Crossroads of Knowledge

Helen Peterson *Editor*

Gender in Transnational Knowledge Work

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Helen Peterson and Minna Salminen-Karlsson

This volume is unique in being the first edited book on gender issues in transnational business corporations concerning knowledge work. The globalization of technical work, and collaborations between business partners in the global IT industry, has so far been researched mainly by organizational theorists, with their background in business studies, finance, communication, or sociology, and gender has seldom been taken into account in these studies. There is thus still a void when it comes to studies of gender relations in the globalization of qualified technical work and of how gender relations are changed and reproduced in the context of professional interaction, virtual or face-to-face, between women and men from the East and West, respectively.

The book shows how fruitful a gendered take on these issues is, both for a deepened understanding of organizational matters concerning management and employee relationships and for a widened understanding of gender issues. This area of research contributes to organizational research on gender in male-dominated, technical work environments, by showing how gender regimes in such environments are affected by, and affect, the globalization of technical work. It also contributes to research on gender and globalization in an area that is under-researched: highly educated women in professions with relatively high status. And even if most studies of workplaces in global IT enterprises are about men, as men normally are the majority, there is still a lack of research on men as men in the IT industry. The focus on gender in transnational knowledge work also benefits research on gender and technology as it contributes with a deepened understanding of the co-construction of gender and IT in different societal contexts.

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The book hence provides insights relevant for several different academic fields of research and contributes to some of the central debates in business, economics, geography, sociology, masculinity studies, and feminist theory. While primarily a research volume, we hope that the book will also be useful for people who actually develop and manage transnational business relations and strive to do so in a sustainable way. The book offers relevant material for policy makers and could provide inspiration for setting up policies and strategies to address inequalities and eliminate discrimination against women in this kind of organizational settings.

Though as simple and straightforward as the title of the book – *Gender in Transnational Knowledge Work* – may appear, it needs to be unwrapped as the book's six chapters disclose that the three key concepts "gender," "transnational," and "knowledge work" are highly multidimensional. Although these concepts are what bring the chapters together, the authors have nonetheless been given the freedom to fill them with specific meaning. Instead of seeing this disparity as a problematic incongruence, we see it as a strength that the book can offer many angles on these issues. The reader will find the explicit definitions of these three key concepts in respective chapters. Here we will merely draw attention to what this lack of congruence adds to the book by looking a little closer at the multifaceted character of each of these three key concepts.

1.1 Situating the Transnational in Knowledge Work

The chapters introduce gender perspectives to the research area of transnational business relations in an area we call "knowledge work," referring to work on such a high-qualification level that it usually requires a higher education background. The prime example of this kind of high-intensity knowledge work would be software development. Although several of the chapters in the book focus on the software industry (understood as a subset of the IT or ICT industry) they also include call center work, shared services centers, information technology-enabled service-business process outsourcing (ITES-BPO), and large multinational corporations involved in knowledge work more generally (though not as a prime business). We have even stretched the definition of knowledge work to include a chapter focusing on the higher education setting – computer science studies in India – because we consider this setting highly relevant for understanding gender in transnational knowledge work. The inclusion of this specific chapter on computer science in India is also motivated by the definition of "transnational" as a geographical area. The book primarily concentrates on business collaborations and relationships involving an Asian partner. Several of the chapters concern offshoring and the relocation of knowledge work from Western nations to lower cost locations elsewhere in the global economy, in particular in South Asia. The so-called provider countries are in this book most often referred to as the Global South, which is understandable, as the countries where particular organizations have been studied by the authors are India and Pakistan.

The various authors use somewhat different terminologies to describe the "other side" of the transnational business relationships. In several of the chapters, it becomes clear that the term "West" is most often used to refer to the USA but also to the Nordic countries or to North America and Europe more generally. However, "Global North" is also used to refer to these countries. Reflecting over the normative position of the USA, both in transnational business relations themselves and in research about them, is highly relevant for both researchers and practitioners in this field. Two of the chapters, the one by Jeff Hearn et al. and, in particular, the one by Helen Peterson, Minna Salminen-Karlsson, and Sunrita Dhar-Bhattacharjee, touch upon the issue of the Nordic countries being different from the USA as a context for transnational business collaborations, due to different organizational cultures and different gender relations in society.

The transnational aspect, however, refers to more than solely this geographical dimension. The transnational dimension denotes a wide variety of interactional and mobility patterns and relationships between people who communicate with people abroad in their day-to-day work practices, who travel extensively as part of their work, or who manage business relations across national borders. Empirically, this variety is displayed in the different chapters. They focus in a diversity of ways on the interplay between local and global in gendered divisions of work and careers, as well as in the private lives of the knowledge workers. They also highlight how important it is to understand who is excluded from transnational business relations as these relations produce new segregating patterns in workplaces and a new global division of labor.

1.2 Situating Gender in Transnational Knowledge Work

The chapters in the book cover a range of themes highly relevant for transnational knowledge work and investigate them from a gender perspective: culture, communication, identity work, structures, organizational change, globalization, mobility, resistance, leadership and management, international business, work-life balance, education and labor market, policies, and value systems. The chapters also demonstrate the multidisciplinarity within gender research itself and how different perspectives on gender can be combined and developed. The chapters draw on the social constructionist approach of "doing gender," feminist organization theory, gendered discourse analysis, techno-feminism, and critical studies on men and masculinities.

It is important that a book on gender issues in transnational knowledge work not only highlights women. Men do have gender, and many of the chapters highlight challenges that men face in this transnational business setting. A merit of the book is that it illuminates men's conditions both in the West and in the South. A comparison of the chapters by Hearn et al., Yasmin Zaidi and Winifred Poster, and Roli Varma reveals that in spite of the vast differences in national gender equality ideologies and policies, the practice of the man being the breadwinner with a supportive

wife, who takes care of the family, is transnational, as it is similar among both Finnish male managers and Pakistani and Indian male employees.

Most employees in knowledge work are middle-class, highly educated people and, thus, to a certain extent share a common background. The book highlights how the lives of these women and men are, however, influenced in different ways by transnational business relations. Their lives and working lives are "transnational" in different ways and to different extents. They can also be described from different perspectives: Debra Howcroft and Helen Richardson's chapter with an overview of the unequal benefits of the globalization of service work is nuanced by the case studies in several other chapters. The conditions in the West and South as such are different, and conditions for women and men in these settings are also different. For example, managers who appear in the chapters of this book are men, and women seem to be less transnational due to gender-segregated patterns. However, there are also differences among women and among men – not all men are transnational to the same extent.

In sum, the book thus contributes to the development of understandings of the intersection of several different empirical and theoretical fields. Hopefully, the reader will find the chapters valuable to gain increased awareness and understanding of the complexities of these issues. Next, we want to draw attention to how the book contributes to the specific field of study, that is, gender in organizations.

1.3 Transnational Transgressions of "Gender in Organizations"

Studies on gender relations in transnational companies in non-Western settings benefit organizational research and organizational practices in at least three major ways. First, the authors of this volume increase our understanding of gender relations in knowledge workplaces outside the Western sphere as such. There is a vast amount of research on gender relations in Western companies, but gender relations are always situated, and Western findings do not automatically apply in other cultural contexts. While the chapters in this volume give insights in how gender is constructed in some non-Western settings, much research remains to be done in this developing research area.

The chapters in this volume also draw attention to the fact that studying gender and developing specific gender equality plans and policies is in itself a distinctly Western approach. Singling out gender and gender issues from other diversity issues in a work environment in this manner is a culturally and socially situated practice. In a multicultural society, such as, for example, India, the prominence that gender issues have received in the West during the last decades does not seem reasonable. In the West, gender equality as a particularly important issue has its history, starting with the second-wave feminism in the 1970s. In a country like India, there are and have been a number of movements pertaining to gender, and also nationality,

religion, region, language, and caste, and the singling out of gender as a particular problem to be dealt with, by particular policies, is to a certain extent an import by Western companies. In particular, Smitha Radhakrishnan's chapter addresses this issue, but it is also touched upon by Zaidi and Poster.

Second, studying gender relations in knowledge companies in non-Western cultural contexts can hopefully open the eyes of Western researchers for the cultural situatedness of many concepts and general assumptions which are often easily reproduced even in research. This can enhance the interpretative sensitivity and openness for alternative perspectives in gender studies in organizations in general and also in studies in the West. The chapters in this volume, for example, present alternative definitions and understandings of concepts and ideas such as "career," "work-life balance," and "family-friendly policies." Even the meaning of "gender equality" becomes destabilized when transferred to a context outside of the Western organizational setting.

Another example of what happens when the perspective is shifted from a Western context is how apparent it becomes that the stereotypes about technology coded as masculine are situated, specific for the European and North American societies. Several of the chapters highlight the so-called women-friendly aspects of IT that make careers within this field attractive to women in the South. The book, thus, shows that a focus on gender in transnational companies can contribute to the development of new perspectives on gender in relation to technology.

Several of the chapters use theoretical concepts and analytical approaches that have been developed in the West and show how they can benefit from being applied in a new context, although not without cautiousness and reflexivity. This deepens the understanding of the underlying complexities of gendered constructions of relations, identities, and organizations. An example is the theoretical framework developed by Joan Acker that is widely used in studies of gender in organizations and is referred to in this volume in the chapters by Peterson, Salminen-Karlsson, and Dhar-Bhattacharjee and by Radhakrishnan. Both chapters find that this framework, when used for analyzing gender relations in organizations in the South, reveals that it has originated from studies in Western organizations. Even when being a usable tool, it does not catch important aspects of organizations in the South, as it, as Radhakrishnan points out, restricts itself to the organizational reality without accounting for the vastly different experiences, expectations, and societal and cultural conditions that employees in different cultures carry with them in their organizational lives.

