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The Social and Cultural Construction of the Work Life - Private Life Boundary in Three Countries: A Comparative Study of the Evening Hours in the Lives of Norwegian, French, and American Elite Professionals

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THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION  
OF THE WORK LIFE - PRIVATE LIFE BOUNDARY  
IN THREE COUNTRIES:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EVENING HOURS IN THE LIVES OF NORWEGIAN,  
FRENCH, AND AMERICAN ELITE PROFESSIONALS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes results from a study of the practices and orientations associated with the 5-9 PM hours. Drawing its data from a set of in-depth interviews carried out with comparable groups of elite business professionals in Paris, Oslo, and San Francisco, the study reveals the different ways in which this period is handled by the three groups of respondents. In each of the three countries, this slice of time is appropriated differently. In the San Francisco case, these hours can be used either for working life or for private life, depending on the life circumstances of the individual and his or her occupational and organizational affiliation. In Paris and Oslo, however, supra-organizational and supra-occupational temporal conventions assert themselves, contributing to a different kind of evening habitus. While the Parisian respondents are likely to approach these hours as a special kind of facetime reserved for the professional elite, the Oslo respondents treat this period as private time inaccessible to their employer. In the Parisian case, these hours are appropriated as a resource for the affirmation of an elite status group identity, that of the *cadre*. In the Oslo case, however, the professionals leave the office early so as to show their attentiveness to private life and family obligations. In this way, they demonstrate their characteristically Scandinavian appreciation of private life and their membership in a national-societal community defined in part by a specific mode of balancing working life against private life. Theorizing these findings in relation to various kinds of social temporality, the paper argues that these patterns of variation reflect differences in the stratification cultures of the three countries.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The comparative cultural study of temporal expectations and conventions, a relatively undeveloped area within sociology, affords the opportunity to examine issues pertinent not only to the sociology of time, but also to traditional sociological specialties of work, sociology of family, as well as the sociology of occupations and organizations. 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.

A host of social theorists have 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).

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).

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 disposing of this temporal period. By contrast with manual jobs tied to the clock, 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 even of their own accord, whether to outdo their peers, dramatize their commitment to the firm or the product, assuage guilt, enact the role of the "go-to-guy," or at the behest of 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.

But working late or leaving early, in any particular case, also hinges on the "normalizing" influences (Turner 2002: 164-8) associated with corporate units such as work teams, clients, and, at the most diffuse level, organizational cultures. Countless observational studies of corporate white-collar workplaces bear this out. One of Shih's Silicon Valley engineers, for example, explained to her that, though there were no rules in her workplace against leaving the office at 5:30 PM, such a practice was nevertheless out of the question (Shih 2004: 238). It was the desire to excel and perform well in her own eyes and the eyes of others that kept her in the office during the early evening hours:

My company is very demanding in that it is a highly competitive environment. So if you leave at 5 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...

Other studies report on the tendency of managers to pile on the work tasks such that professional employees have no choice but to stay through the evenings to complete them. One of Rutherford's respondents, a young investment banking manager working out of the bank's London office, conceded that he would be inclined to give the associates more work if he saw them "leaving at 6:30 PM" (Rutherford 2001: 272):

It is ludicrous for the young to work these hours and be sitting here at 10:00 at night.

On the other hand, if I saw someone regularly going home at 6:30 PM, then I'd think that he can't have much work to do and I'd better give him some more!

Such studies support the obvious conclusion that the expectations of their work environment have a profound impact on the ways in which professional workers and their managers handle the transition from working life to private life.

But what about other sociocultural influences on these boundary experiences, boundary expectations, and boundary decisions? Given the multiplicity of such normatizing influences and the fact that they originate in structures located at many levels of social organization, including corporate social units, categorical social units, institutional systems, and societal systems, it stands to reason that professionals encounter a diversity of normatizing influences when they make boundary decisions about where work ends and private life begins. These influences spring from the cultures associated with categorical units (gender groupings, ethnic groupings, status and class groupings) and, at a still higher level of social organization, institutional and societal orders (Turner 2002: 37-8, 40-47, 164-167). Indeed, as many ethnographic case studies have borne out, numerous sociocultural forces enter into these boundary expectations, including those originating in meso- and macro-level structures such as organizational cultures (Hochschild 1997, Kunda 1992), occupational

cultures (Fuchs-Epstein 1999), gender cultures (Rutherford 2001), and even industry cultures such as the culture of "Silicon Valley" (Cooper 2000).

In this comparative paper I show that, in particular social environments, these normatizing influences can come from a variety of more distant sources besides the colleagues, supervisors, clients and other elements of the local workplace environment. When it comes to these boundary decisions, these nonlocal normatizing influences are particularly salient and potent in the more corporatist European societies and much less salient and potent in the American social context. In order to explore these cross-societal differences, I use findings from a comparative study of the transition from work life to private life among professional elites in San Francisco, Oslo, and Paris, three cities located in three Western countries where contrasting stratification cultures prevail.<sup>1</sup>

## **METHODS AND DATA**

The study's distinctive research design and cross-societal perspective makes it possible to identify three types of evening habitus differentiated not only in terms of their overall orientation towards the evening - as a resource for working life, for private life, or for both working life and for private life - but also in terms of the relative contributions of personal, organizational, class-specific, and societal-institutional temporal conventions. As the analysis will make clear, even among individuals who confront similar demands on their temporal resources, share similar life circumstances, and occupy similar positions in the stratification orders of their societies, these evening routines vary in patterned ways along with the expectations which inform them. Capitalizing on the explanatory leverage afforded by a controlled three-country comparison, the study brings to light the significance of national-



societal context as an important factor in the shaping of the evening habitus and norms of temporal appropriation more generally.

