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Expanding the Boundaries of Work-Family Research A Vision for the Future

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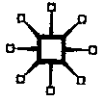
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more useful frameworks have emerged from the "global/transnational" body of research, which focus on the analysis of global-local linkages and the construction of gender, selfhood, identity and work-family life (Bast 2009; Bergeron 2001; Freeman 2001; Mirchandani 2004; Perlow and Weeks 2002; Foster 2005). By considering "culture" from a multi-layered perspective (Hummel et al. 2007) located within socio-historical and institutional contexts (Bamberger 2008; Ozblgin et al. 2011) a more fine-grained understanding of the work-life relationship can emerge.

This chapter examines the work-life experiences of call centre workers in a large global outsourced firm in India. Three questions are examined: (1) How are work-life policies adapted and implemented in Indian call centres? (2) Are there regional differences in the ways in which work-life conflict and policy availability are reported by employees? (3) Are there subgroup differences in the work-life experiences of Indian call workers? We structure our argument as follows: first, we examine global outsourcing and call centres in India. Second, we consider the socio-cultural discourses on work-family life in the Indian context and explore national level policy provisions. Thirdly, we briefly discuss our theoretical approach and method, and finally present our findings drawing on a cross-sectional survey and qualitative interviews.

Global outsourcing and the call centre industry in India

In recent years, the rapid growth in information communications technology (ICT) and service sector industries has led to new business models and strategies for human resource management (HRM) (Budhwar et al. 2009). Business process outsourcing (BPOs) and the IT-enabled services (ITES) industry have mushroomed in India, due to the strong state support towards liberalization, modernization of technical infrastructure and a vast supply of highly educated English speaking workers (Upadhyay 2009). India has emerged as the leading destination for global outsourcing, with nearly 690,000 workers directly employed in IT services and 553,000 in the ITES/BPO sector (National Association for Software and Services Companies [NASSCOM 2007]). While there have been numerous studies on the IT industry in India (Heeks 1998; Perlow and Weeks 2002; Upadhyay 2009), we focus on "call centres" at the lower end of the knowledge economy. Call services refer to "specialist technology intensive offices that (...) deliver services to customers over the telephone, replacing or complementing face-to-face interactions with the public" (Belt et al. 2002:366). Work organization in call centres has often been depicted as rigidly structured and heavily monitored, leading to descriptions such as "bright satanic offices", "electronic panopticons" and "assembly lines in the head" (Bain and Taylor 1998, 2000; Taylor and Bain 1999). Despite claims of shifting away from the "old economy" models characterized by bureaucratic controls and hierarchical

2 Do Work-Family Policies Really "Work"? Evidence from Indian Call Centres

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Within western liberal market economies, organizations have increasingly begun to develop "work-life initiatives" to help workers integrate their work and family lives (Kossek and Lambert 2005). Employers can provide work-family policies for multiple reasons: to improve business efficiency (Rapoport et al. 2002); to attract, recruit and retain employees (Carless and Winthe 2007) and to promote gender equality in the workplace (Dreher 2003). There has been an increasing awareness, however, that work-life policies alone are insufficient without a concomitant change in organizational culture (Allen 2001; Lewis 1997; Thomas and Ganster 1995; Thompson et al. 1999). While this is a progressive step, examination of "culture" at only the organizational level can often subvert attention from national contexts, which may support or hinder organizational practices (Haas and Hwang 2007; Kossek et al. 2010). Further, globalization and increasing mobility of capital and labour have made the international context even more important.

A major limitation in current work-life research is the predominant focus on western countries, while relatively little is known about developing countries contexts. Over 94% of work-family research originates from the west, (especially USA and the UK) with barely 6% of studies from other parts of the world (Casper et al. 2007). This suggests that most studies, directly or indirectly, accept the dominant western discourses on work-family life (see Lewis and Rajan-Rankin, this volume). While a small but burgeoning body of literature has begun to examine work-life issues in non-western contexts (Arjee et al. 2005; Choi 2008; Namastayam and Zhao 2007; Yang 2005), few studies have explicitly examined cultural variables (Powell et al. 2009).

