2008). Corporatist France, however, approaches social benefits as entitlements whose relative size reflects the recipient's employment contributions and occupational history. The United States, one of the foremost examples of the liberal regime, attempts to minimize rights-based social benefits for all beneficiary groups, particularly for those with a weak attachment to the labor market (Esping-Andersen 1999).

Living in societies with different welfare institutions, Norwegian, French, and American citizens face different opportunity and incentive structures with regard to work, leisure, and parenting. While the laissez-faire American regime does not offer incentives for childbearing, both the French and Norwegian regimes are "pro-natalist" in the sense that they supply economic incentives for women to have children (Goodin et al 2008: 194).<sup>53</sup>

The two pro-natalist European regimes can be distinguished on other grounds. The dual-carer/dual-earner welfare state regime (Leira 2002) instituted in Norway has "de-familializing" consequences (Blossfeld & Drobnič 2001: 43) for all parenting men and women who participate in the labor market. The Norwegian state's policies enhance the opportunities for employed women (and employed men) to raise children and work outside the home at the same time. Through its relatively generous parental leave policies (44 weeks at 100% of prior salary or 54 weeks at 80% of prior salary) and public provision of childcare services, the Norwegian state partially emancipates mothers of young children from the temporal and economic constraints accompanying childcare responsibilities. The Norwegian state has been aggressively expanding the number of subsidized day-care centers (*barnehager*) during the period 1999-2007. The public system could accommodate some 80% of children between the ages of 2-5 in 2005 (Ellingsæter 2006). In Norway, the state lessens the temporal and economic burdens for the class of citizen engaged in both working and caring activities. At the same time, because it

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<sup>52</sup> Personal communication with Marion Fourcade

<sup>53</sup> The work-family literature dealing with professional workers in the United States has identified pockets of strong work-family strain among almost all professional parenting women and among some "egalitarian" professional parenting men (see Blair-Loy 2003, Cooper 2000, Hochschild 1997). At the same time, other "traditional" professional parenting men appear to escape the strain by extending their workdays and handing over parenting duties to their female partners, even when their partners would prefer that they come home earlier to assist in childcare duties (Blair-Loy & Jacobs 2003). Although the work-parenting nexus has not been studied as extensively in France, in Scandinavia it appears that it is less culturally acceptable for the parenting professional man to withdraw from parenting duties because the Scandinavian "gender regime" (Connell 1987) is rather different than the American or the French gender regime. In Oslo, a Scandinavian environment where "family-friendly" policies and working time arrangements hold sway (Ellingsæter & Leira 2006), middle-class men are expected to take part in childrearing activities, even if this means that they have to curtail the workday.

organizes these benefits in a gender-neutral way, the state provides incentives for fathers to assist their partners in childcare.

Compared to the Norwegian system, the French system is less "de-familializing." It does not go quite as far as the Norwegian system in providing universal paid parental leave and making subsidized public childcare universally accessible. While parental leave is guaranteed in France, it is not necessarily paid. Further, in 2002 only 15% of children under 3 years of age were in the custody of French daycare facilities (*crèches*). While an additional 29% of children under age three were under the care of a paid childminder employed by the state, the remainder received care which was entirely private (Fagnani & Letablier 2005: 137). Finally, the French system upholds gendered norms regarding the male breadwinner more rigidly than the Norwegian system, and does not offer guaranteed paternal leave for employed fathers.<sup>54</sup>

The laissez-faire American regime leaves decisions about work, employment status, and childcare primarily to the individual and the private market. With no public provision of childcare services, it does not relieve the caring burdens of mothers in the same way as either the Norwegian or French regimes. Neither does it alter the incentive structure facing employed parents who are juggling work and family responsibilities. It may have "de-familializing" effects, but only for those parents affluent enough to afford the "outsourcing" of family and caring activities to paid providers (Blossfeld & Drobnič 2001, Gershuny 2000).

### **Work Centrality and Gender Cultures**

According to Hofstede's comparative work on gender cultures across the world, the "tender" cultural environments of Norway and other Scandinavian countries are relatively inhospitable to the "masculinist" live-to-work ethos, as compared with the cultural environments in either France or the United States. In Norway, more so than United States and France, both women and men tend to favor a "work-to-live" ethic (Hofstede 2003, 1998). This supposition finds some support in existing cross-national values surveys. A recent Eurobarometer survey confirmed that, with the exception of the Dutch, Norwegians attach less importance to a successful career, and consider career success less central to a "good life" than any other European population (Mykkjelvedt 2005). A pronounced gap between Norway and the United States is also evident with respect to stances and attitudes towards working life. An ISSP "values" study from 1989 revealed that a concern with securing high incomes and opportunities for advancement is more widespread in the U.S. than in Norway (Birkelund & Sandnes 2003, Clark 1998). In Norway, as foreign observers have reported, managerial careers do not carry the same prestige which they have in other non-Scandinavian countries (Tixier 1996).

### **Stratification Cultures in the Three Countries**

Just as the three social environments under study diverge when it comes to daily work rhythms, they also differ with respect to the prevailing stratification cultures. The French professional lives and works in a post-aristocratic society preoccupied with social rank (D'Iribarne 2006, 1989) whereas the American professional lives and works in an environment which promotes a generalized competition for status and wealth open to individuals of all social backgrounds (Lamont 1992). The Norwegian professionals live and work in a relatively solidaristic, egalitarian, and cohesive society which frowns upon most overt status competition.