The paper pins down the role played by temporal conventions in the construction of this crucial temporal zone by contrasting the ways in which three comparable sets of respondents orient themselves to the 5-9 PM hours. In order to explore these expectations, this paper takes advantage of data drawn from a carefully designed cross-societal controlled comparison (Lamont 1992) involving interviews with three quasi-matched sets of approximately forty elite business and technical professionals from each country. By ensuring the comparability of the three sets of respondents in terms of their educational and occupational profiles, the design opens the door to inferences about the effects of societal contexts on professionals' ways of appropriating the focal time period. Each group of corporate professionals is composed of professional men and women between the ages of 26 and 43 living and working in large urban centers within each country: San Francisco, United States, Paris, France, and Oslo, Norway. Generally more temporally constrained than older professionals, the elite but time-poor (Sullivan 2008) professionals within this age range are typically midway through the launching phase of their professional careers and often in the launching phase of their family careers as well, raising grade school-age children alongside their full-time professional careers (Moen 2003: 41, Bartolemé & Evans 1979).

In order to generate comparable sets of respondents sharing similar occupational and biographical profiles, the respondent pool was restricted to business and technical professionals (both men and women) in their late twenties through early forties. This "quasi-matching" recruitment strategy was devised in order to generate three similar sets respondents face comparable demands on their temporal resources. Within each of the three groups, every

family status is represented, ranging from single men and women to partnered childless men and women to parenting men and women with caretaking responsibilities for young children.<sup>2</sup>

While the respondents in my study are not necessarily representative of the average worker or even the average professional in terms of their education or career trajectories, they match up very well against one another. All full-fledged members of the business elites in their respective country, each set of respondents occupies an extremely privileged occupational position by virtue of their education, their earnings, and the prestige carried by their position and organizational affiliation. Many of the respondents work in extremely demanding business services fields such as corporate banking/finance, accounting, corporate law, and management consulting, while others work in slightly less demanding positions as line managers or internal consultants working in large companies. The vast majority of the respondents in each country either work or have worked for employing organizations ranking as some of the most prestigious organizations in these business services fields. Full-time professionals for at least four years, they are well acquainted with the amount of time and energy it takes to tackle the heavy workloads and tight deadlines which they confront on a daily and weekly basis.

Of the roughly forty respondents from each country, two-thirds are men and one-third women. The majority of both the men and women are partnered, whether married or cohabitating with a long-term partner, but each group includes single men and women as well. Because the samples in each country span men and women from their late twenties to their early forties, each group contained representatives of all three major family statuses: unpartnered and childless, partnered and childless, and partnered with children. All of the parenting professionals in the three countries live with their grade school-age children. While

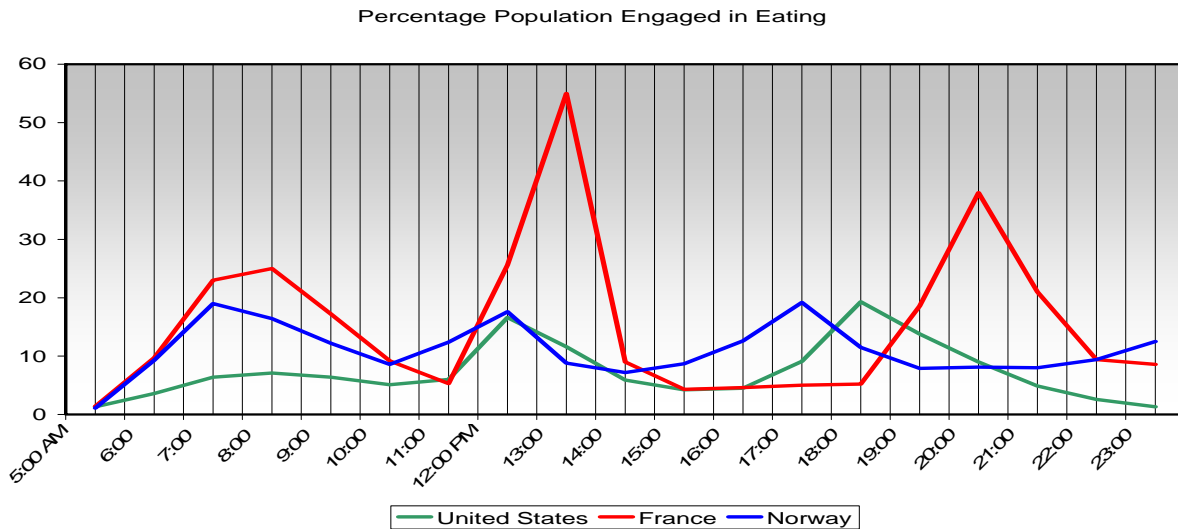
the parenting professionals clearly exercise less discretion over their work schedules and temporal budgeting than their nonparenting peers, both groups have to deal with time scarcities which impinge on the 5-9 PM hours.

The paper draws from interview material elicited through a series of open-ended questions posed to each member of these three groups concerning their evening hours routines and their perceptions of which activities are appropriate and inappropriate to the evening hours.<sup>3</sup> These questions were put to respondents as part of a longer face-to-face interview concerning practices and orientations surrounding working life and private life. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Those interviews which were carried out in French and Norwegian were translated into English in order to facilitate the coding process. Once the interviews were committed to paper, they were interpreted with the aid of an inductive coding scheme developed in MaxQDA. Applying this scheme to respondents' commentaries and narratives about their evening routines, I identified the prevailing practices, identity categories, and orientations which the respondents associated with these hours.