Third, and as a combination of the first two, more situated knowledge about gender relations in transnational companies can have implications for gender equality practices. A number of transnational companies, with their headquarters in the West, have general gender equality policies, which are to be enforced in all offices, including those in the Global South. While equality between human beings can be seen as a global value, gender equality policies, which are based on Western ideas of problems and their solutions, without knowledge of the cultural context where they are to be enforced, can be interpreted as cultural imperialism. Understanding the local conditions on their own terms is necessary for improving them. The book

highlights, for example, how career-oriented women in the South encounter different obstacles than their colleagues in Europe and the USA do. Several of the chapters in this volume allow for the alternative voice to be heard – providing a different definition of the problems with gender inequalities, as well as of solutions for achieving gender equality, which help us expand our vision.

Not only does the research in this book contribute with interesting perspectives on women's and men's conditions in different national and cultural contexts, but research on gender in transnational business relations can also challenge concepts, categories, and practices that are often taken for granted as common sense by managers in transnational companies and reproduced even in research.

1.4 Structure

The book consists of six substantive chapters, and although the methodological approaches and the theoretical starting points differ greatly between them, they complement rather than contradict each other and share several intersections when it comes to empirical focus and results. The aim and results of each chapter are outlined more in detail below.

Debra Howcroft and Helen Richardson's chapter "A Gendered Analysis of IT-Enabled Service Work in the Global Economy" offers a comprehensive introduction to the field of gender and transnational business relations. It attempts to achieve an understanding of the intersections of gender, formal and informal labor market, service work, ICTs, and globalization. The chapter is an updated version of an article previously published in the journal *New Technology, Work and Employment* over 8 years ago. However, the updates and the new issues raised for discussion make this a highly relevant article. Drawing on a large secondary material consisting of previous studies, statistics, and reports, it focuses on women's working lives in the global economy. More specifically, it discusses in detail some gendered issues specific for information technology-enabled service-business process outsourcing (ITES-BPO), the IT sector generally, shared service centers, and call centers. It sets these discussions within a framework of multiple theories about globalization, the knowledge economy, and the network societies and the supposed consequences for women and for gendered relations at work, in organizations, and in the labor market. This chapter introduces several different themes that the subsequent chapters investigate further and develop. It ends with an extensive list of suggested issues for further research with which we can only agree. There is still a need for further research on the development of definitions and statistical databases, the formal and informal economy within specific global commodity chains, detailed historical and occupational studies, international regulation of labor, and an intersectional approach to these issues.

Roli Varma's chapter "Paradox of Empowerment and Marginalization: Women in Computer Science in India" contributes with knowledge on the complex and paradoxical gendered construction of computer technology itself, the technology

with which the employees described in the book actually work. Varma starts from their education. Studying computer science is an attractive educational route for Indian women for reasons depending on the context of the Indian society. Although the women she interviewed did describe that it is much more difficult to pursue computer science as a woman in India than it is for a man, mainly due to social pressures and biases, these women also described the empowering and liberating force associated with this field of study. These results are particularly interesting due to the fact that they challenge the Western understanding of computer science as a masculine discipline.

Varma's chapter reveals that much of gender research on the masculinity of computer science education and profession has a Western point of departure. Women are excluded from IT jobs in India also, but due to societal contextual aspects, rather than due to the social construction of technology as a masculine field or due to the social construction of technological competence. Her chapter highlights the social and psychological benefits of IT for Indian women, such as independence, self-esteem, and social status. Although focusing on women's experiences, the chapter also reveals the pressure on men to conform to cultural expectations in different cultural contexts and that men are being pushed into IT for high status without being presented with a choice and without considering whether they are interested in such a career or not.

Helen Peterson, Minna Salminen-Karlsson, and Sunrita Dhar-Bhattacharjee's chapter "A Perfect Match? Cultural Clashes and Gendered Work Ideals in Transnational IT Companies" describes more closely the conditions in the working life of Indian women in IT, by focusing on the clashes between different gendered work ideals in the Swedish and the Indian business context and how these clashes influence collaborations on management level. The analysis highlights how managers and employees in the two countries manage cooperation across not only national boundaries but also across organizational cultures where the construction of the ideal worker looks very different. While the Swedish work ideal reflects masculine constructions based mainly on an entrepreneurial attitude, the Indian work ideal is associated with authoritarianism and paternalism, and although both work ideals to a certain extent exclude women as ideal workers, they also create hierarchies between men and exclude certain enactments of masculinity. The analysis here shows how women find it difficult to live up to the gendered work ideal due to family obligations. However, in what might seem to be paradoxical, women are also seen as ideal workers due to these family obligations, as this makes them less prone to leave the company as part of a career strategy to improve salaries, a strategy used by men and creating problems for the companies that have to constantly recruit new employees. Indian men are described as pressured, by family and by the idea of the male breadwinner that still remains strong, to make a career by constantly changing workplaces, thereby raising their wages.

This chapter reports from a research project that has established Swedish research on offshoring as a new field of study and broadened the field as the results differ from previous results from studies of American and British offshoring experiences. In relation to the international body of work in the field of offshoring, the chapter

shows that Swedish companies encounter different problems than American and British ones, mainly due to a larger distance between the organizational cultures. But this also means that there is potential to find different and new solutions to problems.

Smitha Radhakrishnan's chapter "Culturalism as Resistance: Exploring the Contradictions of Gender Policies in Indian Multinationals" also touches on the issue of computer engineering being viewed as an appropriate job for women – due to the air-conditioned and clean work environment. Indian women's working life in IT companies is further elaborated, for example, by showing how the enactment of professional femininity in the IT business in India is closely linked to a specific Indian femininity that is appealing in both India and the West. The Indian context also provides an interesting background to reconsider familiar sociological key concepts and feminist debates. One such example is the much researched, so-called work-life balance.

But above all, the chapter is an important contribution to studies on gender relations at work. It focuses on the implementation of gender equality policies, aiming at improving the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women, in multinational organizations. Radhakrishnan has interviewed human resource directors and employees in India's technology industry about the implementation of gender policies. Her chapter illustrates the importance of also including an analysis of the national and cultural context in order to fully understand how organizational corporate policies such as these are developed, implemented, and resisted. Similar arguments are transferable to studies in all contexts, not only Indian multinational corporations. However, as the author remarks, this is an aspect that is rarely taken into consideration – as many of the existing studies on gender equality in organizations and policies based on them use a perspective that limits itself to the boundaries of a single organization.

Jeff Hearn has together with *Marjut Jyrkinen, Mira Karjalainen, Charlotta Niemistö, and Rebecca Piekkari* authored the chapter "Top Men in Transnational Companies: The Construction of Men, Masculinities, and Work-Family Intersections within 'Gender-Neutral' Contexts." This is the first of the two chapters focusing on masculinity, showing masculinity constructions in the West among managers in transnational companies, how top men involved in knowledge work construct and display masculinity. Drawing on two large Finnish studies of management and gender equality, the chapter analyzes managerial masculinity in relation to family and work-life balance issues. The relevance of a critical masculinity perspective is apparent, as the majority of the top managers in these companies are men. Although the chapter analyzes the construction of masculinity in a transnational business context, one of the chapter's major contributions is the way it situates the analysis within a national as well as a transnational business context, showing how important the national context is for the work that is undertaken, as well as for the identities of the managers. The findings illustrate how the Finnish local context is permeated by a widespread ideology of gender neutrality, which helps to conceal gendered power relations in organizations, as well as in the private, family context. In spite of the Finnish societal gender equality rhetoric and policies, the managerial masculinity in

these Finnish transnational companies is built on a narrow traditional breadwinner model, assuming a heterosexual man with a supporting wife and closing out women as top managers.

Yasmin Zaidi and Winifred Poster are the authors of this book's last chapter: "Shifting Masculinities in the South Asian Outsourcing Industry: Hyper, Techno or Fusion?" This chapter offers a different yet complementing perspective, on the constructions of masculinity in transnational business relations: that among employees of transnational knowledge companies in the South. Just like the chapters authored by Hearn et al., Radhakrishnan, and Peterson, Salminen-Karlsson, and Bhattacharjee, it draws on an extensive data collection during several years and in several organizations. In this chapter, we are also introduced to two different national contexts, as the case studies were conducted in both India and Pakistan. The analysis builds on interviews with both software engineers and developers and international call center workers. It provides an intriguing outlook on the interplay between the global and the local, when masculinities are constructed, reconstructed, and negotiated in both professional and personal relations and influenced by a highly transnational context. The authors ask whether emerging South Asian masculinities are transgressive or regressive of gender relations or perhaps both. They found that some of the different, often contradictory, masculinities that emerge are the results of a fusion of old and new as the traditional Indian and Pakistani masculinities encounter the expectations, norms, and gender relations in the transnational workplace. This final chapter also highlights how these transnational business relations and the construction of masculinities and femininities are interlinked with postcolonial, political relations and the "war on terrorism" by relating these issues to the need of disguising their ethnical belonging, which infuses the consciousness of the call center workers.