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<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the French system does free mothers to join the workforce to a greater extent than most other corporatist regimes (such as Germany).

According to a survey study undertaken by cross-cultural psychologists, Norwegians feel uncomfortable with overt claims to socioeconomic status to a much greater extent than their American counterparts (Kleiner and Okeke 1991: 514). It seems likely that elite business professionals in Norway do not differentiate themselves overtly from less socioeconomically successful members of society to the same extent as they might in other countries, particularly a country like France where rank counts for a lot or a country like the United States where achieved wealth is the mark of an elevated moral standing (Sivesind 1997, Tixier 1996, Lamont 1992).<sup>55</sup>

The high degree of vertical differentiation, "groupness," and publicly sanctioned hierarchy which characterizes the French and especially the Parisian milieu has been noted by a variety of observers, both French and non-French. Philippe D'Iribarne has gone so far to call modern France a modern-day "society of orders," (D'Iribarne 2006, 1989, Crozier 1964) obsessed by social rank. This "castelike" society, according to D'Iribarne, promotes an unusual post-aristocratic stratification culture where individuals draw distinctions between the "base" and the "noble," and where status is codified in publicly communicated forms.

In his many studies of French culture and society, Bourdieu has described a rigidly hierarchized and closed country with a number of homologous occupational fields and lifestyle fields. In such a society, every field of activity is organized by the "master dichotomy" of dominated/subordinated (Fuchs 2007: 160). Moreover, in France, much more so than in comparatively open countries like the United States or Norway, an elevated position along one dimension of stratification implies an elevated position along another dimension. Thus, one's elevated educational pedigree has to be "matched" with a similarly elevated occupational position. In this society, the graduates of schools such as *École Polytechnique*, those who occupy the apex of the educational stratification order, constitute a publicly "consecrated" elite identified as the leaders of the country's primary economic and political institutions (Bourdieu 1996 [1989]: 150-3). For this educational-occupational-social elite, living up to this publicly conferred status necessitates the investment of significant amounts of time and energy in professional life. As Boltanski wrote in his classic study of *les cadres*, the *cadre* is defined in France as someone "who does not count his work hours" (Cousins 2004, Boltanski 1987). More recently, French sociologists have observed that the work hours of the *cadres* have long been a publicly observable "vector of social demarcation" within the French corporate workplace (Baudelot & Gollac 2004, Delteil 2004, Lallement 2003: 72, Cousin 2004).

In Norwegian society, the prevailing stratification culture does not sanction hierarchies of achievement or ascription to the extent that it does in most other European societies or in the United States. Instead, it sublimates inequalities of wealth and accomplishment and valorizes equality as "sameness" (Gullestad 2001, 1992: 190-8). In this society, equality of material condition and social status is presumed as a prerequisite for membership in the broader community [*felleskap*] valued highly by many Norwegians (Lien et al 2001). In this social environment of "conspicuous modesty," it is the avoidance of obvious forms of social ostentation and distinction which becomes an indispensable strategy in the arsenal of those who have

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<sup>55</sup> This devalorization of careerism in Norwegian society may also be connected to the archetypally Scandinavian "cult of modesty" which in goes by the name of *Janteloven* in Norwegian. According to this Scandinavian cultural code, outward signs of success such as conspicuous wealth should be muted as much as possible. Chasing outward success and trumpeting one's success to the outside world becomes signs of pathological egoism rather than laudable ambition (Daloz 2007, Kannoner & Okeke 1991). This cult of modesty is connected to the Scandinavian embrace of outward "sameness" as an important social cement binding together individuals belonging to a community [*felleskap*] (Gullestad 2001, 1992: 190-8, Lien et al 2001).

achieved monetary or social status (Daloz 2007). As previous cross-national research has shown, Norwegians are more apt than Americans to look askance at ambitiousness in the occupational domain as a morally suspect form of egoism rather than a laudable form of self-betterment (Kleiner and Okeke 1991: 514). Moreover, in Norwegian society the development of one's professional career carries less weight as an ingredient of the "good life" than it does in other countries such as the United States (Frønes & Brusdal 2000).

American professionals live and work in an environment with a stratification culture macrocontext that differs from the French and the Norwegian stratification cultures. Here the members of the corporate elite live and work in a relatively nonstratified society without any explicitly formalized public status order. As Weber noted at the turn of the 20th century, the United States is a nation where "status conventions" are "weak" relative to European societies (Weber 1978: 960). And yet, American society is exceptionally unequal in regards to socioeconomic status and all capable individuals are expected to take part in a generalized competition to achieve economic status (Mennell 2007: 250). This competition open to all comers and its outcome is supposed to meritocratically reflect the effort and skills contestants bring to the competition (Münch 1992: 151). Success in one's professional career is highly valued, particularly for those who have succeeded in landing managerial and professional jobs (Lamont 1992). In this stratification order, members of the business elite may enjoy privileged access to jobs and wealth on account of their education or connections, but they do not occupy a place in the publicly sanctioned social hierarchy in the same way as their Parisian peers do (particularly those who graduate from *École Polytechnique* and other *Grande Écoles*). At the same time, insofar as it lacks a relatively robust sense of a community which transcends differences of wealth and status, the American stratification culture differs from the Norwegian stratification culture and the French stratification culture.