### **COMPARING THE THREE MACROCONTEXTS: TEMPORAL RHYTHMS**

While the three metropolitan areas in which the respondents live and work are not culturally representative of the "modal" metropolitan area in each country (see Lamont 1992), they differ markedly in terms of the rhythm of the daily round of professional and nonprofessional workers. As time diary data shows (see figures and appendix), the three societal contexts under study diverge when it comes to the structure of the workday. The most obvious and clearest indicator of this divergence is the timing of meals, a central social

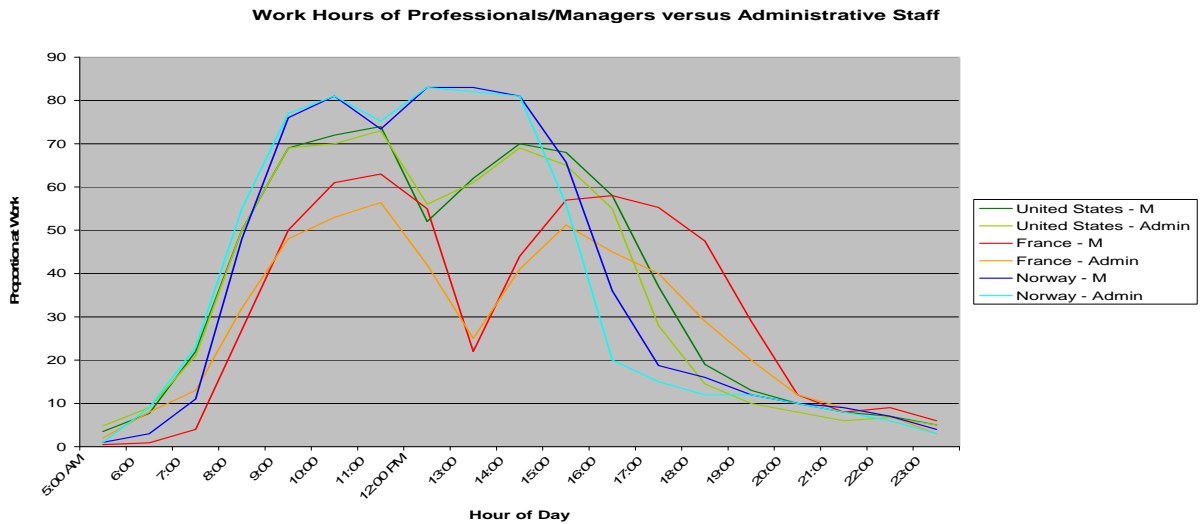
event in the lives of most individuals in any given society and a communal event which gives form to the daily routine (Warde et al 2007, DeVault 1991). This can be seen clearly in the following "tempogram" showing the proportion of the population engaged in eating during the hours of the day.



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:



In each country, the nonprofessional workers with fixed hours tend to arrive a bit earlier and leave later than their professional colleagues. 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 (see Figures 3 & 4 in Appendix). 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.<sup>4</sup>

## COMPARING THE THREE MACROCONTEXTS: STRATIFICATION ORDERS

Just as the three social environments under study diverge when it comes to daily work rhythms, they also differ with respect to the *stratification cultures* and forms of individualism affecting the lives of the business elite. While the elite Parisian professional lives and works in an extremely hierarchized social environment with a publicly sanctioned status order, and the American professional inhabits a social environment which stresses a generalized competition for achievement status, their Norwegian counterparts live and work in a relatively solidaristic, egalitarian, and cohesive environment. In this social setting, it is reasonable to suppose, the gulf between the lifestyle of elite business professionals and the lifestyles of other elements of the population is neither so pronounced nor so salient (Hofstede 2003, Tixier 1996).

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. D'Iribarne and others have described this stratification culture as "castelike" inasmuch as it is rooted in the all-encompassing distinction between the "base" and the "noble" D'Iribarne has gone so far to call modern France a modern-day "society of orders," (D'Iribarne 2006, 1989, Crozier 1964), while Bourdieu has described an elite educational system which establishes "genuine cultural boundaries" between the graduates of differently ranked institutions (Bourdieu 1996 [1989]: 150-3). In this system those who occupy the apex of the stratification order, the graduates of schools such as École Polytechnique, constitute a publicly elevated or "consecrated" elite deeply identified with the country's primary economic and political institutions. It stands to reason

that this publicly anointed elite wants to live up to this status by investing significant amounts of time and energy in their professional lives. In this environment, the investment in work can signal one's position in a society-wide status order. As Boltanski wrote in his classic study of *les cadres*, the *cadre* is often defined in France as someone "who does not count his work hours" (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 Parisian corporate workplace (Baudeolot & Gollac 2004, Delteil 2004, Lallement 2003: 72, Cousin 2004).

In Norwegian society, as the anthropologist Marianne Gullestad writes, 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 masks 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 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). Findings from cross-national "value"

surveys confirm Norway's status as an outlier in this regard. A recent *Eurobarometer* survey found that, among the populations of European nations, the Norwegians are the ones least likely to consider a successful career as a necessary ingredient of the "good life" (Eurobarometer 2001). A pronounced gap between the U.S. and Norway 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 (Clark 1998).

The San Francisco professionals live and work in a macrocontext which differs both from the French and the Norwegian environments. Here the members of the corporate elite live and work in a relatively nonhierarchical society without any explicitly formalized public status order society. 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). In the American stratification culture, individuals are expected to take part in a generalized competition to achieve levels of economic status whose outcome is supposed to reflect their efforts, talents, and commitment to the competition (Münch 1992). 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 order differs from the Norwegian stratification order.



## **TEMPORAL BENCHMARKING, TEMPORAL TERRITORIALIZATION, AND TEMPORAL COORDINATION**

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*, *temporal territorialization*, and *temporal coordination* within social networks.