Indian child is socialized within gender-segregated normative frameworks where the "masculine" and the "feminine" are taken to represent the public and private domains (Kakar 1978). Both the Indian workplace and the family have undergone considerable change in recent years, especially with globalization and liberalization of the economy. The rise in dual-earner families has led to a shift in sex-role perceptions, allocation of household responsibilities and fathers' involvement in childcare (Bharat 1995; Ramu 1987; Sekaran 1992). Despite this, male-breadwinners remain dominant, especially in relation to unpaid care and family responsibilities (Larson et al. 2001; Vera-Sanso 2002). This suggests that gendered norms about work-family life persist, even as workplaces have begun to adopt more gender-neutral language.

These cultural differences in the framing of the work-family interface in India filter through to the organizational level as well. Edwina Plo's (2007) insightful account of Indian epistemologies highlights the ways in which IIRMI strategies are located within distinct socio-cultural contexts in Indian firms. For instance, religion, caste and class in the Indian context and the colonial legacy can influence work cultures such that power inequalities are replayed between Indian managers and workers (Dehejia and Dehejia 1993). These power inequalities are often couched within paternalistic and familistic models of work practices, wherein the Indian workplace "often resembles the extended Indian family in their qualities of hierarchy, loyalty, paternalism, patronage, and mutual dependency" (Larson et al. 2001:207). Indeed, Sahay and Waisham (1997:207) have noted that Indian managers often promote notions of caring and dependency among workers in an attempt to engender organizational loyalties. While workplace norms and practices are increasingly becoming westernized (Datta 2005), familial norms remain steeped in traditional normative frameworks. This clash between traditional and modern ideologies towards work and family life can explain in part, employee experiences of work-family conflict in the urban Indian context (see Saunders 2002).

Work-family policies and the IT sector in India: a systemic analysis

While India does not have formal work-life policies per se, there are in existence numerous statutory policies that regulate work and family life. The Indian Constitution adopted in 1950 is the cornerstone document for many of these provisions (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2006:1674). At the national level, several noteworthy legislations emerged during the post-independent period including the Factories Act (1948), the Employee State Insurance Act (1948), Maternity Benefits Act (1961), the Equal Remuneration Act (1971) (1869), and anti-sexual discrimination policies under the Indian Penal Code (1869, 1997). Given the vast disparity between the rural poor and the urban rich in

organizations, these so called "new workplaces" are a far cry from the flexible management practices they were originally envisioned to be (Thompson and Warhurst 1998). As Upadhyay (2009:7) observes, "top-down and direct techniques of management are often the norm in Indian software organizations". By invoking the image of the "English butler" who must know his master's every need, Upadhyay's study indicates that the organizational control in the IT sector is based on a slavish acceptance that "the customer always comes first". Given that call centres in India cater primarily to markets in the USA and Western Europe where there is a time lag of 12 to 14 hours, call agents mostly work evenings and nights. This arrangement could be viewed as the "colonization of time" (Mirchandani 2004:363), where global capitalism is replayed in the relationship between the Indian call agent and the western client.

An international division of labour is evident in call centres, where high-end knowledge work is often retained in western countries and low end tasks are outsourced to third world workers (Russell and Thite 2008). A major attraction for outsourcing customer service work to India is the availability of cheap labour – Indian call agents earn the lowest wages compared to other global competitors (Ng and Mitter 2005). This suggests that despite the "image building" efforts of the IT industry (Upadhyay 2009), in reality call centre work is poorly paid and highly informalized (Mitter et al. 2004). In the context of export-oriented sectors of employment, studies have found that the drive for cheap labour is contiguous with a preference for women workers (Ghosh 2001; Razvi and Pearson 2004). Call work has often been viewed as epitomizing feminine characteristics of "passivity, servicing and generous attention to customer needs" (McDowell and Court 1994:773). The image of call workers as "cybercooles" (Ramash 2004) has been challenged and there has been evidence of individual agency (D'Crux and Noronha 2006; Mirchandani 2004) and collective resistance and the development of trade unions (Taylor et al. 2009). Despite this, there remains a dearth of research on employees' experiences of work-life balance in Indian call centres; our study attempts to address this gap in the literature.