## **Appendix C**

### **Research Strategy and Methods**

This study is designed as an exploratory and generative multicase study. As such, it aims to elaborate novel conceptualizations, analytic frames, and explanatory accounts more than to verify or test prespecified conceptualizations and explanatory accounts defined at the outset of the inquiry (Luker 2009). In order to generate these analytic frames, the study makes heavier use of induction from observations than deduction from theoretical postulates, although it necessarily moves back and forth from observations to theory-laden hypotheses and generalizations (Alford 1998: 27-29). It poses relatively open-ended research questions and then gathers the maximal amount of empirical evidence potentially relevant to these questions. This process of induction proceeds largely along the lines proposed by Glaser and Strauss in their grounded theory manifestoes (Glaser 1978, Glaser & Strauss 1967). Following their "iterative" approach to induction, the study carries out repeated rounds of analysis and repeated rounds of conceptualization, bringing the theoretical constructs and the data into ever closer alignment (Luker 2009, Dey 1999, Alford 1998).

The cases which this dissertation examines belong to different categories and perform different analytical functions in the research process. The units of observation which serve as the study's observational cases, the individual men and women included in the three groups of respondents, are treated as empirically "real" units (Ragin 1992). These empirically real units, however, are also analyzed as loci for generic social processes which cut across these cases (Ragin 1992: 8). Each of these empirical real cases also belongs to a collection of empirical cases, a group or subgroup of individuals all of which have been "cased" (Small 2009: 25). This empirically cased group or subgroup can also be viewed as a "constructed case" created in the course of the research process. In this sense, the empirical cases can be subsumed under a theoretical conceptualization. For example, in the chapter dealing with the temporal zoning of the weekday evening we meet the collection of French respondents who conform to particular conventions applying to late-hours work. The behavior of this collection of French respondents with regard to the evening hours constitutes a "case" of temporal zoning practices dictated by status group norms and expectations, as well as a collection of empirical units.

### **Respondent Matching and Selection**

If each individual member of the national groups constitutes an observational case, then the only way to make any valid inferences about the effects of societal context (see Appendix C) is to try to match the observational cases (i.e. the individuals) across national contexts to the fullest extent possible. This matching process lies at the heart of the structured or controlled approach to cross-national research involving individuals as the units of comparison and countries as the contextual cases (Sivesind 1997, Lamont 1992).

With respect to matching strategies, several options present themselves. In their comparison of the domestic and work-related "careers" of British and Norwegian men and women, for example, Crompton and Birkelund employ an individual-level "biographical" matching strategy to find out how the differing sociocultural and institutional environments in the UK and Norway shape the work trajectories and family trajectories of comparable individuals (Crompton & Birkelund 2000). This biographical matching strategy takes individuals' sociodemographic attributes, especially age and gender, and converts these into matching parameters (Smelser 1973). Further strengthening the *individual-level* comparability between their two groups of male and female bank managers, they also ensure that their

Norwegian and British respondents have done similar types of work for similar employers, in this case large retail banks (Crompton & Birkelund 2000: 334-6). By matching their two sets of respondents biographically and in terms of their employment context, they succeed in producing the kinds of individual-level matches between individual members of the groups which enable them to chart the career and family trajectories of like individuals. This individual-level matching strategy makes it possible for them to arrive at a number of inferences regarding the consequences of societal context for the individual-level trajectories of their respondents in the realms of work and family life.<sup>56</sup>

In her landmark study of social boundary-drawing practices in the United States and France among both upper-middle class and working class men (Lamont 2000, 1992), Michéle Lamont exploits a looser type of group-level matching strategy. Selecting her French and American respondents from two distinct urban areas within each country (one "metropole" and one second-tier city), she winds up with two groups of conationals matched only on their gender and their general class status (Lamont 1992). If we break the French group down by every pertinent individual-level attribute (i.e. occupation, educational credentials, income, etc.), we see immediately that not every member of the two groups has an exact "twin" in the other group (Lamont 1992: 154-5). While each of her two groups contains at least one computer specialist, the French computer specialist does not have an exact American twin of the same age, family status, and social background, for example. But this relatively loose partial matching strategy turns the individual-level heterogeneity of each group into a strength. Because of the variety of occupations and occupational fields represented in both her American and French groups, Lamont can claim that the differences she finds between the American and French cultural repertoires are not specific to particular occupational groups but are diffused throughout the upper-middle class populations in both countries.<sup>57</sup> Thus, this strategy exploits the occupational heterogeneity of each group to identify genuinely cross-national divergences between the groups on "cultural" dimensions of comparison.

Because this dissertation focuses on cross-national variation between widely diffused group-level phenomena such as cultural repertoires and biographically specific phenomena such as family trajectories, it combines these two matching strategies. As the study examines the first kind of cross-national divergences it was necessary to assemble conational groups matched in a loose sense. However, in order to analyze the biographically specific dimensions of comparison, the study replicates the biographical matching strategy used to such effect by Crompton and Birkelund.