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, the theory receded from view within the field of sociological theory and empirical sociology more generally. 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 normatizing influences at work in the boundary decisions of individuals allocating the 5-9 PM hours.

The idea of *temporal territoriality*, first introduced by Zerubavel (Zerubavel 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 Zerubavel and Nippert-Eng suggest, in many social contexts certain clock hours are collectively *flagged* 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).

The third conceptual lens derives from the "relational perspective" on time and temporality (Crang 2007). This lens trains attention on the need for individuals to coordinate their joint activities spatiotemporally with significant others, whether these activities are connected with work or private life. In an article about the "harried" lives of contemporary parenting professionals, Southerton argues that temporally "squeezed" people encounter

challenges when they try to align their own personal routines with the routines others within their social networks, both within the workplace and outside it (Southerton 2003: 14). These coordination challenges often arise during the evenings when individuals would like to spend time in joint leisure activities enjoyed in the company of friends or family members (Lareau & Weininger 2008). For the busy parenting professional, it is not always easy to synchronize one's departure from work with the departures of colleagues or one's arrival at home with the arrival of spouses, children, or other family members. For this reason, *temporal mismatches* between the focal individual and members of his or her intimate social networks can prove problematic during the evenings.

In this article I press these three 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 temporality and the "temporal habitus" (Elias 1992) as it is constituted in three different social settings where professionals are exposed to contrasting stratification cultures.

### **BOUNDARY EXPECTATIONS AND TEMPORAL TERRITORIALITY**

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.

Really, 5:30-8:30 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 from 5:30 to 8 PM 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...the *cing à sept [smiles]* is the payoff...*that's when we learn from each other and those above us....*

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:

If I don't have a project and I am off at five o'clock, what am I going to do afterwards? What would I do? How would I pass my time? No, no, I couldn't do it. I would get really bored.

These hours are for work, after all.

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 "tarry 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 at the company [physically] 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, she complained, did nothing to increase the "efficiency" with which people carried out their tasks. A Parisian attorney condemned the practice vehemently, praising the culture of "Northern Europe," where people could 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 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.

Unlike 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, these hours were designated as "family time" [*familietid*]. Tobias, a senior 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 freeing up 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 evening, or ... 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 1 am.

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>5</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.

#### **BOUNDARY EXPECTATIONS AND TEMPORAL BENCHMARKING**

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. Thus, the habit 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 PM, and could include an hour-long lunch break, but it often lasted until well after 8:00 PM. One young Parisian investment analyst for a large Parisian bank left the office early, around 7:30 PM 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."<sup>6</sup>

if you leave work at 7:30 PM, 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 12-14 hour day 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, is 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 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 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 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 expectations of an early departure from work was also entrenched in deeply rooted Norwegian understandings of 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 *culture of leaving 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.<sup>7</sup> 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."

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.

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. One manager at a medical device company explained that, in her workplace, there would be no stigma attached to leaving before 6:30 PM. In this company, anyone who wanted to continue working after 7:00 PM would find it necessary to restart the office lights themselves. 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" 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 2-3 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...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.

#### **BOUNDARY EXPECTATIONS AND TEMPORAL COORDINATION**

Just as there were cross-national differences in the reference targets which comparable Parisians, Norwegians, and San Franciscans drew upon in transitioning from work life to private life transition, there were also differences in the temporal coordination problems facing the partnered and parenting members of each group. Practically all of the partnered but childless Parisian professionals managed to go out with friends and romantic companions, men and women who also worked late and had late dinners, at least three evenings a week to restaurants or clubs, ensuring that they had a "social life" after the end of the workday. Investment banker Nicholas often managed to have dinner and drinks with his colleagues even at 9:00 PM. One French investment banker who regularly worked very late into the evenings made an arrangement with his live-in girlfriend regarding dinners. He would call

her at 7:00 PM and let her know whether he would be coming home by 10:00 PM. If he did not anticipate leaving the office by 9:30 PM, she would arrange to have dinner with someone else at 8:00 PM, her preferred dinner hour. There were more evening time constraints for those Parisian professionals with children at home. But these respondents endeavored to arrange their family's schedules so as to match up with their late evening work hours. Laurent, for example, made sure that his two young children would stay awake until 9:00 PM so that he could work until 8:30 PM and get home in time to see them. As he explained:

My children go to bed late. I have small children and they go to bed at 9:30 PM. This way I can see them. I don't know if other children go to bed late...although many small children must go to bed at seven PM.

Determined to see his children in the evenings, Laurent pressured his wife until she agreed to put them to bed later than she would have wanted. All of the Parisian women respondents who cared for young children employed paid childcare to attend to their children's needs during the 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM period, allowing them to extend their workdays into the evening. Like other French working professional women, for example, Jeannine, a technical consultant, paid for childcare for her two young children while she was at work. This childcare worker worked until 7:30 PM, enabling Jeannine to stretch her workday to at least 7:00 PM in the evening.

For the partnered Norwegian men, temporal mismatches in the evenings could create more serious problems when the man worked in a very demanding field. If he worked as a management consultant, for example, he might feel strong pressure to stay in the office past 5:00 PM. Thus, the Norwegian men with the most demanding jobs in consulting, finance, and law had to leave their romantic companions to their own devices during the crucial early

evening hours. Because of cultural understandings about companionship and relatively short workdays, particularly in the large public sector, a large proportion of the educated female workforce class left work at 5:00 PM or before. Because of the ensuing temporal mismatch, and their sense of guilt over their inability to provide companionship, these men had a comparatively hard time working during the 5-9 PM period. As one Norwegian management consultant put it, "there isn't anything particularly fun about working late hours when my girlfriend is at home waiting for me." Working late becomes particularly "onerous," as he put it, when the important members of one's social network are spending these hours enjoying themselves at the local pub. Stein, another management consultant, felt that his job at a global management consultancy, a job which required him to routinely work past 8:30 PM, made evenings lonely for his girlfriend, who "normally" got off work at 4:00 PM and wanted to spend her evenings by his side. This lack of synchrony in their departure times "took a lot of energy" from both of them:

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 [in terms of companionship].