Conceptualizing work-family life in India

The terminology of "work-family balance" may be new to corporate culture in India (Gambles et al. 2006), but discussions about the ordering of work, family and life date back to ancient religious texts. *The Laws of Manu* and the *Dharmasstras* (legal edicts) provide instructions about gender-specific roles in relation to paid and caring roles (Saunders 2002). According to these texts, the concept of *dharma* provides an overarching doctrine on the "ways of living". Work and family obligations are hence viewed as part of the threads of human living which are woven together to create a harmonious existence, with family often taking precedence (Sharma and Kunnungo 1997). The

...enriching work-family life. This approach also enables a broader scope for challenging universality of effects (Starou and Kilianotis 2010) and proposes alternate ways to conceptualize cultural effects at national and regional levels. Finally, we also draw on gendered organizational theories, in particular on the "ideal worker" and "ideal parent" models (Acker 1990, Williams 2000) that illustrate the gendered ways in which work-family roles are constructed within organizations. Having outlined the theoretical premises) of our study, we turn to our methodological approach.

Method

A mixed method design was used combining a cross-sectional survey of 1001 customer service representatives (CSR) with 50 in-depth interviews. Survey data were collected in 2006 from a large Indian BPO company called Echo² with branches in Chandigarh (Northern India), Hyderabad (Southern India) and Pune (Western India). About 2825 survey questionnaires were distributed and 881 completed questionnaires were received (response rate of 31%). The sample consisted mainly of young (60% were aged 18-25 years), highly educated (62% were graduates), male (39% were female), single (25% were married) and childless employees (1% had children). This demographic is broadly consistent with the workforce profile of the Indian ITES industry (NASSCOM 2008a). The questionnaires included standardized measures such as the Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer et al. 1996), General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg 1980), Social Networks Questionnaire (Magliano et al. 2006) as well as self-report scales examining policy availability/take-up. Recognizing the need to delve into the subjective experiences of call workers, a follow-up qualitative study was conducted in 2010. In-depth interviews coupled with visual techniques were used to intensively explore concepts of culture, worker identity and work-life integration. By drawing on this rich range of data sources, quantitative data were triangulated with first person narrative accounts.

Findings

Three main themes are explored in our findings. First, we examine employer policies for work-life balance and how they have been culturally adapted and implemented in Indian call centres. Second, we explore regional differences in the ways in which call workers experience work-family conflict/balance and policy availability. Third, we consider sub-group differences in work-life conflict/balance and draw on the "ideal worker model" (Acker 1992) to shed light on these trends.

Work-life policies: paternalism or gender equality?

Company Echo is one of India's top 20 BPO companies providing voice and non-voice customer services to clients in India and abroad. With a strong

India, there have been two distinct streams of work-life policies. While on the one hand, anti-poverty policies promoting family and child welfare have been aimed at the unorganized rural poor, gender equality policies within organizations have focused more on work-life integration for middle-class urban Indians.

India has a federal system, and for most part state level policies implement national policy mandates. The Shops and Commercial Establishments Act (1962) remains the main legislative measure at the state level that regulates working hours, sick leave, worker compensation and other employee welfare concerns. In addition, the National Association for Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) serves as a regulatory body which oversees companies within the IT sector. The relaxation of labour laws, such as the removal of the "night ban on women's work" (Sankaran 2003) has enabled call centres to operate during evening/night-time hours and attract a female labour force, with significant consequences for their work and family life. As gradually, the term "work-family balance" is entering corporate culture in India, the impact of such policies on their health and well-being is being acknowledged by policy makers (Desai 2007).

Indian organizations also provide human resource policies to recruit and retain employees. Employers have introduced flexible working arrangements and part-time options to promote gender equality and reduce job-stress (Komaraju 1997). Organizations concerned with high attrition rates have introduced job incentives to reward employee loyalty, although the "bottom-line" still drives such policy initiatives. Another major thrust towards work-life policies comes from transnational parent company mandates. In a comparative study Foster and Prasad (2005) noted that parent multinational companies in the USA did provide a range of work-family benefits, but only a few were translated to the local subsidiaries in Indian firms. Thus, organizational policies for work-life balance may range from family-friendly policies and flexibility arrangements to "perks" and incentives to reduce attrition and reward loyalty.