Chapter 2
A Gendered Analysis of IT-Enabled Service Work in the Global Economy

Debra Howcroft and Helen Richardson

In this chapter, we aim to weave together a number of areas of literature in order to highlight gender inequality in information technology-enabled service (ITES) work in the global economy. As women's participation in labor markets increases (ILO 2007) along with the expansion of service sector work (ILO 2008), expectations have grown that increased opportunities and gender equality beckon. Global capitalist development involves the mobilization of large numbers of women workers, and women's participation has increased over time at all income levels (WDR 2011). Sex-based segmentation in the workforce is endemic, however, with women often concentrated in industries where profit margins are protected by shrinking labor costs, extending working hours, or reducing the number of formal workers (Heintz 2006). Labor market trends are linked to a common rhetorical theme, which suggests that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are driving and enabling work transformations and that women are likely benefactors (ILO 2001; Mansell 2001). This is coupled with the increasing outsourcing and offshoring of ITES work, which some view as being key to promoting development, to offering opportunities for women to enter the workforce, and to becoming involved in enterprise (Morgan et al. 2004). Investment in technology generally, and ICTs in particular, is often touted as an instrument for bridging the gap between developed and developing countries and accelerating economic growth, yet these assumed economic and social gains – for both women and men – are dubious at best (Mansell 2002; Avgerou 2003).

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The feminization of parts of the labor market, which sees an increasing ratio of women's labor force participation compared to men's as well as a deterioration of working conditions in previously male jobs (Standing 1999; Benería 2001), has led to institutional changes at the microlevel, including outsourcing and changes in the composition of the workforce. These feminization trends expanded initially within the manufacturing sector and more recently through the internationalization of services. Diane Perrons (2010) reflects that economic restructuring toward services and the feminization of employment are associated with increasing levels of inequality. Decentralization and individualization are more likely to lead to a gender pay gap and gender-differentiated outcomes, with gendered norms and assumptions shaping the work environment, labor market, and wider economy.

Global employment indicators show the importance of service work (ILO 2008) and also point to the growth of the informal economy and development of increasingly precarious jobs that have occurred in parallel with the processes of by which labor markets have become more deregulated and flexible (Benería 2003). As the macroeconomic context has altered with deregulation and restructuring, a persistent gap in the literature on women's employment in the global labor market is the lack of recognition and under-enumeration of informal sector work (Chen et al. 1999; Elson 1999; Standing 1999), even though this may constitute the primary source of income for many families (Benería 2003).

Cultural factors militate against progress for women, with a devaluing of "women's work," and barriers continue to restrict their vertical and spatial mobility. Without doubt, the opportunity to participate in the labor market has been positive for some women, yet a gender division of labor exists in all cultures of the world (Huyer 2003), and gender wage differentials prevail (Horton 1999; Standing 1999; Elson 2002; ILO 2007). The earnings gap between men and women relative to $1 of male earnings is, for example, 90 cents in Malawi, 12 cents in Bangladesh, 64 cents in India, and 62 cents in Germany (WDR 2011). Long-term trends fail to indicate that the position for women workers is one of "equalizing up" (Elson 2002); rather, it appears that pay and conditions for men are deteriorating ("equalizing down") as they are obliged to participate on the margins of the labor market (Standing 1999; Pearson 2003). The promise of women's empowerment through transnational service work is thus failing to materialize (Howcroft and Richardson 2010). This is particularly the case given the 2008 global recession and subsequent austerity drives in the West, which has impacted on the numbers employed in ITES work generally.

In this paper, our intention is to weave together a number of areas of literature that operate at the intersection of gender, labor markets, service work, IT, and globalization in order to raise awareness regarding issues of gender inequality in the global sourcing of service work. Next, we will discuss women's working lives in the global economy and then discuss in more details the specifics of employment in ITES-BPO (Information Technology Enabled Service-Business Process Outsourcing) call centers, shared service centers, and also in the IT (information technology) sector globally. Finally, we highlight some potential avenues for future research.

2.1 Gender and the Global Sourcing of ITES Work

Global employment trends indicate that the service sector is the largest provider of employment worldwide, exceeding both the agricultural and industrial sectors (ILO 2008). This is a consequence of changes in the global division of labor since the 1970s, facilitated by continued improvements in ICTs and by the feminization of employment, which has seen increasing numbers of women enter the job market. Conversely, the service sector, and with it, the global expansion of capitalism, has become reliant on this huge influx of women into the economy (Howcroft and Richardson 2010). The term "feminization" was intended to highlight the irony of integrating women as equals into the workforce at a time when women have been pushed into more precarious forms of work. It is used to characterize the activities associated with "women's work": ideologically constructed and with fluid definitions according to the role of the family and the specific requirements of the local labor market at any given time and place (Webster 2010).

Feminization trends are most marked in countries where women's participation in agriculture is low (e.g., in East and Southeast Asia and Latin America) as they move predominantly into service, clerical, and sales occupations (Horton 1999). Women moving into ITES work such as financial and IT services have displaced men in areas that were once considered to be well paid and highly skilled. These employment trends should be interpreted within the framework of labor markets generally, since they are gendered institutions operating at the intersections of the productive and reproductive economies and often constructed on assumptions that women are secondary earners (Elson 1999). Discrimination is also a factor, resulting in women being concentrated in high-risk and insecure occupations with low pay and with few opportunities for advancement. Namrata Gupta (2014) has noted, for example, that the upsurge in women into computer-related courses and employment is not an indication of a radical revolution in gender relations in an Indian society that remains patrifocal.

Changes in global employment trends have gone hand-in-hand with liberalization featuring an easing of restrictions on internal and external trade and deregulation of labor protection, which has enabled unprecedented growth in contract labor and opportunities for subcontracting (Jhabvala and Sinha 2007). This has facilitated a reduction of the core size of the firm as the periphery is expanded to new outsourced sites in other countries (Benería 2001), and firms search for cheaper and more flexible ways to accumulate capital. Services were once regarded as nontradable work in that service work is usually location specific due to its nature – for example, caring for a person requires co-location of the worker and person being cared for. Likewise, service work often faced time restrictions and dependency on skills not easily found elsewhere. However, service work is being reinterpreted – ITES-BPO has enabled tasks to be increasingly conducted electronically over large distances (World Bank 2007). In the quest for new sources of profit, labor is sought in cheaper localities, aided by neoliberal policies, which aim to support the deregulation of trade and financial transactions.

On the surface, the increasing adoption of ICTs may appear to break down spatial barriers and allow work to be conducted "any time, any place, anywhere" as investors and companies globally relocate to lower labor cost regions or shift focus from the formal to the informal economy. To attract foreign direct investment, however, developing countries need to be able to offer key location-specific assets, which include political and economic stability, possibilities for low-cost production or special market access, a well-functioning telecommunications infrastructure, and a burgeoning software sector for back-office process and software services (Paus 2007).

These spatial considerations must be borne in mind as capitalists negotiate two contradictory spatial tendencies – the need for sufficient geographical mobility to seek out investment opportunities in new locations and the need for sufficient geographical fixity so that accumulation can occur (Herod et al. 2007). Hence, we see that although India remains the dominant supplier of offshore services among developing countries, a number of Indian firms are either relocating aspects of their own offshoring activity to other countries in order to maintain competitiveness, or they are tapping into offshoring opportunities in other developing countries so as to preempt the emergence of competitors (Abugattas 2007). The outsourcing of ITES work to an overseas third party enables firms to offset production costs and relocate fairly rapidly in response to changes in risk and profitability. In this context, geography may seem to be irrelevant, but it merely takes on different characteristics as capitalists seek new spatial forms. The Caribbean, for example, served as the initial location for ICT-enabled service industry work such as telemarketing and banking (Freeman 2000, 2010; Ward and Pyle 2000), but this has now been surpassed by regions of India, where much of the UK and US IT work is outsourced (Economist Intelligence Unit 2005). Chan et al. (2013) give a useful summary of the politics of global production in their study of Apple and the outsourcing of its consumer electronics production to Asia, noting that the search for high corporate profits has been enhanced by efficient ICTs, neoliberal trade policies, international financial services development, and access to immigrants and surplus labor.

Given that in the majority of countries in the world, women are still at a financial disadvantage compared with men (ILO 2004), some argue optimistically that ITES work has the potential to provide distinct possibilities for reducing gender inequities and providing economic autonomy for women workers. These opportunities are seen to arise in a number of ways (Stanworth 2000). Firstly, the global expansion of capitalism has been dependent on a huge influx of women into the workforce, women who have traditionally been financially dependent on husbands and male relatives, thereby providing a new degree of financial independence. Secondly, ICTs release women from time and location constraints traditionally associated with the workplace, thus allowing women to better combine paid work with caring responsibilities. Thirdly, proponents of the information or network age (Beck 1992; Castells 2004) predict the rise of flatter organizations, based on teamwork rather than competition, allowing for more women to be represented in management positions. This view of ITES work restructuring suggests, however, that new technologies create new societies rather than change the terms in which social, political, and economic

relations are played out (Mansell 2002; Wajcman 2002). There are numerous theories of globalization, the knowledge economy, and the network society, with rhetorical claims regarding the effects of technological change (Wajcman 2006), yet as Celia Stanworth (2000) points out, what technology makes possible should not be confused with material change. This view of technology, organization, and globalization suffers from a naïve determinism, which assumes unidirectional trends are taking place.

As the macroeconomic context has altered with deregulation and restructuring, inequalities in the profit-making capabilities of different sectors of the economy occur on another order of magnitude, thereby engendering massive distortions in the operations of various markets (Sassen 2007). When faced with competition from large, global organizations, operating informally is one of the few ways in which some local firms can survive – for example, using space not zoned for commercial uses such as a basement in a residential area that is void of workplace standards and requirements. This sector of economic activity is not registered with government agencies and neither does it comply with regulations concerning work practices, benefits, taxes, and licensing (Baruah 2004). While numerous studies highlight the prevalence of informal work in manufacturing and within certain aspects of service work (such as cleaning, sex work, street vending), there have been virtually no studies – aside from anecdotal evidence – on the informalization of ITES work, employment that is potentially highly vulnerable to informalization through global service chains.