The fact that a large proportion of educated working women in Oslo quit work before 5:00 PM had implications for those male professionals who, as single men, might have been tempted to linger in the offices past 5:00 PM. Working after 5:00 PM seemed "less attractive," as one man said, when girlfriends were waiting at home. One management consultant who had worked at the Norwegian unit of a global management consultancy no longer felt inclined to work late hours once he experienced a painful temporal mismatch between his workday and that of his short-hours girlfriend:

well, I met my now-wife [laughter]...I was spending a lot more time with her and she

finished a couple hours before me...and I mean basically, it wasn't as fun to sit at work working on some sort of analysis until 8:00 PM at night when you have a very attractive alternative [laughs]...

Another professional man, a software developer, had "naturally" cut an hour off his workday once he got seriously involved with his first post-college girlfriend, a schoolteacher who got off work early. A much younger Norwegian management consultant, Haldur, worked for an extremely demanding international management consultancy where long workdays were quite normal. Within the last few months, however, he had cut short his workdays, which used to end no earlier than 9:00 PM in the interest of seeing his girlfriend. A dental student with much more time on her hands, she pined for him in the evenings. As he 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. I want to, you know. And so I've had to become even more efficient at work...

The internalized pressure these men experienced to quit work relatively early was in part due to the restricted working hours of the educated women with which they were romantically involved. The Norwegian women professionals, for their part, valued the companionship they enjoyed as a result of the men's early departures from the workplace. For one woman married to a management consultant, men who spent their nights at the office to the detriment of their spouses and children were behaving "egoistically." She was happy that she and her husband had a "reasonable relationship" [*fornuftsforhold*] in which each person had "someone to be with" in the evenings.

If the male professionals felt pressure to come home at 5:00 PM in order to be in the company of their significant others, they experienced much more pressure when they assumed the responsibilities of parenthood because the 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM period was prized as

family time for parenting professionals of both sexes. The men as well as the women felt that it was imperative to spend as much of this time as possible with their children. Whenever children arrived, Haldur was prepared to cut his workday back even more dramatically, to ensure that he had time to "bond" with his children in the early evenings:

Q: But if you decide to have kids; would you continue working the same amount of hours as you do now?

A: No. At least, I would plan my days differently. No, I'd structure it in a different way.

Well ... then I guess you'd take the evenings off, between 5 PM and 7-8 pm, to develop a bond with your kids. And then you'd continue working after that. Take a 3 hour break with your kids.

Such a definite plan to clear this period of time for parenting activities did not emerge from the commentaries of any of the French or American men. This deeply felt imperative was reinforced by the early closing hours of the widely utilized state-sponsored kindergartens [*barnehager*] coupled with the rarity of paid childcare and the tendency of Norwegian men to share pickup duties with their spouses.

All of my Norwegian respondents with young children, both women and men, took full advantage of these state-sponsored kindergartens despite their restricted opening hours between 8 PM and 4:00 PM. Failure to pick up one's child at 4:30 PM would result in a fine. At the same time, they studiously avoided the kind of paid childcare help used by their French and American peers. A woman 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 job was 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.." 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. <sup>8</sup> As a male Norwegian manager at an energy services company explained:

...here 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.

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. Upon his arrival, he would have dinner and put his son to bed at 7:30 PM. It was much more "satisfying" [*tilfredstillende*] to be in their company at home as opposed to working in his office during these hours.

It was more common among the parenting Norwegian respondents than their Parisian and even their American peers to cease work between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM. During these hours they are supposed to enjoy the company of their spouse and children. If necessary, work can be resumed in the late evenings after 8:00 PM. While some of the French and the Americans put in an hour or so at home during these hours, almost every Norwegian respondent, both women and men, reported that they returned to work for more than two hours after putting their children to bed. One woman manager at a large Norwegian telecom



company put her daughter to bed at 7:30 PM and then would work from 8:00 to 11:00 PM at home. A male professional, a corporate attorney working in one of Oslo's most prestigious corporate firms, usually went back home around 5:00 PM or 5:30 PM and spent time with his son until 8:00 PM, whereupon he resumed working on his laptop.

Because the San Francisco respondents enjoyed more flexibility with respect to their appropriation of the evening hours, the temporal mismatch problems they encountered required fewer adaptations than the problems encountered by their Parisian or Norwegian counterparts. Unlike their Norwegian peers, the majority of the partnered but childless San Francisco men were in relationships with women who worked until at least 6:30 PM, often later, and so they rarely had to concern themselves with how the women were spending their evenings.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, they convinced themselves that their girlfriends and wives did not particularly mind their evening absences. These men were happy for the women to amuse themselves in solitude or with female friends. One newly married consultant worked extremely late into the night and spent much of the week on out of town consulting assignments while his wife got off work every day at 5:00 PM sharp. It was "very nice," he thought that she could find other women with whom to "hang out" after work during the week.

Even for the parenting professional men in San Francisco, such *temporal mismatches* during the evening caused relatively little concern. Those San Francisco parenting professionals of both sexes who wanted to see their children in the evenings were usually able to quit work early enough so that they could arrive home in time for a 7:30 PM or 8:00 PM bedtime story. Unlike the Parisian professional men, these men did not delay the child's

bedtime so as to prolong their own workdays. One male manager explained that he tried to leave himself enough time to spend "at least an hour" with his infant son in the evenings:

I try to leave work at around 5:30 PM so I can get home by 6:30 PM...of course, some days are harder than others...but I usually try to get home to see my son for at least an hour or so every night before he goes to sleep.