Theoretical framework

Given the complexity of work-family discourses in India and the multiple layers by which policies and cultural contexts can be understood, we have drawn on multiple theoretical frameworks to inform our study. The "transnational" approach to work-life integration (Poster 2005) is particularly relevant. In this approach, organizational dynamics are viewed as a product of social and cultural institutional frameworks which inevitably include power that can take both local and transnational forms. The individualism-collectivism paradigm (Rosaldo 1974; Triandis 1980) also provides a useful lens for analysing work-life issues within a global context. The transference of global forms of work from individualistic societies into collectivist societies could shed light on specific cultural norms and values

Table 1. Work-life policy availability and take-up in company echo (n = 881)

Work-life policies	Availability		Take-up	
	No. of employees	% of employees	No. of employees	% of employees
Maternity leave	441	50.06	35	7.94
Part-time work	540	61.29	249	46.11
Home-based work	119	13.51	5	4.20
Flexi-leave (FL)	58	6.60	10	17.24
Health services	296	33.59	54	18.24
On-site gym	152	17.25	28	18.42
Recreational activities	196	22.25	50	26.32
Wages counselling	107	12.15	17	17
Travel services	333	37.80	134	40.24
Children	483	54.82	179	37.06
Penalties/Life Insurance	305	34.62	50	16.93

Rajan's narrative suggests that he conceptualizes being a "family-friendly employer" from a paternalistic lens. Gender equality is not constructed as the need to "re-design work" but to minimize disruption to the traditional family role. Work-life policies in company Echo can be viewed as status quo maintaining and aimed at reducing employee attrition while reinforcing traditional gender roles. By constructing itself as a "family entity", the organization draws on values of paternalism to secure organizational loyalty, while promoting work-family segmentation.

Regional differences in work-life conflict/balance

A second layer of "culture" through which work-family policies can be filtered and adapted in Indian call centres is the socio-cultural and historical context of the regional states within which they operate. Regionalism in India takes on many forms, evidenced by the myriad rural-urban landscapes, cultural customs, languages and caste/race identities across Indian states, reinforcing the view that "there is not one, but many Indias". While several authors have attempted to examine "Indian culture" as a system of values and beliefs (see Kumar 2004; Sinha 2002), few studies have examined regionalism as a cultural variable in defining work-family life. In her important work, Prabhū (2001) helpfully categorized welfare systems within Indian states. States with strong women's movements and public provision were found to be more resistant to neo-liberal reforms, while states which

corporate social responsibility rubric, Echo's company policy is grounded in "family values" and the need to "be caring, show respect, compassion and humanity for our... customers around the world". As an equal opportunity employer, Echo actively recruits women workers. Work-life policies are hence overtly introduced to promote "gender equality", while also addressing employee attrition. As Manohar, a male HR manager observed:

...it's like... yeah... we are a different company every nine months... that is, every nine months you can be assured we have a completely new workforce. Attrition has been as high as 110% in this sector... so... um... we have to do whatever we can to keep the employees happy.

"Keeping employees happy" is a recurrent theme driving HR policies at Echo. Workplace initiatives include a bundle of policies ranging from statutory provisions such as maternity, paternity leave and sick leave as well as work-place flexibility and part-time work options. Further, given the uniqueness of global outsourcing work, additional provisions are made, such as "pick-up-and-drop" services to ferry women workers to the office at night, subsidized lunch packages, *antakshari* (musical games), stress-reduction programmes and leisure activities. While not ostensibly "work-family policies" these initiatives help to keep employees motivated and reduce work-related stress. Table 2.1 depicts self-report availability and take-up for a range of work-life policies. A provision-utilization gap is evident, with fewer "family-friendly" policies being utilized compared to other employee support policies. This can be explained in part by the *life-course effect*, as there are only a small proportion of employees who are parents. However, socio-cultural factors also inform the ways in which work-life policies are adapted and implemented.

In-depth interviews with HR managers revealed strongly held views about what constitutes "women's work". These values and assumptions are institutionalized through the organizational ways in which work-life policies are made available to the employees. Work-life initiatives are implemented through a "person-centred" approach, where each small team of CSR's (customer service representative) has a dedicated "SPOC" (single point of contact); generally a HR manager, who would take their individual needs into consideration and arrange for workplace flexibility. Therefore work-life policies were implemented in many cases, solely on managerial discretion. As Raju, a senior HR manager shared with us:

Yes we certainly do take their family circumstances into account... like... um... when a lady is having young children we try our level best not to put her in the night shift work and offer more day shifts... we try to protect from negative effects

a liberal economy and Punjab is still playing "catch-up". Social development indicators suggest that Maharashtra has the most pro-active state policies for welfare, Punjab follows a micro-solidarity model of familial/informal support and AP is a mixed picture of neo-liberal expansion and traditional family models. This is but a surface level critique of a far more complex regional picture, but provides a useful starting point to unpack social and economic policies at the state level. We now turn to our data on regional differences in work-family conflict/balance reported by employees in the three branches of company Echo.