What is clear is that mainstream analysis constructs assumptions about opportunities for women in the labor market that are divorced from their sociocultural experience. There is an invisibility of women in statistics and indicators (Huyer 2006). Local context is important, gender relations are not static, and detailed research is needed. It is thus important to view ITES work as an international division of labor within global capitalism, subject therefore to vulnerability from decision-making in the boardrooms of leading firms (Taylor et al. 2014).

2.2 Illustrations of ITES Work

In this section, the global employment trends and material changes outlined above are explored in relation to three different economic profiles within the ITES-BPO sector: call centers, shared service centers, and the IT sector. Clearly, outlines of women's labor market participation will differ according to "pre-existing cultural patterns of male dominance, state policies and workers' resistance that can vary across countries" (Ward and Pyle 2000, 308). In Taiwan and Japan, for example, patriarchal norms have restricted women's employment in the formal sector, whereas in Thailand and the Philippines, cultural traditions have permitted wider economic roles for women (Ward and Pyle 2000, 310). Further, class, ethnicity, or locale, as well as gender, can shape different roles for women in the formal and informal economies. Experiences depend on the existing economic, social, and

cultural fabric (Arun and Arun 2002). Changes are not necessarily uniform within a country, however. Arun et al. (2006), for example, focus on differences in regions, castes, and class in India. They suggest that ITES-BPO has offered some opportunities for the urban middle classes who possess knowledge and skills of value but show that while participation of women in the labor market has risen in India as a whole, in Kerala there has been a comparative decline in participation, with women economically marginalized compared to other parts of India. Research thus requires a global lens showing how work plays out in different cultural and geographical contexts. One example is the work of Kiran Mirchandani (2012) who vividly exposes the microprocesses enacted in the global economy with class, gender, race, and capital exploited through "authenticity" work in call centers.

To a large extent, the research on outsourcing and offshoring has been primarily concerned with the implications for the home economy, with few studies considering its impact on the host country (Abugattas 2007). Of studies that are concerned with offshoring and developing countries, much of the focus is on India, since this region is seen as paving the way among developing countries and reports optimistically assume that other developing economies can follow suit. According to one consultancy study (McKinsey Global Institute 2005), India is the main provider of the offshoring industry, accounting for more than 80 % of all offshoring activity in developing countries, with most of the export of software and ITES going to the USA and UK (UNCTAD 2003). In this respect, the geographical spread from developed to developing countries is limited. Of the academic studies which have focused on the host country, therefore, much of the work is primarily based on research reported from India; this informs much of the discussion which follows below.

Our first example concerns the outsourcing of call center work, which has received a considerable amount of media attention as North American and Western European firms offshore voice work to cheaper overseas locations. The second illustration refers to shared service centers, which emerged as back-office administrative jobs and were standardized, consolidated, and then moved offshore. Finally, the IT industry will be profiled: a sector that has enjoyed rapid expansion, particularly in developing economies such as India, where the software export market has made a substantial economic contribution.

2.3 Call Centers

A popular example of outsourced ITES employment concerns call centers offshored to locations such as India, the Philippines, China, and Eastern Europe. Deregulation and the privatization of public services have resulted in investment patterns that "privilege capital" (Carr and Chen 2001). Hence, the appeal of the offshoring of ITES-BPO works, which is intent on taking advantage of different time zones and cheaper land and labor costs, preferably in a location with a high-skilled workforce. In this respect, rather than call center offshoring representing an alternative

"customer servicing paradigm," its development cannot be abstracted from the dynamics of capitalist accumulation (Ellis and Taylor 2006, 111).

On the surface, the offshoring of call center work to developing economies, and its potential to provide white-collar work for women workers, may appear beneficial, yet on closer inspection it appears that the benefits for women are questionable. According to an international study across 17 countries (Holman et al. 2007), international subcontractors are disproportionately located in India, South Africa, Canada, and Brazil. These subcontractors typically provide less training and pay lower wages, while employees have lower levels of job discretion, more intense monitoring, and weaker collective representation.

Taking India as an example, the call center industry operates as a global subcontractor with 73 % of the operations servicing international customers. While many of the employees are well educated and working in full-time, permanent positions, attrition stands at around 40 % (as compared with the average of around 20 % across 17 countries) (Holman et al. 2007). Despite the Indian employees' educational qualifications and ability to respond to the highest number of calls within the set target time, they have the lowest levels of job discretion, the highest levels of monitoring and surveillance, and the lowest labor costs.

When considering the labor process, studies show how the combination of front office (voice) work, carried out mainly at night, and back-office work during the day enables firms to operate around the clock in offshored locations (Taylor and Bain 2005). ICTs thereby facilitate a triumph over capitalism's temporal quandary as operations are split geographically allowing firms to achieve around-the-clock operations (Poster 2007), thus making outsourcing a desirable strategy. Synchronization of shifts with Western work time has a big impact on work-life conflicts in offshored locations, however, as do long shifts, unpaid extra hours completed, long travel times, and inflexibility of provided transport (Taylor et al. 2014). Some regions forbid Indian women to work at night, but such is the imperative to attract investment that the labor department of Maharashtra, after being lobbied by NASSCOM and business organizations, relaxed these regulations (Taylor and Bain 2004), thereby removing restrictions on the workforce.

For Indian workers, one of the consequences of the 24-h day is that (for those serving US customers) they completely reverse their working lives to night time, leading a "double life" (Ramesh 2004), which generates a number of tensions including health ailments and a separation from their family and the household. It has been suggested that the future growth of call center workers in India will primarily be based on an increase of female employees (Baxi 2006; Holman et al. 2007), despite working structures operating against those with familial responsibilities. Mirchandani (2010) discusses the gender hierarchies enacted through three processes: firstly, the construction of caring and servitude as central to the work; secondly, how work is promoted as technically orientated and professional; and thirdly, the masking of organizational responsibility for the impact of shift work on home lives.

There are contradictory pressures since much of the work process is routinized, yet at the same time, problems regarding cultural affinities become increasingly

prominent. In response to adverse customer reactions, a number of firms in the UK with offshoring experiences have relocated back to the host country and now market their home-based operation as a competitive advantage. In order to minimize the negative customer response, employers demand a constructed cultural identity, which may sit uneasily with cultural identity within the host location. This is not intended to imply that the cultural landscape is previously untouched by Western influences (Cohen and El-Sawad 2007) but cultural difference is leveraged as a control mechanism. A key challenge that call center workers face in India is the neutralization of their diction and the cultural assimilation that is assumed as they adopt anglicized names while "smiling down the phone" (Taylor and Bain 2004). Mirchandani (2004) describes the psychological tensions when workers in Indian call centers are rendered invisible by the adoption of Western identities and are expected to conceal the location of the center. Drawing on years of research, Mirchandani (2012) illustrates the microprocesses of economic globalization and the required performance of "authenticity work" by Indian customer service workers that acts as a legitimacy building activity to enable a transnational customer service encounter to be successful. The transnational service worker is thus actively constructed and socialized and often paying a high personal cost including night working, dislocation from family, and long hours.

As acknowledged by NASSCOM, recession across the world impacts on India given that 60 % of ITES clients are from the USA and 22 % from the UK. Further, financial services are responsible for 50 % of the overall demand for ITES (Taylor et al. 2014), and this sector has been particularly affected by recession in the USA and Europe. Prerecession research indicated the benefits derived from job-hopping or internal promotions (Vira and James 2012), but promotions have since been largely postponed. Moreover, conditions are worsening with dismissal for "poor performers," harsher monitoring, and transport provision curtailed. This has huge impacts on health and personal life (Taylor et al. 2014).

While the call center literature can be categorized as contending visions of optimistic or pessimistic scenarios, much of the existing research has taken place in a Western context. The small, but emerging, literature on call centers in India tells a different story, whereby the reality appears to be more reflective of the dystopian vision of the "sweatshops of the 21st century" (Belt et al. 2002) or "Taylorism through export" (Taylor et al. 2008). Phil Taylor and Peter Bain (2005) have argued that India has reproduced some of the worst aspects of Western call center labor processes in uniquely Indian ways as Indian hierarchical work structures are transposed to ITES-BPO. This provides the environmental context for women's work in Indian call centers, which are themselves embedded in the history and political economy of a region where gender inequality is pronounced (Chen 2000; Kelkar and Nathan 2002). In their research into an area currently underexplored – the Indian BPO call center – Taylor et al. (2010) find that half of the employees are female, working around 50 h a week and dealing with calls that are transactional and standardized with very poor pay and conditions. Shoba Arun and Thankom Arun (2002) suggest that opportunities are created but also reproduce gender

inequalities evident throughout society. So, while this sector may offer employment opportunities previously unavailable for some, the environment is far from ideal.

2.4 Shared Service Centers

The removal of capital import restrictions, coupled with financial deregulation, has been one of the prime determinants of the expansion of service sector employment (Mehra and Gammage 1999). Shared service centers (SSCs) are interesting as an example of the reorganization and restructuring of IT-enabled organizations, clustered in particular locales. They symbolize employment trends, which have witnessed shifts from core to peripheral activities, with the periphery being located in smaller firms and independent contractors (Benería 2003). They exemplify a reorientation within organizations from "jobs" to "tasks" where similar activities are identified, lifted from their locations, and brought together in centers dedicated to certain roles. This trajectory of change sees the simplification of work, through its standardization, centralization, followed by outsourcing and offshoring. Each move is associated with changes in performance, new forms of organizing, reduced cost, and a reframing of work, which claims to separate it from the materiality of location and people.

Many shared service centers surfaced in the mid-1990s for the processing and centralizing of routine or back-office support functions, such as HR, IT, or finance. Reallocating these activities to shared service centers was seen as a way to enable the rest of the firm to concentrate on the strategic aspects of their operations while reaping the benefits from economies of scale. This differentiation and specialization of knowledge has enabled service firms to generate products of predictable quality while speeding up delivery times (Miozzo and Soete 2001).