Among the several female San Francisco parenting professionals, all had some type of paid childminder who could, if necessary, take care of the during these hours. One woman enjoyed the services of a live-in nanny who could take care of the child's needs during this period. For this reason, these parenting professionals were not constrained in the same ways as their Norwegian counterparts who felt obliged to align their workdays with the opening and closing hours of the kindergartens.

Thus, for a variety of reasons, the temporal coordination problems which the partnered and parenting Parisians and the Norwegians encountered did not materialize in such strong forms in the lives of the partnered and parenting San Francisco respondents. Because the Americans did not live and work in social contexts where there was much pressure to leave work early or to stay late, they were spared the strong temporal alignment pressures vis-à-vis important members of their social networks like significant others and children which made their presence felt in the lives of their European counterparts.

## **TEMPORAL ORDERS AND STRATIFICATION CULTURES**

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, distinctive forms of temporal territorialization, and distinctive forms of temporal coordination.

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*.<sup>10</sup> In the Norwegian context, a more solidaristic, egalitarian, and homogeneous environment, the operative temporal conventions arise from society-wide norms about the appropriate placement of the transition from work life to private life and the best way to appropriate the 5-9 PM hours.<sup>11</sup>

The boundary expectations of the Oslo respondents mirror those of their Parisian peers inasmuch as they also reference normative 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 membership in a societal community. For the Norwegian professionals, leaving the office before 5:00 PM is what typical Norwegians or Scandinavians are supposed to do.<sup>12</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. Viewed from a cross-national perspective, the San Francisco case represents a particular kind of social context, a context where *distant temporal conventions* are relatively weak in comparison with the local temporal conventions. No other normatizing forces came into play for the San Francisco respondents beyond those originating in their immediate organizational and personal environment.

This is not to say that the Parisian or Norwegian respondents do not attend to the more immediate reference targets which occupy center stage for their San Francisco counterparts. In fact, the Norwegian and French respondents do pay close attention to the boundary

construction activities and orientations or their peers, coworkers, and the expectations of their employing organizations. 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 *noncadres*, *cadres*, and *cadres supérieurs*. 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 territorialization. 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 escape 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.

## **CONCLUSION**

While the paper'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 normalizing 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 emerge.

More specifically, the findings suggest that professional elites living and working in American society, with its distinctively loose daily rhythm and distinctive stratification culture, also face a distinctive set of temporal boundary expectations when it comes to the evening hours. The American respondents benchmark their boundary decisions only against reference targets within their workplace environment. They confront a weakly territorialized evening, and they encounter relatively few temporal coordination challenges.

By contrast, in the Parisian milieu, with its more hierarchic, formalized, and generalized status order (Jepperson 2002) and its "backloaded" daily rhythm, the evening hours become territorialized as working time. They also evolve into a temporal locus not only for "facetime," but a special type of facetime linked to reference targets attached to the *cadre*. 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 authority and responsibility within the organization (Baudeolot & Gollac 2003, Cousin 2003, Bourdieu 1989). In Paris the practice of working during these hours was linked to a status culture tying 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 *noncadres* who habitually leave earlier, around 6:00 PM. In this context, the evening hours are strongly territorialized as *social* work time, and the dominant temporal coordination challenges revolve around the need for parenting professionals to push back their children's bedtimes.

In the equally corporatist but more egalitarian and solidaristic Norwegian context, however, these expectations are eclipsed by those connected with membership in the national-societal community where most working people are supposed to make time for themselves and their families. In this social environment, making a temporal investment in private life becomes a way of demonstrating membership in what Jepperson calls a "national social

community" (Jepperson 2002, 1992, Parsons 2007 [1979]). The expectations these professionals bring to the transitional period between 5-9 PM signal their kinship with the less occupationally privileged Norwegians who wanted to keep these hours for themselves rather than donating them to their organization or using them to affirm their position in a transorganizational status hierarchy.<sup>13</sup> This presumption provides for the temporal integration and coordination of the society as a whole, not only within particular status-groups. In this social setting the transitional hours are also territorialized, but as private time rather than work time. Here the dominant temporal coordination issues pertaining to the evening hours address either the alignment of partnered men's work hours with those of their female significant others or the alignment of parenting professionals' work hours with the restrictive opening hours of the kindergartens.

Given this cross-national contrast, it is clear that these temporal expectations vary across these societal contexts, even among comparable groups of individuals who occupy analogous parts of social space (Bourdieu 1989). More specifically, these expectations reflect the underlying stratification culture (Lamont 1992, Smelser 1973: 75) prevailing in the society in which they emerge. 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 the two European contexts, such influences share the stage with expectations deriving from other kinds of reference targets; a status group in the Parisian case and a national-societal communities in the Oslo case. Thus, *within the achievement-oriented yet egalitarian stratification culture in which the San Francisco group lives and works, we see both more organizational and suborganizational benchmarking and*



*less temporal territorialization of the evening hours.* In the Parisian context with its more hierarchic and corporatist stratification culture as well as in the Norwegian context with its "tender," (Hofstede 2003, 1998) and solidaristic stratification culture, the benchmarking addresses status groups and national-societal communities rather than the immediate workplace, and the evening hours are more strongly territorialized. Finally, in both of the European countries we can observe more temporal rigidities (Zeruvabel 1981) around the evening hours and thus more temporal coordination challenges.

This paper provides an opening towards a comparative sociology of collective temporal norms as they are manifested in the evening routines of elite professional workers in different societal settings. Unveiling the various temporal expectations at play in these three settings, the study enriches our understanding of such phenomena as temporal territorialization, temporal benchmarking, and temporal coordination. It paves the way for a more complete and systematic examination of the linkage between these temporal patterns and the stratification cultures in which they emerge.