A structural equation modelling technique² (Byrne 2001; Kline 2005) called the multiple indicator and multiple causes (MIMIC) model is used to test the effect of regional differences (using firms as a proxy) on bi-directional work-family conflict (WFC) and work-life policy availability. MIMIC² is a powerful technique that enables the testing of observed variables as antecedents or consequent effects on a latent variable or theoretical construct (Goreskog and Goldberger 1975). In this model, we examined the extent to which employees reported different levels of WFC and policy availability across different regional branches of the same company (see table 2.2). An examination of the model fit suggests a statistically robust model all standardized co-efficients (Beta values) are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

Results suggest that employees located in firm A in Punjab and firm B in Andhra Pradesh reported higher WFC levels and substantially lower work-life policy availability, in comparison to firm C in Maharashtra (control variable). Far more detailed analysis is needed to substantiate prove a "regional effect", but the evidence tentatively suggests that the firm located in Maharashtra has stronger organizational and state support for work-life

Table 2.2 MIMIC model of regional differences in work-family conflict and policy availability

	Bi-directional work-family conflict	Work-life balance policy availability
Firm A (Punjab)	0.204***	-0.404***
Firm B (AP)	0.172***	-0.345**
Firm C (Control)		
Model fit summary		
Number of cases	846	846
Chi-square	2642***	2585
Degrees of freedom	1156	1170
CFI	0.943***	0.946***
TLI	0.939***	0.943***
RMSEA	0.039	0.038

(** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$).

adopted aggressive liberalization policies experienced weaker public provision and labour insecurity. Neoliberalism and gender parity hence form two important variables in understanding policy provisions within export-oriented sectors of employment (see Ghosh 2001). We hypothesize that *regionality* is an important lens by which work-family and gender roles can be understood in the Indian context. To test this hypothesis, we first briefly examine the social indicators of three Indian states where Echo is located: firm A in Punjab, Northern India, firm B in Andhra Pradesh, Southern India and firm C in Maharashtra, Western India.

Punjab is one of India's smaller northern states with a population of 24.3 million and a low sex-ratio (number of women per 1000 men) of 874 compared to the country total of 933 (Government of India 2001). Literacy rates among females in Punjab is relatively high at 63.6%, however this has not translated into high rates of female employment. Women workers in Punjab constitute less than 38.6% of the total female population, and deeply rooted male-breadwinner ideologies remain dominant (Maskell 1990). In the 1960s Punjab was a pioneer in the "green revolution" reforms and had a thriving agrarian economy, even though the growth of the IT sector has been sluggish up till recently, when the rural hinterlands were being converted into sites for global BPOs.

In comparison, Maharashtra is one of India's most economically developed western states with a population of 96.8 million and a relatively high sex-ratio of 922. Female literacy rates in Maharashtra are very high at 67% with a concomitantly high rate of female employment. Consequently, women's mobility, and social and political rights have historically been both more visible and more pronounced in this state (Kumar 1993). Women's movements in Maharashtra have ranged from the "light to the night" movements, state policies including the Employment Guarantee Scheme, social reform movements in relation to domestic violence and the promotion of gay and lesbian rights. With modernity having always been, if subliminal, a part of Maharashtra's urban middle-class reality (Datta 2005), introduction of neo-liberal reforms has not had as adverse an effect as expected, given its pre-reform marketized economy.

Andhra Pradesh (AP) is the fifth most populous state in India with over 76.21 million people, and a high sex-ratio of 978. Despite this, female literacy rates, at 50.4%, are far lower than the other two states and this is evidenced by a large gap in male and female work participation rates. With massive disparities in income between wealthy urban and the rest of rural AP, in recent years, this state has aggressively adopted neo-liberal reforms and trade liberalization programmes (STPI 2009). According to the NASSCOM-Kearney (NASSCOM 2008b) study, AP and Maharashtra are rated as "high" in commercial interest while cities in Punjab were viewed as "moderate/low". From this brief review of the three Indian states, we can tentatively conclude that on neo-liberalism parameters, AP is neo-liberal, Maharashtra has

balance compared to AP or Punjab; a finding which is consistent with Prabh's (2001) categorization of welfare states. Numerous other explanations could also explain this occurrence, from firm-level and sample effects, to managerial styles and workload distributions in these firms. However, we may surmise at the least that there appear to be some regional differences in the ways employees report WFC and policy availability across firms located in different parts of India.