As the service sector generally offers higher wages and greater job security than the agricultural sector, trends such as the offshoring of shared service centers to developing economies could provide broad improvements in the quality of women's employment (Mehra and Gammage 1999) and help challenge the gendered labor market. Shared services could potentially provide high-skilled, flexible, well-paid jobs which offer a wide range of employment, such as accounting technicians, qualified accountants, or payroll specialists in finance SSCs or specialists with relevant professional qualifications in HR SSCs. While we acknowledge that issues of concern to UK employees are not simply replicated elsewhere, a study of shared service centers in the UK (Howcroft et al. 2008) argues that these highly gendered environments fail to operationalize policies and practices that support and encourage women at work. Their concern with "transformation," which is geared toward cost-saving efficiencies, ongoing relocation, and standardization with a narrowing of skill differentiation, offers limited opportunities for career development. Within the service industry, particularly banking, finance, and insurance, women are predominantly based at the lower-paid and less-skilled employment levels, with few occupying positions in management (Standing 1999). In India, female employees in ITES

tend to be concentrated in particular occupational areas, which are generally the lower-skilled jobs related to data entry, and they comprise only a small percentage of managerial personnel (Hafkin and Taggart 2001).

Of women employed within the service sector, employers prefer young, single women, with a good education. Moreover, rapidly shifting technologies result in the remuneration of young new hires rather than experienced workers (Benería 2003). Underlining the assembly-line nature of the work, employers require flexible working with shifts, which frequently prevents women with families from taking jobs during off-peak hours.

2.5 The IT Sector

In the first phase of global migration to Asia in the 1970s, IT-related jobs were labor-intensive, contingent, primarily assembly-line or semiskilled, and low-wage, with long hours and harsh conditions (Castells 1996, 1997; Mehra and Gammage 1999). Much of the production focused on low-technology consumer goods, such as radios and televisions. Over the last 20 years, however, the pattern has changed from making IT to using IT. The IT workforce is, therefore, a fairly new profession, yet we find that women occupy a minority of positions indicating that gender inequalities are being replicated in these industries (Hafkin and Taggart 2001). Globally, we see that while IT work is on the increase, women constitute only 25 % of the global IT workforce (Ahuja 2002). In addition, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines have seen a rise in urban and upper and middle class women participating in the IT labor market (Gupta 2014), largely as a result of access to education and liberalization policies during the 1990s. While NASSCOM has optimistically predicted that women will increase their representation in the IT industry (NASSCOM 2006), government and industry-related initiatives elsewhere have seen a reduction in the female IT workforce as numbers of women working in the IT sector around the world have continued to shrink (Ahuja 2002; Griffiths et al. 2007). In 2004, India surpassed the USA in women's IT workforce participation at 35 % (Poster 2013), yet the percentage of women working in IT in India has more recently decreased from 26 % in 2010 to 22 % by 2012 (Lannon 2013).

Anchored within the ideology of the new economy, much has been written about the so-called IT revolution and its potential transformative power. Taking the example of India, described as the clear leader in the field (Sahay et al. 2003), IT is the fastest growing industry within this developing economy (D'Mello 2006), employing over 1 million workers. In India, the IT industry contributes 7.5 % GDP – up from 1.2 % in 1999 (Gupta 2014). Much of the mainstream media, and agencies such as NASSCOM, explain the competitiveness of the IT industry as arising from the levels of English proficiency among well-educated people. Yet, despite the scale and potential of this sector, gender relations have been largely ignored in studies of offshore software development (D'Mello 2006). Although it is considered to be a safe job for women, gender inequalities are reproduced (Arun et al. 2006; Gupta

2014). Gendered job segregation is rife, and attitudes prevail that a woman should have primary responsibility for the family. Performance and appraisal systems have been shown to be biased, both because these assumptions are built-in and because the appraisals are conducted by senior male managers who tend to hold the view that men can work more flexibly and are better at working under pressure (Arun et al. 2006; Gupta 2014).

In an ethnographic study of workplace practices in global software organizations in Mumbai, India, Marisa D'Mello (2006) describes how employees, interacting across time and space, are consistently required to work long hours to accommodate different time zones and frequently operate in crisis mode with tight project deadlines while having to constantly update their skills in response to rapid changes in technology. In addition to these demands, the mobile nature of these types of occupations also works to women's disadvantage as they experience difficulties when faced with long hours, expectations of overseas travel, and participation in informal social networks (Adam et al. 2008).

Their domestic circumstances also result in women being less inclined to "job-hop," taking advantage of higher salary negotiations and benefits that often come with new modes of employment. These material circumstances work against women, and, consequently, the majority of women IT workers carry out routine work, while their male counterparts are appointed to analytical and managerial positions (Hafkin and Taggart 2001; Ahuja 2002).

In India, many software firms can be found in urban clusters and IT-based special development zones such as Bangalore, Mumbai, Delhi, and Hyderabad (renamed Cyberabad). Within the Indian IT sector, the unemployment rate has been described as "endemic," and as a result, unemployed IT graduates move among different cities in the search for work, or are pushed into emigration as part of the body-shopping business (Biao 2007), which has the effect of driving salaries down. These issues of flexibility, mobility, and decreasing pay are undoubtedly gendered and work against many female IT professionals.

One study of the IT industry in India considered the informal sector (comprising body shops, training institutes, and unemployed or semi-employed IT workers), which has been deemed integral to the expansion and development of the formal IT sector both in India and abroad (Biao 2007). Informal sector activity has also provided initial work experience for many IT workers, preparing them for work in the industry; for example, the majority of IT professionals in Andhra Pradesh entered the international workforce via the informal sector. These workers provide cheap and flexible labor for the global market and also provide a resource base that allowed body shops to survive the market downturn following the "dot-com boom." Clearly, informal sector work has been integral to the development and success of India's software industry.

Although it has been argued that the IT industry offers a less discriminatory environment than other employment options in India (Heeks 1998), nevertheless, the social and cultural construction of gendered identities is heavily implicated in the everyday practices of technology work. As D'Mello (2006) eloquently argues, these sites in India are far from a "level playing field" for female and male IT

workers, embodying stereotyped gender norms and traditional gender relations. Women are encouraged to join a modern global workforce but retain traditional gendered ways of being (Basi 2009). Studies show that while men are concentrated in the more prestigious export software firms, women can be found in higher proportion in domestic low-end and IT-enabled services, suggesting a clear gender differential in access to employment in this sector (Suriya 2003). In this respect, gender is a marker that continues to sort out high tech from low tech. Most women in the IT global workforce are reported to be less than 30 years of age – the median age of Indian IT employees, for example, is 24 (Lannon 2013) – and predominantly employed in lower-level jobs such as programming. Moreover, women are underrepresented in higher-level occupations, such as consulting and project management (Kelkar et al. 2002; Suriya 2003). A further problematic element in this shift is that as increasing numbers of women enter the IT professions, there is a drop in salaries, status, and working conditions. The domain of masculinity becomes increasingly feminized.

2.6 Developing Gender Research in ITES Work

Kathryn Ward and Jean Pyle (2000) suggest extending the understanding of gender matters in the global labor market to the development of more relevant theoretical frameworks and building political and economic strategies to change women's situations for the better across the globe. In this paper, as well as considering the consequences of ITES labor market opportunities for women generally, we have also called for a more holistic consideration of women's situation. In this section, we suggest some new avenues of research to help gain a greater understanding of gender matters in the global outsourcing of service work.

Since the 1980s, the centrality of gender to economic and social change has been understood by many in development agencies and international organizations, formalized by requirements to embed gender matters within project and funding aims – known as "gender mainstreaming" (Kothari 2002; Perrons 2004). While gender mainstreaming has attempted to bring about institutional transformation, experience has shown that it has had limited success (Rao and Kellner 2003) and there is evidence to suggest that the instrumentalization of these issues within projects does not necessarily serve feminist goals or may in fact be in conflict with them (Benería 2003). All too frequently, it is based on an "add women and stir" approach and fails to question some of the liberal assumptions about global capitalist expansion and competition. There is, therefore, a crucial requirement to build an understanding of the intersections of gender, formal, and informal labor markets, service work, ICTs, and globalization. While this paper represents an attempt to achieve this, the research is literature based. We recognize this as a limitation and strongly advocate the need for detailed qualitative and quantitative studies that offer a grounded analysis that acknowledges the experiences of women's lives. What is to be done should embrace both research and policy dimensions. When analyzing women's economic

position, theoretical models, for example, need to incorporate gender, class, ethnicity, and the changing role of corporations, the totality of work, and the role of the state (Ward and Pyle 2000). There also needs to be an awareness of the role of state policy and the intertwining of gender, class, and ethnicity within this. An understanding of the way the state shapes women's economic lives is crucial to developing strategies for effective change and improvement (Ward and Pyle 2000, 320). We suggest the following avenues for further research:

2.6.1 Develop Definitions and Statistical Baselines

Firstly, problems of definitions and inaccurate statistics persist. Research in developing statistical baselines is required to reveal the detail of women's economic activity, much of which currently remains invisible (Elson 1999). Greater understanding of global, regional, and local variances would be beneficial. In addition, there is no accepted definition of services for the calculation of national accounts or for the measurement of international transactions (Miozzo and Soete 2001). When carrying out this type of research, it is important to understand the social and the cultural aspects as well as the economic, since these elements are less easy to quantify and are often erroneously deemed less significant (Heintz 2006). Research into comparative work histories also helps to move away from reliance on formal labor force statistics (Ward and Pyle 2000).