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<sup>56</sup> In their study of British, American, and Hong Kong banking managers working in offices of the same global company, Wharton and Blair-Loy they employ a partial matching strategy which allows them to stage simulated pairwise comparisons between individuals through statistical techniques which replicate qualitative matching. These techniques allow them to divvy up the three sets of managers into smaller subsets corresponding to their gender and family status, thereby controlling for these sociodemographic attributes. They employ a more straightforward matching strategy in terms of their respondents' employment contexts, however. Each group of employees works for different branches of a single transnational bank with a relatively uniform corporate culture (Wharton & Blair-Loy 2002).

<sup>57</sup> It should be noted, however, that Lamont is also able to make cross-national comparisons between American and French *subgroups* who are matched on individual-level attributes such as social backgrounds and occupations. Her group-oriented matching strategy stages group-level comparisons first, and then takes advantage of the internal heterogeneity of the two national groups in order to stage *subgroup-level comparisons*. Here she compares and contrasts more closely matched American and French respondents sharing the same kinds of social backgrounds and other individual-level attributes (see Lamont 1992: Chp. 6).

These two matching strategies are evident in the composition of the final respondent groups. While the members of each conational group have all attended elite institutions of higher education, have all landed jobs with well-regarded employers in the for-profit sector, have all earned high salaries, have all amassed between a minimum of five and a maximum of eighteen years of work experience, and have all attained an elevated socioeconomic status, they nevertheless differ among themselves with regard to their occupational fields. Each national set of respondents is comprised of managers and professionals drawn from five different occupational fields: engineering management, software design, corporate law, investment banking, and management consulting. The groups also exhibit some internal heterogeneity with regard to sociodemographic profiles. Each group has a mix of people in their twenties, thirties, and forties, as well as similar gender ratios (approximately 3:1 in favor of men). All partner and family statuses are represented in each of the three groups (with the exception of the single parent).

Within each set of conationals, however, is a smaller subset of respondents who are much more closely matched across countries than the members of these larger sets. While these subsets of conationals are not matched on every sociodemographic dimension of interest, as they differ in their ages and their family statuses, they are all male and all between the ages of 26 and 36. Most importantly, the fifteen members each subset have all spent a minimum of four years working as post-MBA/MA management consultants for one particular Big Three management consultancy, a global company with an extremely standardized and uniform corporate culture across its American and European branch offices. Because of their tenure at the firm, the members of these subsets can be said to have experienced nearly identical organizational cultures, and endured nearly identical pressures and demands on their time and energies. However, it is critical to note that, while the members of these subsets are very closely matched with their "twins" in the other subsets in terms of their educations, their occupational fields, and their context of employment, they do diverge from these twins in terms of their post-consulting trajectories and, most importantly, their partnership status and family trajectories.

These various groups were assembled with the aid of several initial recruitment strategies. The first procedure relied on elite educational institutions and employers as the primary recruitment channels. This recruitment strategy was used to recruit the investment bankers, accounting professionals, and management consultants for the general sets of conationals. In order to identify promising interview candidates from these occupational groups, I solicited the assistance of alumni relations departments at top graduate MBA programs in each country in order to obtain the names and contact information of their alumni who had gone to employment at one of the major management consultancies or investment banking houses. These MBA programs insisted on maximum confidentiality. An MBA graduate who had worked for three years or more at any of these firms was eligible for selection. For each potential respondent, I located the prospective respondents' current employer so that I could contact them about the study. Once potential respondents had been located, they were initially contacted by email and then by phone. Of the prospective interviewees that I contacted in this manner, all but a handful declined to participate in the project, yielding a very high cooperation rate for this part of the recruitment process. However, even when a particular person had agreed to participate in the project, it was not uncommon for it to take several months to actually schedule an interview due to respondents' long work hours and intense work schedules.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> In the most extreme case, it took eighteen months to schedule the interview given the respondent's schedule.

The subgroups of corporate attorneys, engineering managers, and software developers in each country were generated through a different initial recruitment strategy centered around employers. This employer-based recruitment strategy was also used to assemble the fully-matched subsets of management consultants described previously. In order to find respondents through this recruitment channel, I first assembled lists of between prospective employing organizations with large offices in each of the three target cities. I then contacted gatekeeping individuals at these employing organizations, typically HR personnel who dealt with the public. These gatekeeping personnel put me in touch with professional employees fitting the selection criteria. Only three gatekeeping personnel at the different companies (one in the United States and two in France) refused my solicitations; the others cooperated fully and put me in contact with their employees. Just as with the previous recruitment strategy, all but a handful of prospective respondents agreed to an interview. Again, all individuals and companies did insist that I keep their names and identities to myself at all stages of the research process.

In order to round out the conational sets, I turned to a third recruitment procedure: snowball sampling. This procedure was used to recruit yet another wave of respondents for each of the conational groups. While not an ideal procedure for finding respondents from a statistical perspective (Small 2009: 25, Weiss 1994: 29), snowball sampling has many virtues from a practical standpoint, not least of which is the usefulness of having a known and trusted vouching figure "pitch" the project to prospective respondents. As many researchers have learned, the person doing the referring is in a better position to dispel any doubts or concerns which the snowball respondent harbors about the study than the researcher himself or herself (Weiss 1994: 34).