But it also has implications for theories of structural differentiation, social integration, and the micro-meso-macro links bridging the interactional, organizational, and societal levels of social life (Collins 1988, Alexander et al 1987). 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 (Merton 1984, Zeruvabel 1981). 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. From of the employed professional, organizational time and work time often take precedence over the subordinate temporal orders

of self time and family time, and the "temporal regime" (Sabelis 2007) of the organization may dictate where the work - life boundary falls.<sup>14</sup>

But these temporal regimes themselves reflect less localized temporalities within the societal context in which both the individual and the organization are operating. This *collective temporal habitus* (Elias 1992) varies across different societies with contrasting stratification systems. From the individual perspective, the various temporal orders are not always harmonized with one another. This dissonance is particularly evident in the Parisian case, where many professionals deride the imperative to work in the evening as inefficient and pointless facetime. In the Norwegian case, on the other hand, it is the temporal regime of the organization, not the routine of the individual, which can sometimes conflict with the generalized mandate to leave work early. None of my Norwegian respondents, even the most work-centric, disparaged or repudiated the practice of making time for oneself or one's family in the early evening. As for the San Francisco respondents, the temporal regime of the organization was not constrained by any larger cultural pressures. Some organizations (investment banks for example) worked their professional employees around the clock while others did take steps to facilitate "family-friendly" work hours. Moreover, contrary to many images of the "workaholic" American manager or professional (Philipson 2002), many of the San Francisco respondents, though not all, approached their evening routines as mere strategic accommodations to the demands of an illegitimately "greedy" (Blair-Loy 2003, Coser 1974) work environment.

Given the findings of the study, it seems clear that professional workers living and working in the San Francisco context, and perhaps other urban American settings, tend to form a temporal habitus which reflects the normative pressures of their immediate work

environment more strongly than other normative pressures. This work environment, in turn, operates relatively autonomously with respect to higher-level temporal orders. In both the French and the Norwegian cases, however, both the workplace and the extraorganizational environment foster temporal expectations which either extend or compress the working day and which supply different temporal benchmarks to the professional worker. In these settings where the boundary decisions are informed by norms originating in higher-level social structures, the organizational environment cedes some of its autonomy with respect to these boundary decisions to these higher-level structures.

As we have seen with our mapping of cultural and experiential processes such as *temporal benchmarking*, *temporal territorialization*, and *temporal coordination*, the three groups of similarly situated business professionals do not allocate the evening hours in the same ways. They are subject to different sociocultural and structural pressures which impinge on them both directly and indirectly through their organizational environments and their extrawork social networks. Thus, as this analysis shows, 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.*

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the paper, it does not matter whether the culturally defined unit of comparison is the country or the city, as either type of contextual environment performs well as a "revelatory case" (Yin 1994: 45).

<sup>2</sup> A variety of recruitment techniques were used to identify and recruit the first-string respondents in each of the three countries where the study took place. First, I contacted several elite educational institutions which catered to business-bound students in each of the three countries. In Norway the three most prominent educational institutions which perform this function are *BI* in Oslo, *Norges Handelshøyskole* located in Bergen, and *NTNU* located in Trondheim. In France, with a larger and much more hierarchical order of higher education, those who aspire to business services positions in banking, finance, accounting, and management consulting must complete their educations at one of the top institutions, a list which includes the Grande Écoles (*École Polytechnique*, *École des Hautes Etudes de Commerce*, *École des Mines*) and several private business schools including the famous INSEAD and *ESSEC*. In the US, the young men and women who go on to positions in these fields are channeled through a larger number of highly selective public and private MBA-granting business schools. The names of prospective respondents matching the search criteria (employment in management consulting, banking, or accountancy) were culled from the alumni lists maintained by these schools. Through this procedure I secured a number of potential respondents in each city. I then recruited another set of respondents through snowball sampling procedures built around referrals to members of the first-string respondents' social and professional networks (Weiss 1995: 24). Through this recruiting procedure, I was able to add another eight to twelve second-string respondents to each of the three groups. The final recruitment strategy targeted employing organizations as recruitment channels. For each country, I assembled lists of prospective employing organizations which employed substantial numbers of professionals and managers within the age range I had specified. Building a list of ten firms in each country (three banks, three technology companies, two consultancies, and two finance firms), I proceeded to contact HR personnel in order to obtain the names of potential interviewees. This procedure resulted in another ten to fifteen additional respondents in each country. In addition to matching the respondents on these individual-level biographical and occupational attributes, I have also matched them as closely as possible with respect to their general levels of success at work.

<sup>3</sup> The interviews were all carried out with the respondents physically present and recorded with a digital recorder. As the interviews also covered many other topics in addition to the theme of the daily routine, they often lasted an hour or more. Of the interviews with the Parisian and Oslo respondents, the majority were conducted in the respondent's native language. A minority of the interviews were carried out in English, but only with those respondents entirely fluent in the language. All the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded with the aid of MaxQDA2, a software package which enables analysts to identify and attach codes to similar themes in different interviews.