2.6.2 Research the Specifics Within the Formal and Informal Economy

Research is needed into the formal and informal economy, in particular the provision of in-depth studies of women in specific regions and within specific global commodity chains. It is inadequate to look only at the formal sector, and greater gender analysis is required for both formal and informal sectors (Ward and Pyle 2000). Few policymakers have explicitly addressed the opportunities and constraints faced by informal workers in the context of global integration and competition (Carr and Chen 2001), yet there are examples that challenge this (Pearson 2003). Especially lacking is knowledge about the outsourcing of ICT-enabled service sector tasks to home-based workers. This requires both building up statistical knowledge as well as drawing on women's lived experiences as they move between formal and informal work. Since the invisibility of informal employment affects women far more than men (Standing 2006), there is a particular need to include all aspects of employment in research. For example, emphasis could be placed on studying the grass roots in terms of participation along the global services chain. Ruth Pearson (2003) draws our attention to action by the Central American Women's Network to

implement voluntary codes of conduct (VCCs), which are concerned with labor conditions along the value chain and request that the main contractor takes responsibility for the pay and conditions of all workers at every stage in the process. Most women are faced with no alternatives to this type of work; however, it should not be at any price. What women workers want is "Trabajo – si pero con dignidad" ["Work, yes – with dignity"] (Red Centro Americana de Trabajadoras de la Maquilas, cawn@gn.apc.org, cited in Pearson 2003).

2.6.3 *Consider Both Paid and Unpaid Work to Appreciate the Totality of Women's Lives*

There is a gender division of labor between paid and unpaid work. A woman's position in the labor market is inextricably linked to experiences in the home and the domestic division of labor. As James Heintz (2006) explains, women work more in unpaid nonmarket activities than men, and this limits the options that are available to them in the global labor market. The totality of both paid and unpaid work must, therefore, be considered when researching constraints on women's ability to participate in the labor market. Data is needed on where women work and the proportion of time spent in formal, informal, and domestic sectors.

2.6.4 *Provide Detailed Historical and Occupational Studies*

A comprehensive understanding of gender, technology, and development would enable a greater appreciation of how the emergence of new occupations and divisions of labor can be perceived as gendered. Rather than viewing this as a property of the technology per se, an understanding of the broader context of gendered labor markets and "women's work" may enable power relations and future outcomes to be contested. Detailed sectoral and occupational studies are required to trace the historical precedents and explain the outcomes for different groups of workers.

2.6.5 *Focus on International Regulation of Labor and Recognition of Workers' Rights Globally*

International regulation within the World Trade Organization structure (such as TRIPS and GATS) concerns international economic activity yet neglects to cover international regulation of labor (Pearson 2003). While there has been concern about the economic consequences of "protectionism," nevertheless, research on policy to enable the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of

compulsory labor, and the abolition of job discrimination would be a step forward. One such example of this is from the Central American Women's Network (CAWN), which includes organizations of women workers in Nicaragua and Honduras. This group demanded an end to discrimination, job security for all, consideration in the workplace (no mental, verbal, or physical abuse), access to national social security benefits, a minimum wage, limits to the length of the working day, pay for overtime, freedom to organize and be involved in collective bargaining, and a ban on child labor (Pearson 2003, 30). Studies need to focus on issues of organizing and unionization to highlight progress toward better working conditions. Emerging research concerning trade unionism and ITES in India reveals the challenges of building a meaningful presence among a workforce lacking collectivist traditions (Taylor et al. 2008).

In addition, legislation improving the position of nonstandard workers is required, so that "flexible" ways of working are no longer considered deviant and thus devalued (Stanworth 2000). Working conditions need to be more closely examined to identify differences between international firms or in the same sector internationally (Ward and Pyle 2000). For example, labor laws that limit the working hours of employees in the North do not apply in the South, neither do they apply to foreign employees of the same US firm when they locate overseas (Poster 2007). There is a need for cross-national studies to identify the equal opportunity policies in outsourcing firms with an international comparison of how these are played out in practice.

2.6.6 Consideration Needs to Be Given to All Dimensions of Inequality

Finally, although our focus has been primarily on gender, equally the path of change is shaped around class and racial/ethnic processes. As Joan Acker (2006) points out, the notion of "intersectionality" is important in pushing forward our understanding of complex inequalities and the diverse realities of people's experiences.

2.7 Conclusion

To summarize, given the broader context of the feminization of labor and the growth of the informal economy, we suggest that caution is needed before drawing positive conclusions about the employment opportunities provided by the ITES sector and the prospects of advancement for women in developing economies. The mobilization of large numbers of women workers has taken place primarily in export-oriented, labor-intensive industries relying on low-cost labor for global markets. Women predominate in industries with poor quality employment where profit

margins are protected by reducing labor costs, extending working hours, or reducing the number of formal workers (Heintz 2006; Standing 2006). For many women workers within the service sector, these local and global tensions become embedded within their everyday lived experience, varying between types of service work and across different locations, depending on the contextual specificity. Clearly, there are different development experiences according to sector types, regions, locales, and familial structures. These experiences, however, must be considered within the broader picture of social, cultural, and economic positioning. So, far from reshaping women's lives and creating new opportunities, we suggest that the global sourcing of ITES work offers limited benefit to women. Cultural factors still militate against progress for women by systematically downgrading and devaluing "women's work," while material structures continue to restrict their vertical and global mobility. This arises from the gendered contradiction in the way in which capitalist societies operate, between the goals and organization of capitalist production processes and the goals and organization of families/households (Acker 2006).

The global recession since 2008 has illustrated the vulnerabilities of a number of sectors to Western economic decision-making (Taylor et al. 2014), and this is reflected in a slowdown in ITES-BPO growth (Vira and James 2012). Benefits such as transport to work and opportunities for promotion have been affected by the recession in the West with cost cutting through "performance excellence" further increasing harsh performance management and pressure on the workforce – provoking work-life conflicts for women in particular. So, technology, the global economy, and marketization have come together to drive the growth of ITES-BPO, but these processes also mirror the stress, insecurities, and vulnerability of employees (Arun et al. 2006). Market demand can therefore increase participation of women in paid work but is affected by continuing gender segregation, gendered assumptions, and the requirement to meet social and cultural approval (Arun and Arun 2002).

The continuance of oppression and discrimination is not inevitable, however, and social change is possible. Examples of collective organizing have provided workers with a voice that highlights the reality of their working lives, enabling those involved in the global division of capitalist production to connect with international systems of solidarity and fight for change. The assumption that transnational corporations can operate in a borderless global economy pursuing profit at any cost is unsustainable in the long term; therefore, raising political questions about the viability of this model and drawing attention to these practices can only serve to further undermine it.

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Chapter 3
Paradox of Empowerment and Marginalization

Women in Computer Science in India

Roli Varma

Despite various initiatives by the National Science Foundation, information technology (IT) companies like Google and Microsoft, and nonprofit organizations such as the National Center of Women in Information Technology to achieve gender equality in computer science (CS), the proportion of women studying CS remains low in the USA. Since 2000, the share of CS bachelor's degrees awarded to women has declined by 10 %. In 2013, women earned only 18 % of bachelor's degrees in CS (National Science Board 2016). The same is the case in Europe where women represent around 17 % of total graduates in CS (Ansip 2014).

The dearth of women in CS in the USA and Europe, however, can be contrasted with the situation in non-Western countries. Studies conducted in Iran (Shashaani and Khalili 2001), Hong Kong (Lee 2003), Mauritius (Adams et al. 2003), Taiwan (Fan and Li 2005), and Malaysia (Lagesen 2008) show that CS is a popular major among women. Despite no special initiatives undertaken by the Indian government, IT companies, or nonprofit organizations to encourage women's enrollment in CS, there are a large numbers of women studying CS in India (Varma 2009, 2010, 2011). Since India's independence in 1947, women's participation in higher education has been growing. In 1950, women accounted for just about 10 % of all students in higher education, yet, by the year 2011, women accounted for 44 % of students enrolled in higher education (Frehill and Cohoon 2015). Enrollment data shows that women constituted 42 % of students in CS and computer engineering at undergraduate level, 67 % at master level, and 53 % at doctoral level (Government of India 2012/2013).

Does this imply that CS is a "women-friendly" field in India? Based on in-depth interviews with female CS students in India, this paper illustrates the prevalence of gender issues in CS, despite the high presence of women. It reveals a paradox and

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argues that female students seem to be empowered with a degree in CS and yet they remain marginalized within the Indian social setup.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

In the last two decades, the scholarly literature specifically on women in CS in the West has grown (Ahuja 2002; Cohoon and Aspray 2006; Singh et al. 2007). Overall, existing research has identified a number of factors that contribute to the relative paucity of women in CS in the USA and Europe.

It has been argued that there is a subtle gender-based socialization, which shapes the expectations of parents, teachers, and the students themselves that CS is more suited for men than for women (Varma 2002; Beyer et al. 2004). A number of studies have focused on the objective conditions, namely, the digital divide, the small proportion of women among CS faculty, gendered recruitment techniques and pedagogy, and the harassment of female students by their male peers (Katz et al. 2003; Varma 2007a). Another set of studies have highlighted how women's subjective evaluations of their self-efficacy lead to alienation and a feeling of not fitting in, which makes the study of CS unappealing (Irani 2004; Varma et al. 2006; Grant et al. 2009). Most importantly, several studies show the CS field as dominated by the "geek" culture – a set of idealized male norms such as falling in love with computers with the first exposure, being extraordinarily well versed in the inner workings of computers, being myopically focused on them to the point of obsession, and being antisocial – from which women distance themselves (Kvande and Rasmussen 1989; Rasmussen and Håpnes 1991; Stepulevage and Plumeridge 1998; Margolis and Fisher 2003; Varma 2007b).