As this indicates, virtually all of the potential respondents contacted through this method accepted my invitation as I had already been "vetted" by someone in their social network. It should be noted that a similar dynamic may have worked to my advantage in all three recruitment strategies. I surmise that the high level of acceptance and cooperation was due to the fact that I had been "vetted" in each case by a respected gatekeeper: an individual who vouched for me, an HR department that screened me, and an elite institution's stamp of approval.

Finally, given the success of these strategies, I would have interviewed any participant who accepted my invitation stemming from all three recruitment methods. However, as with any research, I did not have unlimited time and resources to remain indefinitely in the field. Ergo, once I had interviewed fifty respondents in any national pool, I stopped issuing new invitations. Yet, as indicated previously, the time lag between an invitation being accepted and an interview date being scheduled could be of several months duration. Thus, even after reaching fifty respondents, I continued interviewing any respondent who had accepted my invitation previously. For this reason, I exceeded my target threshold of fifty respondents per national case. In sum, the final sample of over one hundred and fifty respondents comprises at least fifty respondents from each of the three countries.

### **Data-Gathering Procedures: Semi-Structured Conversational Interviews**

The bulk of the data gathered for this study was obtained between 2003 and 2007 through a series of semi-structured conversational face-to-face interviews carried out in Oslo, Paris, and San Francisco. All of the interviews were done at a time and location chosen by the respondent. Two of the San Francisco respondents elected to do the interview in my home, and approximately 20% of the respondents in each country preferred to hold the interviews in their offices during business hours. The majority of the interviews in each locale, however, took place



in public venues such as restaurants, cafes, and pubs. Interviews were primarily conducted during lunch, the evening, or on the weekend. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

I conducted all of the interviews in Oslo and San Francisco by myself. In Paris interviews were carried out by myself and a French-speaking colleague in residence at the École Normale Supérieure who acted as a translator and interpreter. With respect to the interviews carried out in Oslo with the Norwegian interviewees, the majority of interviews were done in Norwegian once I had acquired sufficient mastery of the language. While it took considerable amounts of time and energy to gain sufficient proficiency in spoken Norwegian, it was well-worth the effort, as it enhanced the quality of the interviews.<sup>59</sup> Although many of my Norwegian and French respondents spoke fluent English, I preferred to do the interviews in their native tongue to capture the richest possible data.. Further, several of the French and Norwegians complimented my efforts as they interpreted it as a sign of my seriousness and commitment to respect their cultures and languages. Immediately after conducting each interview, I wrote up a brief memo listing my initial thoughts about those aspects of interview material relevant to the study. However, special care was also taken to record each interview for subsequent verbatim transcription.

The semi-structured interviews themselves served two distinct analytic purposes. First, they gave me access to the respondents' recollections of events, decisions, and processes going on at the time of the interview and during the past which preceded the interview, as well as their interpretations of these first-person phenomena. As other analysts have noted, qualitative interviews work well as a means of securing retrospective narratives about their "already-experienced" lives, as well as prospective expectations and aspirations regarding their futures (Gerson 2010: 233, Orrange 2007, Weiss 1994). The interviews succeeded in giving me a good sense of the events and decisions which had shaped the respondents' life histories in the domains of education, work, leisure, and family life (Elder Jr. & Giele 2009) and, indirectly, the ways in which these experiential domains connected with macrosocial structures. They provided for material which enabled me to bridge the gaps between positionalities, macro-structures, institutional logics, and interior worlds (Maynes et al 2008: 16, 41).

The interviews also served as ways of probing the cultural worlds of the respondents, attempts to elicit the more or less well-articulated ritual vocabularies and codes which individuals use to render their experiences of working life and private life meaningful and socially acceptable (Rubin & Rubin 1995). In probing the "sociocultural frameworks" (Blair-Loy 2003: 195) which the respondents used to frame these experiences, the interviews were designed to unearth the body of cultural resources (Swidler 2001) which the respondents press into service when they are asked to make retrospective and prospective sense of their engagements with working life, with their careers, with leisure, and with family life. By tapping into this reservoir of cultural resources, the interviews expose to view the stock of scripts, accounts, and narratives which the individuals have at their disposal by virtue of their exposure to a distinctive cultural environment (Lamont 2000, 1992).

In terms of the substantive themes surfacing in the interviews, they tended to cluster into the following five categories:

1. **biographical patterns:** What do the respondents have in common in terms of their work careers and private life "careers" (Becker 1992), both in terms of their objective profiles and their subjective experiences?

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<sup>59</sup> I owe a debt of gratitude to the FLAS program for funding a year of Norwegian language training, as well as the American-Scandinavian Foundation which provided much of the support for my fieldwork in Oslo.