Sub-group differences in work-family conflict/balance

Given that we have found some regional level differences in employee experiences of WFC and policy availability we extend this analysis to consider other socio-demographic variables. Are there subgroup differences in terms of gender, age, job type, income, religion, caste, class, parental status and employees' WFC/balance? Table 2.3 provides results from a MIMIC model on select socio-demographic controls, WFC and policy availability.

The MIMIC model is statistically sound with robust model fit. A closer examination reveals that only three socio-demographic indicators yield significant results. First, younger employees were more likely to report more WFC compared to older employees, while simultaneously reporting less availability of work-life policies. This coupled with the non-significant results on gender, marital status and parental status, is telling. A reverse life-course effect appears to be in play, where young single workers uncumbered with family responsibilities report higher work-related strain. Second, an income effect is clearly evident, with employees in the lowest income bracket earning under Rs. 1 lakh (approximately £1481 per year) reporting the highest levels of WFC, and also strong work-life policy availability. Job stratification effects are evident with low income earners experiencing greater work-life strain, even as fear of reprisal from employers and career penalties in utilizing work-life benefits could explain low level of take-up. Narratives of servility and the need to view the organization as being "caring" and "a good employer" could also explain vulnerable workers reporting higher policy availability. Contradictions in perception and practice hence evidence the tensions between the "ideal worker" assumptions embedded within the organization. Third, technical support workers (non-voice) were found to experience lower WFC, compared to front-line CSRs. This supports the view that service sector workers engaging directly with clients (CSRs) are more likely to experience work-related strain than non-voice staff.

Some thought must also be given to the "non-significant" results in Table 2.3. First, we address the socio-cultural variables of education, caste and religion. There are potential multi-collinearity issues between education and class, just as there are with marital and parental status. While Echo and proclams to be an equal opportunities employer, with a commitment to

Table 2.3 MIMIC model of subgroup differences in work-family conflict and policy availability

Bi-directional Work-life balance	Work-family conflict	
0.103(ns)	-0.08(ns)	Female
-0.26*	0.264*	18 to 25 years
-0.23*	0.233*	26 to 35 years
		(36-45 years)
0.04(ns)	0.002(ns)	Married
0.01(ns)	0.050(ns)	(Single)
		Have kids
		(No kids)
-0.13(ns)	0.007(ns)	High school
-0.10(ns)	0.010(ns)	Bachelors degree
-0.14(ns)	0.058(ns)	Post-graduate degree
0.21***	-0.102*	Under Rs. 1 lakh
0.08***	0.041(ns)	Rs. 1 to 3 lakhs
0.19***	-0.101*	Technical support
-0.015	0.04(ns)	Supervisor/Manager
-	-0.03(ns)	(CSR)
-	-	Hindu
-	0.028(ns)	Muslim
-0.01(ns)	0.016(ns)	(Other religion)
-0.03(ns)	0.048(ns)	Kshatriya
0.046(ns)	-0.042(ns)	Vaishya
777	777	Model fit summary
2721***	2864***	Number of cases
1318	1372	Chi-square
0.942***	0.939***	Degrees of freedom
0.939***	0.935***	CRI
0.037	0.037	TLI
		RMSRA

(*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, ns = not significant).

employ ethnic minority groups (particularly women and lower caste groups) given the political sensitivity surrounding caste, less than 30% of our sample reported their caste status.⁵ Religion in itself did not provide us with much data, as it is the complex amalgamation of religion, caste and class which denotes their social status in relation to socially stratified Indian society. While gender was found to be insignificant in our quantitative analysis, in-depth interviews unpacked deep-seated assumptions about the