There are four main feminist theories that have addressed the question of women in IT. Reconfiguration feminist theory emerged in the early 1980s when gender was not considered an analytical category in the social analysis of technical developments. For instance, Cynthia Cockburn (1983) showed how men have used new technologies to assert their dominance over women. Using the example of the printing industry, she illustrated that men defined themselves as skilled compositors since they were responsible for hot metal composition, which has to be lifted (about 50 lbs) in printing. They protected their gender positions by claiming that compositors had to be men since women could not lift large weights. Further, they defined women as incapable of dealing with printing technology and did not permit composition work done by women to be printed. As a result, the gains of technological innovation were unevenly distributed, giving men more access to technical jobs and higher pay than women. Moreover, much contemporary scholarly research has shown that women have been excluded from the computing field and how such exclusions have contributed to the dynamic between CS and masculinity (Peterson 2007).

Cyber feminist theory focuses on the specific area of cyber culture and gender. It is based on the assumption that cyberspace and the Internet are inherently democratic

spaces, open to everyone and devoid of gender. In the world of IT, women can be liberated by breaking out of restrictions imposed on them through long history of masculine domination. For instance, Sadie Plant (1997) addresses the male as "1" and female as "0". She sees an emerging world of women and IT set against the old world of patriarchy. She celebrates new cyber technologies as central in the fundamental shift in power from men to women and shows the inclusion of women in the World Wide Web, Internet, and other net-based communication technologies.

Cyborg feminist theory is neither positive nor negative about IT. Instead, it views IT as both an opportunity and a threat. For instance, Donna Haraway (1991) defines the cyborg as a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality, as well as a creature of fiction. She argues against naturalism (all phenomena can be justified in terms of natural causes) and essentialism (all entities of the same kind possess a common set of characteristics), since these see innate differences between men and women, which are used as an explanation for why there are so few women in IT. Further, she proposes taking into account race and class to show complexities and contradictions in the relationship between gender and IT. She seeks to create coalitions based on affinity instead of identity since IT comprises extensions of the human body.

Finally, technofeminist theory seeks to find a balance between pessimistic ideas about gender and IT on the one hand and utopian ideals on the other hand. It sees IT as an opportunity for women to further their progress in the technological arena. For instance, Judy Wajcman (2004) sees IT as both a source for and a consequence of gender relations. She sees men as ill prepared for a postmodern future and women as ideally suited to the new technoculture. She regards women as more skilled communicators than men in the occupations that rely on information. She contends, however, that technologies are gendered in both their design and use, and women will not find computer technology liberating to them until they start designing it.

These theories start from the assumption that CS and the world of IT is male dominated. However, rather than being a universal assumption, this is an Anglo-Saxon and Eurocentric portrayal of CS. In contrast, women's participation in CS in India is relatively high in terms of the enrollment data, as mentioned earlier. This chapter raises the question of how useful and applicable these theories are for understanding women's position in CS in India. The chapter argues that an analysis of the Indian context for CS and the cultural/social meaning of gender in India allows for a fuller reconstruction of gender and CS.

3.2 Method

This chapter is based on in-depth interviews that were conducted by the author with 60 female undergraduates majoring in CS in India in 2007 and 2008. The technique of in-depth interviews was selected because there is little detailed information on women studying CS in India. The study took place in two technical institutes and two universities that granted 4-year bachelors' degrees in CS. One campus is the top

national technical institute, and the other is a well-known regional technical institute. To ensure that minorities in India were included, one university was historically Muslim, and the other was predominantly Sikh. Random sampling was used to select 15 subjects who were in their second and later years of studies at each institution. Once approached, all students participated in the study. The interviews were structured in the sense that only certain issues were covered, and they were also unstructured in the sense that they resembled private conversations with the subjects. Such a combination allowed subjects to express themselves in depth, while the author could maintain control over the topics and explore interesting leads. Each interview lasted anywhere from less than an hour to an hour and a half.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and inserted in the NVivo program for data analysis. Two independent coders coded the same data to ensure reliability. Typically, students gave multiple answers; thus, two tables were created – primary/first response and how often a response occurred. Once all interviews were coded, the author analyzed the data for possible relationships between concepts and variations in the patterns observed. Attention was paid to the number and types of properties, noting not only how many subjects exhibited a concept but also how that concept exhibited itself. The Institutional Review Board at the author's institution, which granted the permission to collect primary data, requires that the names of sites and subjects are not disclosed.

The interview guide comprised questions dealing with demographic information, early schooling, IT resources in schools/at homes, family support for education, precollege career aspirations, the CS program at their institution, and CS gender-specific issues. The following five (and demographic questions) questions posed to female students formed the basis for this paper:

- Are careers with a CS degree attractive to women? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- Why do you think there are so few women that study CS in your program?
- What attracts men to study CS in your program?
- Do women encounter obstacles that men do not in your CS program? If yes, can you give some examples?
- Do any incidents come to mind that are related to being a woman in your CS program? If yes, could you elaborate?

3.3 Findings

Since this is a qualitative study, findings are reported with interview excerpts to highlight the complexity of concepts and by frequency to show their strength.

3.3.1 Demographic Information

All of the students interviewed were young, unmarried women between the ages of 19 and 22. They were in their second to fourth year of CS studies. Other than being a full-time student, none of these students held a job while attending their university. Almost all of them characterized their family background as middle class, with many specifying that they fit into an upper middle-class category. Their depiction is reflective of the occupations of the students' parents, especially their fathers, who were professionally employed. Another indicator was that 40 % of the sample had both parents working. Although the study took place in a predominantly Sikh and a historically Muslim university, almost 75 % of students were born to Hindu families. Of the Hindu students, a majority was of the middle caste, with one-quarter belonging to a high caste. Prior to attending a university, most students attended private schools, and the rest attended central government schools. All these schools had English as a medium of instruction. These students were admitted in their current institutions based on their score in the institute's entrance exam or central/state board exam. Once admitted, they were allowed to choose their field of studies based on the marks they received in the exam; these students enrolled themselves in CS.

3.4 Attraction of a CS Degree for Women in India

In response to the question whether careers with a CS degree were attractive to women, all students enthusiastically said "yes" and gave various reasons for it, which were characterized into three categories. The majority of students (84 % total response, 54 % first response) identified high-paying job opportunities with a CS degree. The next category mentioned by the students (73 % total response, 34 % first response) was the good work environment that a CS job provided. The remaining students (39 % total response, 12 % first response) pointed out social and psychological benefits such as independence, self-esteem, and social status as making CS degrees attractive to women.

A large majority of students claimed that a CS degree would provide many prospects within the job market. They explained that because computers and computer resources are a growing part of many different fields, employment opportunities could be found in multiple sectors, fields, and locations. Students, mostly from technical institutes, also looked forward to the jobs in big multinational companies. They also believed that a CS degree increased the likelihood of beginning a career immediately after finishing their degree, as well as improved career security. In addition to finding jobs, students reported expectations that IT jobs come with a higher salary compared to other fields. High pay certainly added to the attractiveness of a CS degree since it was perceived to offer women a better standard of living

and a better future for themselves and their families. The following interview excerpts illustrate these three aspects – employability, security, and social status:

> CS is more attractive than other branches of engineering because it gives you job security. You are bound to get a job in a big software company. You even have a prospect to get a job in a multinational company [and] thus travel abroad (National Technical Institute).

> Because it pays a lot. This is the most important thing in women's minds… We have not earned much thus [we are] not valued. With a CS degree, we can earn a lot and be more valuable, more respected everywhere (Regional Technical Institute).

> If I had opted for BSC, then I will only get a teaching job in a private school with 3,000 or 4,000 rupees per month… with a B-tech in CS, I can work in a private company and get at least 25,000 per month (Predominantly Sikh University).

> In our country, CS and electronics are supposed to be the top most branches. Plus, you have more options open after four years in terms of high-paying job, working in big companies and going abroad. Other branches are limited to some extent (Historically Muslim University).

The second group of students described a comfortable work environment of CS jobs as an important factor as to why a CS degree was so attractive. They elaborated that they considered CS jobs as generally desk jobs, in which an employee worked in a secure office. Some students added that they would have air conditioning and get to drink coffee, further detailing the expected level of comfort that women would receive in these work settings. In addition, they would not have to travel often, work in a construction field or in a factory, have on-site visits, or work in dangerous places. Also, they would have regular daily hours instead of the random time structures associated with medicine. For these reasons, students believe that parents are much more pliable in consenting to women's desires to maintain employment. Some students even said that CS jobs are family friendly, meaning that they earned familial support or approval. The following interview excerpts are examples from the "good working environment" category:

> If you go into any other field like mechanical or chemical, you will be employed in a factory and do the physical labor… Even in medicine, you will be standing the whole day and work long hours. In CS, you are sitting in your office, which is a safe environment; still you contribute a lot to the society (National Technical Institute).

> You don't have to travel a lot. Your family will not like you to do a job, which involves traveling even if you are interested in it. They don't like you going out in the sun, spending the whole day in the field and talking to field workers. With a CS job, you sit in a room, in air-condition room and program something or debug something (Regional Technical Institute).

> With CS job, you can balance your home life and work life. It is not possible in many other engineering branches because of off-site work, travel, unusual hours, etc. (Predominantly Sikh University).

> Most people in India say that the women should not do physical work. So, families don't like women to go out and do physical work. This is not the case with the CS jobs because they involve mental work. So, families don't create barriers for women to work in the software industry (Historically Muslim University).