2. **life resources patterns:** How do the respondents allocate their own personal resources such as time, energy, and attention to working life and private life (leisure, socializing, family life)?
3. **identity-self patterns:** How do the respondents represent their identities "typify" (Hewlett 1989) their selves in relation to other selves, and what are the "operational" (Glaser 1978: 76) constructions of the self which come into play at working life and private life?
4. **life context patterns:** How do the respondents experience their engagements with educational institutions, work institutions, and the social networks which make up their private lives? How do they experience marriage and family life?
5. **adaptational and goal-seeking patterns:** How do the respondents formulate and pursue their general goals, aspirations, and strategies, both with respect to working life and private life?
6. **interpersonal relations patterns:** What kinds of interactions do the respondents have with other people in their work lives and private lives? What kind of relationships do they have with their colleagues, peers, friends, relatives, and family members (spouses, children, friends)?

While the interviews were structured in a loose and flexible manner consistent with the methodological tenets of qualitative research, they did contain some set questions which were posed in the same form to every respondent. This rigidity was necessitated by the study's explicitly comparative approach. Further, many of the questions posed to the respondents aimed at eliciting "generalized accounts" (Weiss 1994: 73) of such experiences as overwork, moments of extreme satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work and outside work, episodes where work commitments came into conflict with private obligations, and so forth. Finally, because the interviews were intended to capture the interpretative frameworks relating to respondents' experiences of working life and private life, they incorporated a variety of open-ended, hypothetical, vignette-based and third-person questions designed to elicit respondents' general orientations and "policies" towards these domains (Swidler 2001: 105, 220). In particular, several questions tapped the respondents' perceptions of what a normal and desirable working life (and private life) entailed and, correlatively, what an intolerable, undesirable, and unacceptable working life and private life entailed. Many of these cultural questions focused specifically on the respondents' immediate motivations for working hard at their jobs and dedicating themselves to their careers (see Chapter 2). These questions were formulated in both more and less open-ended forms, such as "What makes hard work worthwhile" and "What motivates you to work hard?" These questions were tailored to elicit both first-order motivation scripts adducing specific motivations (e.g. career success) and second-order scripts or glosses offering interpretations and specifications of these factors and their motivational roles.

For those particular respondents who constitute the subset of individually-matched management consultants (see the preceding section), these semi-structured interviews were supplemented with life calendars useful in the gathering of factual information concerning life histories (Elder Jr. & Giele 2009). The completed life calendars facilitate the mapping of work/career and family trajectories of the three groups of matched conationals along a multitude of dimensions, including work hours, vacation patterns, promotions and job changes, partnership events, and parenting events. Some of the findings from these life calendars have been incorporated into the analysis presented in the two chapters contrasting the work and nonwork lives of the matched male consultants.

### **Analytic Procedures: Analysis of Interview Material**

The corpus of data collected through the interviews and life calendars was subjected to an iterative process of empirical-theoretical coding. This "rolling" process allowed for a repeated tacking back and forth between the empirical and theoretical tracks of analysis (Alford 1998). Through multiple rounds of data coding and analysis, I slowly maneuvered the data and the most analytically useful and applicable "theory frames" (Rueschemeyer 2009) into closer and closer alignment with each other. More concretely, I took the behaviors, orientations, discourses, perceptions, goals, and interactions making up the actual data and put them in dialogue with a variety of conceptualizations and abstractions. While most of these conceptualizations were informed by theory frames plucked opportunistically from the symbolic interactionist, Bourdieuan, rational choice, and other theoretical traditions within the sociological field, others were devised *de novo* for the occasion.

Because the point of the study was to elucidate and explain contrasts and similarities between the three groups of respondents partially matched on individual-level attributes, the coding process had to make use of both theme-codes and variable-codes (Sivesind 1999). As the bread and butter of qualitative analysis, theme-codes were central to the coding of the focal dimensions of comparison.<sup>60</sup> They were indispensable in the coding of interview material dealing with dimensions of comparison such as hard work scripts, work hours routines, orientations towards long-hours work and business travel, experiences of negative or positive feedback from significant others regarding working life, stances towards unstructured leisure time, balancing working commitments and family obligations. Theme-codes made it possible to construct *analytic frames* which would structure the formulation of hypotheses relating to these focal dimensions of interest. By contrast, variable-oriented codes served a more limited function in the coding operations. These codes only came into play in the coding operations relating to the respondent's background characteristics, characteristics such as sociodemographic attributes, occupational fields, employment contexts and the like (Sivesind 1999: 365-7).

The mechanics of the coding process were simple and straightforward, but very time-consuming.<sup>61</sup> The process began with the formulation of some general problematics which could give direction to my initial attempts to classify and categorize the phenomena under study in ways that would permit meaningful comparisons across the individual-level cases (see Strauss & Corbin 1998). For example, the coding which I carried out in order to lay the groundwork for the chapter dealing with the evening hours began with some basic descriptive coding of the respondents' practices and orientations vis-à-vis the weekday evenings. In subsequent rounds of classificatory coding, I grouped these practices and orientations into "clusters" distinguished by clearly defined properties and boundaries (see Strauss & Corbin 1998: Chp. 8). In the next rounds of coding, I took these clusters of routines, practices, and orientations and abstracted from them essential properties which could provide a toehold for a useful theory-frame. For example, when re-coding the interview material from the respondents who habitually worked late into the

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<sup>60</sup> Sivesind (Sivesind 1999) defines theme-codes as codes attached to "text-bits with a more or less clear relevance for a certain theme" He goes on to write that theme-codes may signify multidimensional variation and therefore lack the structure of a variable-code.