<sup>4</sup> Just as the three countries differ from each other in terms of general social rhythms, they also represent three different kinds of working time regimes, as defined by comparative macrosociologists interested in time use (Gershuny 2002). Cross-national studies of these working time regimes provide evidence which suggests that each of these countries has a distinctive working time profile. In Norway, a Scandinavian social democratic state, the vast bulk of the population (both men and women) is employed at full-time work. The proportion of private sector managers and professionals is relatively low in Norway, although the country has an extremely high rate of labor force participation overall (Birkelund & Sandnes 2003). With regard to working time, Norway ranks second from the bottom of the worldwide annualized work hours index (Burgoon & Baxandall 2004). France, with a

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somewhat lower rate of total labor force participation, also does not have such a high proportion of the workforce employed as full-time managers and professionals. While a larger proportion of the American working population is employed in professional and managerial occupations, as contrasted with both France and Norway, a significantly larger percentage of the American workforce works "extreme" hours, defined as over 60 hours per week on a regular basis (Hewlett 2007, Jacobs & Gerson 2004). According to 2004 ILO data, almost 10% of employed American men work over 60 hours a week on a regular basis. In France, this figure is under 4% and in Norway it is under 2% (ILO). Other statistical evidence confirms this picture. Over 30% of employed American men regularly work over 50 hours a week in 2002, while this was true of only 17% of employed French men and 8% of employed Norwegian men. This high rate of long work weeks is clearly related to the absence of comprehensive society-wide or industry-wide work hours legislation, as is the case in both France and Norway (see Lallement 2003 for France and Torp & Barth 2001 for Norway).

<sup>5</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>6</sup> Although the Parisian professionals treat 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. SM, a manager at a Parisian bank which served governmental clients, worked until 8:30 PM most evenings. He was "motivated 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>7</sup> The contrast between the Parisian and the Oslo cases 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 4PM 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 skance at her early departures but marveled at her ability to start the workday at 7:00 AM.

<sup>8</sup> A comparatively a 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.

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<sup>9</sup> Some of the single San Francisco respondents whose social networks consisted of the underemployed as well as the overemployed were happy that they could leave the office at 6:00 PM and find others who also had free evenings. Donald, a corporate attorney and a transplant from New York City, found it refreshing to live in a city where some educated people were ready to "play" at 6:00 PM, a situation very different than he experienced in New York, a city where "*everyone* works ridiculous hours."

<sup>10</sup> Generally, the hours after 9:00 PM are considered private time in the Parisian context. Further, relatively fewer of the older Parisians worked at home on their laptops; they were somewhat more "segmentalist" (Nippert-Eng 1996) than their San Francisco and Oslo counterparts in regards to the evening hours.

<sup>11</sup> This macrocultural imperative is also well-institutionalized in the early closing hours of government offices across Norway. Almost every public sector office in Oslo, for example, closes at or before 4:00 PM, much to the consternation of foreign travelers. The publicly funded daycare centers, which are popular among parents of all classes, close at 4:30 PM at the latest, making it necessary for many employed professionals to leave work early in order to pick up their children.

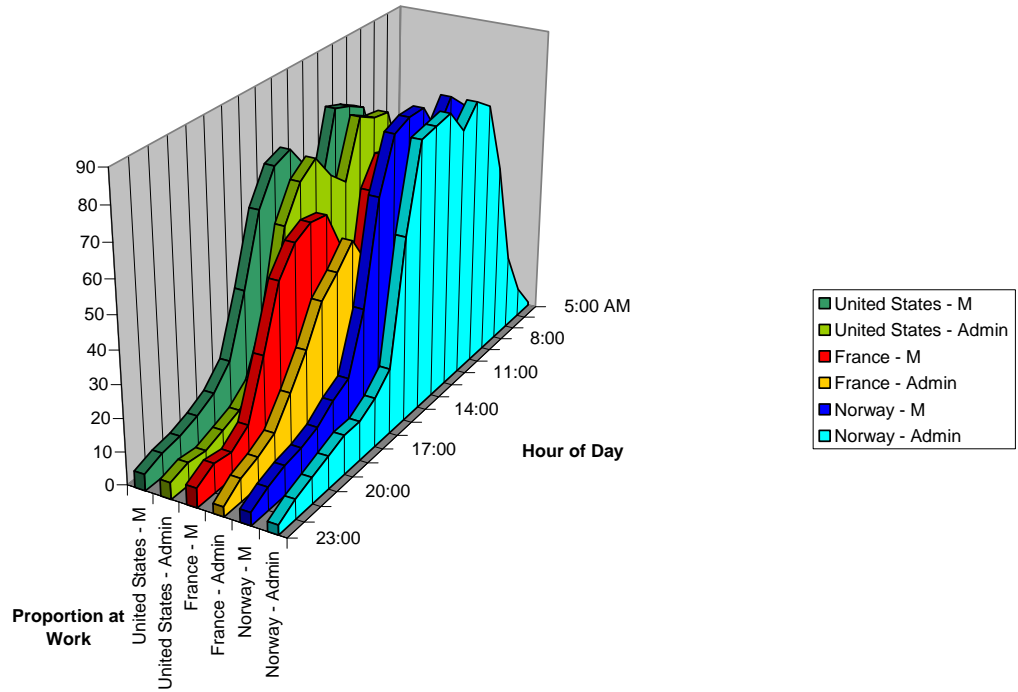
<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that the Norwegians necessarily worked fewer hours than the Parisians. In fact, not only did none of the Norwegian respondents take over an hour off work for lunch, as half of the Parisian respondents did, but three times as many Norwegians as Parisians spent over an hour working at home during weeknights, typically between 9:00 and 11:00 PM.

<sup>13</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.

<sup>14</sup> Governmental policies and institutional conventions operate at the highest levels of temporal stratification, constraining employing organizations to varying degrees in how long they can legitimately extend the workday, the workweek, and the work year.

## Appendix

Tempogram of Workday: Professionals and Administrative Staff



### Notes Regarding Data Sources for Figures (Time Diary Studies)

Country	Year	Collector	Format	Months	Response Rate
France	1998	INSEE	Left-behind	12	88%
Norway	2000	SSB	Left-behind	12	50%
United States	2003	BLS	Recall	12	57%

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