Some critical themes emerging in our chapter, include the ways in which work-life policies in Indian call centres are framed and adapted around seemingly contradictory goals of "gender equality"/"paternalism and recruiting unencumbered workers who by definition generate an attrition problem. (Organizational practices involving the active recruitment of workers at a particular life-stage ("the ideal worker"), demonstrate short-termism in labour arrangements, which reinforces work-life conflict and leads to employee dropout. The "ideal worker" construct in call centre organizations hence precludes the possibility for these workers to have personal lives or form families. The "managerial discretion" model of delivering work-life policies hence reinforces traditional gender roles and provides work-life benefits as "favours" rather than rights or entitlements. Familialistic welfare ideologies within organizations create a pseudo-parental role among managers, who are required to recruit "flexible workers" for economic reasons, but then need to manage their concerns in a "humane way", protecting them from adverse consequences. Legitimizing work-life policies in this sector, both at the institutional level as well as at individual organizational levels, could be challenging. Uncritical reproduction of western style work-life policies may be counterproductive given the diverse settings in which this industry operates.

Our study provides many avenues for further research. First, while we examined formal arrangements, more could be learnt about informal support from family and the community. Second, our analysis of regional differences hints at possible variations in work-life policies across different parts of India; more fine-grained analysis needs to be done to unpack the firm effect as opposed to the regional effect. Third, the traditional paternalism models of management could form the basis for contemporary theorizing around HRM in developing country contexts. The "ideal worker" concept takes on a very different meaning in Indian call centres, and the trade off between social and economic drivers for policy change in global forms of work could be a further area of investigation. Rich dialogue can ensue from examining work and life in non-western contexts, giving us new vocabularies to understand these two contested spheres of life.

Notes

1. The authors would like to acknowledge the Richard Benjamin Memorial Trust for Social and Occupational Psychology for funding the qualitative element of this mixed methods study (Grant Code: RBT110).
2. All organization, company, firm and individual names have been changed to protect the identity of participants.
3. Structural equation modelling is an advanced statistical approach which tests the relationship between theoretical constructs (or latent concepts) and scale measures (or observed variables) (Byrne 2001; Kline 2005). MIMIC models enable the testing of a reverse causal pathway between individual observed variables and

"ideal worker" and "ideal mother". As Nidha, a female HR manager, married to a colleague in the same firm, and mother to a three-year-old son bluntly observed:

If I was recruiting a CSR and she happened to be a woman married for two or three years I would think twice... at that stage of their life they will be thinking about having children. I would not want this life for a woman with a family

Recruitment of workers is hence based on gendered assumptions about potential life-course effects, and the screening out of candidates who may represent individuals at risk of work-life imbalance. The "ideal worker" in the Indian call centre is one who is young, single and unencumbered by family responsibilities, and who will remain so for a few years. The young single worker is far more "flexible" in adjoining their labour to a long working hours, graveyard shift culture than a parent, whose mobility and familial pressures could foreclose any option to pursue night shift work. Hence, a gendered impasse appears to be the reality in Indian call centres where, on the one hand, traditional gender roles and sexual moralities are being challenged by these "new" economy work practices even as "old school" managers and floor supervisors cling to paternalism and, in some cases, compassionate "peer-protection" in saving women workers from the plight they face themselves. This construction and reproduction of the "crises of gender roles" (Connell 1995) affects both women and men, young and old workers and thus presents an emerging and fascinating dialogue for the future of work and life in globally transported work in India.

Discussion

Our chapter extends the debates around work-life policies and culture by focusing on a global form of work within a developing country context. We conceptualize "culture" at three distinct levels: the global/national (by which we mean global forms of work and the national context); the organizational/regional (including the spatial organization of the regional branches of the company) and the sub-group level (diverse workforce representations of work-life policies). This multi-layering of contexts provides a rich and layered account for examining cultural discourses of work-life policies from *within* the Indian context. Through this conceptualization of "culture" we challenge some taken for granted assumptions about work-life discourse; that national context is secondary to organizational context, that regional variations are unimportant, or that global work is reproduced in a vacuum and outsourced workers are passive subjects who comply with hegemonic power and dominant managerial discourses. A more nuanced picture is developed.

latent concepts. For details on our methodological approach please contact the authors.

4. Model fit in MIMIC models are examined through a wide range of goodness-of-fit indicators. The Comparative-fit-Index (CFI), compares a hypothesized model to a base-line model and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) accounts for parsimony effects; values closer to 1 indicate a good fit. The Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) tests the hypothesized model to the normal population and values lower than 0.05 indicate a good model fit.

5. Missing values in MPlus are estimated for and corrected using maximum likelihood estimation; however, variables with too few cases could lead to a non-significant result.

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