<sup>61</sup> I did manage to speed up the process, however, by using a qualitative data analysis program (MaxQDA). This program enabled me to integrate all of the interview material into one body of text and rapidly divide up this corpus of text in whatever ways were most useful for the data analysis.

evening, I noticed that their orientations came in two "flavors." The first flavor of orientation was an orientation organized around the principle of heeding only the signals given by one's workplace social environment and one's significant others outside this environment. This orientation was characteristically American. The second flavor of orientation, exemplified by the French respondents, was organized around the principle of behaving in line with expectations attached to status group affiliation. A similar bifurcation in orientational patterns appeared when I analyzed the interview material from respondents who often left the office relatively early. With respect to these instances of evening orientations, the same pattern of attending exclusively to the signals given by one's workplace environment turned up among the American respondents. These American early leavers also attended to the signals of their workplace, except that their workplaces gave them the license to quit early. Again, however, many of those who respondents who habitually left their offices at 5:00 PM or before did so because they felt it was part and parcel of a "normal" daily round. This flavor of early departure was visible among the Norwegian respondents who felt that, in leaving the office before 5:00 PM, they were acting in a "responsible" manner befitting someone who had or would have familial responsibilities requiring them to be at home at a "reasonable" hour.

In the final round of theoretically-driven coding associated with this problematic, I started to re-coded the same interview material by applying particular theory frames borrowed from the symbolic interactionist work of Eviatar Zerubavel and Christena Nippert-Eng. Using these theory frames, I was able to reconceptualize these clusters of orientations as instances of two different processes, temporal benchmarking and temporal zoning, through which individuals constitute their engagement with particularly blocks of time. Once these clusters of orientations had been rendered in these "theory-laden" terms, it was a comparatively small step to arrive at theoretically informed explanations of their country-specificity.

## **Appendix D**

### **Comparative Approaches in Cross-National Research**

This study uses the comparative approach heuristically to shed light on patterns of similarity and dissimilarity between behaviors and orientations of actors living and working in three different macrosocial environments. The study is designed primarily as a discovery-oriented inquiry rather than an explanatory effort directed at finding the antecedents of cross-societal differences (or similarities) in predefined outcomes (Ragin 1987). However, the study does venture a number of explanatory claims dealing with such cross-societal differences in temporal zoning practices, hard work talk, and life trajectories. Insofar as it makes explanatory claims about the sources of cross-societal differences in these domains, it must grapple with some thorny logical complexities which afflict explanatory comparative studies of this kind.

Let's say for the sake of argument that we are designing a study which takes matched individuals' career trajectories as its focal dimensions of comparison and individuals as the relevant unit of comparison. These units of comparison can only be studied as embedded units, as they almost certainly live out their lives as members of families, communities, organizations, occupational groups, and so forth. But these embedding structures and contexts are themselves folded into higher-order social structures such as sectors and institutional realms, subsocietal structures which form the backbone of society (Smelser 1997). Only at the topmost level of this ladder do we find the societal "systems" typically designated by the names of concrete countries (e.g. France) (Przeworski & Teune 1970: 30-7).

Given the presence of these intervening layers of social structure between the unit of comparison and the societal level of social organization, it is important to consider the possibility that any observed differences between the dimensions of comparison attached to individuals originate in the differences between the local life context factors rather in the more "remote" (Lamont 1992) societal systems enfolding these social structures. To put this point slightly differently, if we want to cast the intersocietal differences or "societal effects" (Maurice & Sorge 2000) as the solitary *explanandum*, it is necessary to exclude the possibility of causal contributions on the part of these lower-level social structures which constitute the local environment shaping individual's immediate life contexts. But this feat is almost impossible in practice, because we would need to actually hold all of these life context factors constant across societies. In order to be sure that intersocietal differences were the culprits, we would need to match every individual in our two groups of individuals with regard to every possible life context factor, including their family backgrounds, same educational paths, friendship networks, residential communities, employers, and so on (see Crompton & Birkelund 2000: 336). While nothing prohibits such a complete pairwise matching in terms of life context factors in principle, in practice it proves very difficult to find empirical candidates. Even Crompton and Birkelund, the researchers who pursue this logic the furthest, only match their British and Norwegian respondents on their postgraduate training and their context of employment, leaving such life context factors as their families of origin to vary.

If, however, we cannot hold all of the life context factors constant across the societal cases, by far the likeliest scenario for this kind of comparative case study, then we have to settle for a less ambitious implicit causal model. We are forced in this situation to relinquish our aim of looking at intersocietal variation as the only possible factor responsible for the observed variation in individual-level dimensions of comparison. We have to embrace a kind of causal agnosticism as to the *explananda's* level of social organization (Przeworski & Teune 1970: 26)

and admit the possibility that the different life context factors affecting the sets of individuals are responsible for the observed individual-level differences.

As this dissertation is not in a position to hold such differences in life context factors constant across the societal environments, it must adopt this agnostic stance. It cannot say for certain that intersocietal differences alone account for the observed differences in the individual-level dimensions of comparison. But this agnosticism need to be a liability in an exploratory "discovery-oriented" (Luker 2009) study of this kind. The objective of this study is not to single out one particular kind of determinant - either an intersocietal difference, a subsocietal difference, or a difference in life context factors - as the sole causal factor responsible for the observed differences in individual-level and group-level dimensions of variation. Rather, the point is to discover the range of possible factors at all these levels of social organization. For example, in the chapter dealing with counterpressures to work devotion among the Norwegian respondents as compared to their American and French peers, the life context factors (for example, differences in social ties between the Norwegian, American, and French respondents), share the stage with subsocietal factors (the institutional regimes of the employment systems in the three countries), and intersocietal factors (macrocultural differences between the three countries relevant to the weight accorded work versus leisure and family life).

Moreover, the attempt to single out societal and intersocietal differences as the ultimate causal factors responsible for differences in dimensions of comparison associated with lower-level social phenomena and entities can easily founder upon the rock of incommensurability (Steinmetz 2004) and the need for a *tertium comparationis*, the infamous "third of comparison" which rescues the two cases from this incommensurability (Sørensen 2008: 312).

The puzzle of incommensurability and the *tertium comparationis* arises with particular force in case-based comparisons where the *explananda* is predefined as a societal-level factor. In such a situation, the *explananda* has a double existence as a commensurable entity (a societal pattern comparable to other patterns) and an incommensurable entity (a specific nation with a particular and singular history) (see Maurice & Sorge 2000: 30). Thus, the entity "France" can be conceptualized in a societal sense, as a "type of society" with particular values on transsocietal dimensions of variation such as levels of homogamy. But it can also be conceptualized in an incomparable sense, as a concrete country with a singular history and a singular constellation of subsocietal institutions.

It is easy for comparative case-oriented research to vacillate between these two alternative conceptualizations of the *explananda*. This tendency is particularly visible in Lamont's comparative work on French and American boundary-drawing categories. While Lamont frames her project as inherently hostile to the notion of "incommensurable" nation-specific characteristics (Lamont 1992: 2), she ends up incorporating the principle of incommensurability into her actual causal model anyway. When she explains the differences she observes in the boundary-marking talk of her American and French respondents, Lamont oscillates between the conceptualization of societies as bundles of transsocietal characteristics and as singular and incommensurable entities. This ambivalence comes to the fore when she discusses the macrocultural traditions which have percolated through French and American society and molded individuals' cultural repertoires in the two countries. When Lamont cites the French humanist tradition as the source of her French respondents' aversion to money, for example, she seems to be arguing that there is something specifically and particularly French

about this stance (Lamont 1992: 137-9).<sup>62</sup> And yet, she also proffers potential antecedents which can only be described as aspects of France, conceived as a bundle of mostly structural transsocietal characteristics. For example, she mentions the greater degree of job turnover and class mobility within the American employment system as contrasted with the French employment system as a difference which makes socioeconomic status more resonant as a marker of personal worth in the United States than in France. If this transsocietal property - the degree of job turnover - is really responsible for this cultural difference, then the antecedents of this difference do not lie in a phenomenon which could be considered singularly French. On the contrary, *any country* with the same rates of turnover and class mobility would present an equally hospitable environment for the diffusion of this kind of status criterion among upper-middle class men. In Lamont's study, then, the macrocultural *explananda* are conceived in a singular way (as specifically "French" or specifically "American") while the macrostructural *explananda* are conceived as intrinsically specific to the country, as a historically unique cultural constellation.

For a variety of reasons, I do not try to resolve this tension between particularizing and universalizing comparisons in this dissertation.<sup>63</sup> Rather, I take the "easy way out" by following Lamont and making use of both macrostructural *explananda* conceptualized in a universalist manner and macrocultural *explananda* conceptualized in a more particularist manner. While this strategy may not be perfectly satisfactory from a logical standpoint, it affords the greatest explanatory leverage over the empirical issues under investigation.

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<sup>62</sup> To give an example relevant to this dissertation, although the Grande École system may resemble educational systems in other countries (i.e. Japan) in particular respects, it is in many respects unique to France. Thus, if we find differences in the career trajectories of elite French workers and elite workers from other countries, we cannot rule out the possibility that these differences stem from their exposure to the uniquely French Grande École system rather than the "Frenchness" which they bring to their experiences as students. We cannot exclude the possibility that Germans, for example, would experience the Grande École system in a different way if they were exposed to it. Sorting out these two types of causal factors would, however, require some type of experimental or quasi-experimental research design (see Goldthorpe 2000: Chp. 7).

<sup>63</sup> It is obvious that, on a purely logical level, this "both-and" comparative strategy is not entirely satisfactory. After all, it fails to resolve the tension between the "particularist" mode (Friedberg 2000) of cross-national comparison which favors the analysis of societally specific phenomena and the universalistic mode which commensurates phenomena of interest such that no societal specificity is preserved. The most logically satisfactory solution, as Friedberg advises, is to shift the level of analysis to a *higher plane of abstraction* (Friedberg 2000: 63). At this higher plane, one could map the different configurations of transsocietal phenomena, grouping them into specifically national "articulations." While this solution sounds good in principle, it is entirely unclear how it would work in practice, particularly with regard to macrocultural phenomena and features, since macrocultural features are nowhere to be found in their analyses. After all, the only kinds of features which the proponents of the "societal effects" approach to cross-national

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