Family and social controls are complex social tools that make freedom difficult for many Indian women. A CS job was perceived to provide women with independence and the freedom to dictate how they want to live their lives, at least to some degree. One of the strong appeals of the CS program was that students felt that it ensured that they would find a job immediately after finishing their degree and thereby help them to evade marriage and their parents' plans. In addition, they felt that CS jobs would provide them with the attributes of a respected job and self-confidence, attributes that are out of reach for many women. Some of the students even claimed that by holding jobs in CS, women would be helping to elevate the status and dispel negative perceptions of women throughout the country. Others said that a job in CS would allow them to exercise their minds regularly, with critical and analytical analysis that will prove that they have the ability to be rationally minded, similar to their male counterparts. According to them, the ability to perform the technical and logical parts of the job also increased women's standing in society at large. Below are female students' voices on the "social benefits" that they believe they will experience following a degree in CS:

> CS courses are very logical. It is not like chemistry where you have to memorize symbols and formulas. It is also not like biology where you have to memorize technical words and definitions. In CS, you have to think why this is happening? Why not this way? Why not that way? So, it helps to change the image of girls that they cannot think and they can only memorize subjects. (National Technical Institute)

> Actually CS is a technical field. So, doing well in it tells the whole world that you are intelligent, you are analytical, you are technically very strong. You end up feeling good about yourself, about your abilities. You start developing confidence. You become a different person. (Regional Technical Institute)

> CS jobs come with a lot of prestige not only for you, but for the entire family. Neighbor starts praising you because they think you have a sharp brain to figure out how to make [a] computer work… This gives you a lot of respect, builds a lot of confidence in you. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Ma'am, you don't know how hard it is for women to live in India. We have to get approval to do what we want to do. CS will make life rather easy for us. It will give us freedom to be on our own feet…It will give us a good package job, which will allow us to do what we would like to do. (Historically Muslim University)

3.4.1 Status of Women in CS in India

The students were asked to reflect on the status of Indian women in CS, often understood as a male-dominated field. Students' responses were characterized into three categories. The collective answer of the majority of students (68 %) acknowledged the existence of a gender gap, developed from a mixture of social biases and structural obstacles. However, students were not uniform in their interpretation of the situation. Indeed, the remaining students (32 %) asserted that there was not a significant gender gap. They cited either other programs with worse ratios, the belief that CS was actually a positive fit for women, or that the ratio in the program was near

parity. They also stated that the numbers of women in their CS program were growing so that any gendered imbalances were narrowing. Below are some interview excerpts that refute uneven representation of women in CS:

> Ma'am, it is other way around. You find more females in CS than in other fields of engineering. (National Technical Institute)

> The number of girls in CS is increasing. If you look at other branches such as mechanical and civil, the numbers of girls is much less. (Regional Technical Institute)

> I don't think you are right. We have fifty/fifty ratio. So, your question will not apply here. There are many girls in our class. The toppers are girls. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> It is not true that number of women is low in CS. Actually, it is more compared with many other fields here. If you go to physics or mathematics, you will hardly find any female. True, we are lower compared with biology where most women tend to go. But, it is changing in CS. (Historically Muslim University)

The most frequently given explanation as to why fewer women went into CS came from students (77 % total response, 45 % first response) who felt that social/cultural standards and perceptions prevented many girls from entering technical fields. The most popular response was that many Indians envisioned technical fields, especially engineering as being male-oriented fields. Along the same lines, students referenced the social perception that girls were supposed to go into feminine fields such as medicine, biology, commerce, arts, or social studies. Some of them described the perception that women did not belong in college at all. This belief went hand in hand with the idea that women's first priority was marriage and raising a family. They stated that families pressure them not only to marry after 12th class (17–18 years old) but also to stay close to home. They further gave examples of their friends whose degree in CS created hardship because families then had a more difficult time matching their daughters to "proper" grooms. Below are some interview excerpts showing the "social bias" women face in contemporary India:

> This is because of the conception in high school that only boys go into engineering and girls go into medical, humanities or commerce. So, girls do not pick the engineering stream when they finish high school [ninth to tenth schooling] and go to intermediate [eleventh to twelfth schooling]. Even if they want to pick the engineering stream, parents will not let them because they think that boys have better aptitude for technical things than girls. (National Technical Institute)

> In India, family plays a big role. Without their support, girls can't do anything. From the very beginning, from childhood, the parents keep paying their attention toward the boys. They think boys must study. They will not take no if boys do not want to study. But, they don't think that girls must study. They think it will be good if girls study but they are not worried like they are for boys. So, girls themselves believe they do not need to study or work hard… And CS demands you to be very good in study and work hard. (Regional Technical Institute)

> Ma'am, I am somewhat shy to say this. But my parents are concerned that if I study a lot I will have a problem in getting married. They will have to find a boy who is more educated than me. Because I am studying CS, they are worried that they will not find an engineer groom. We belong to the business community and not many boys study engineering… My parents will not allow me to do [master of technology] because it would mean even more problem in getting me married. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> There is a perception that women should be excluded from higher education because their final destiny is marriage and raising kids. The four walls of the house is just their destiny. So, many people are still living in the old world. (Historically Muslim University)

The remaining students (48 % total response, 23 % first response) pointed out that a reason why so few women were in CS was because they lacked support in one form or another, including motivation or encouragement on one side and opportunities or financial backing on the other. Some of these students explained that without the resources to afford proper coaching to help students do well on the entrance exam, any students would have a hard time. The following interview excerpts display "structural obstacles" which women experience to succeed:

> It is because parents spend lots of money for boys and they spend very little money for girls. Getting into [National Technical Institute] requires a lot of coaching in good schools, a lot of financial support from the parents, which is mostly kept for boys. Then there should be mental or emotional support and families tend to provide that also to boys. Most families think that girls do not need mental or emotional support since they know how to adjust. Since families are supporting mostly boys, you see more boys going into CS. (National Technical Institute)

> Parents would not send their daughters to good private schools and good coaching centers because they are expensive. They think that it is more important to spend money for girls' marriage than for girls' studies. (Regional Technical Institute)

> Well, I really had to convince my parents to allow me to study CS. They were not keen because they are keeping money to spend on my marriage and they did not want to accumulate new expense. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Well, thinking of Indian people is not so much developed. They don't think that girls should study to get a job. They think that girls should study enough to get married and nothing more… Girls must obey parents. They do not have any money of their own. So, when they think of their future they have to consider resources which parents will be willing to give to them. (Historically Muslim University)

3.4.2 Attraction of Indian Men to CS

In response to the question what attracts men to CS, the students from all institutions described a combination of push and pull factors that helped propel men in the direction of engineering in general and CS in particular. In general, students from all institutions reported answers in comparable numbers, showing that the reasons for men's success are relatively agreed upon by female students across the country. It should be noted that what students characterized as push and pull factors are not opposite to each other; instead they are two sides of the same coin, namely, the culture of masculine dominance.

The large majority of students (82 % total response, 63 % first response) said that motivations for men to enter CS came from the pull factors that the field offered. They believed that the field of CS allows for a high-earning potential, which is a major concern for many men, especially considering that they are supposed to be the family providers. Some students went so far as to say that their male peers did

not care so much for CS in itself as they did for the high salary they could earn with a CS degree. Other students felt that CS is seen as a "boom field" for men with a lot of job opportunities both in India and abroad. In addition, some students stated that men have natural predilections toward engineering, technical gadgetry, and computers. A couple of students suggested that men enter the CS field because it was developed by men, for men, and is continually dominated by men. Below are some interview excerpts, which show the "pull of CS" for men:

> The contention is that men go for engineering. Within engineering, CS is the top-notch branch so they opt for that… With a CS degree, they will get a good job with high pay, for sure. So men prefer CS over let's say chemical, civil or mechanical engineering. They go to other fields if they are not accepted in CS. (National Technical Institute)

> Ma'am, boys think they are good with technical stuff. They think they can manipulate computers. They think they are brainy. They feel superior among friends and family if they are in the prestigious field of CS. (Regional Technical Institute)

> Boys opt for CS to make money. There is a perception that with a CS degree, one can work for a big multinational company. One can make a lot of money by getting a good job package. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Because men have a superior position in the society, they want to dominate everything that is new and powerful. This is the case with computers. We are living in the computer age. The whole of India is changing with computers and they have to take over that field as well. (Historically Muslim University)

The remaining students (53 % total response, 37 % first response) identified the push factors toward CS. According to them, the Indian social context pushes men to be financial providers by being in a technical field. The students generalized that the cultural norm is that men must earn income for their family. Families, therefore, raise their sons with the idea that technical fields are the appropriate pathway for them to take in schools and colleges. This social perception is sustained by financial assistance to men in the form of good private schools and top coaching centers. In addition, there is constant encouragement from family, teachers, and community for men to prioritize technical fields. Interestingly, while both men and women might experience the "pull factors" of CS, such as status and higher salaries, the following interview excerpts describe the "push for CS" that only male students enjoy:

> If a guy says that he wants to study humanities or English he would get opposition from his parents. But if a girl says that she wants to study humanities or English, parents will welcome that. So, parents push their sons to study CS but they do not push when it comes to daughters. (National Technical Institute)

> Basically men have always been encouraged to study engineering to be on their own feet. They are pushed to study CS to earn high income, provide for family, and make parents proud. (Regional Technical Institute)

> Well, men don't have to prove themselves that they are good with computers. Parents, relatives, friends, and schools give computers to them. It does not matter whether they want them or not. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> They are told to study CS by parents, friends, and teachers. It is because everyone expects men to earn money and the CS field is where one can earn good money. Women are told to settle down, get married, and raise children so they join CS after men have saturated the field. (Historically Muslim University)

3.4.3 Obstacles Encountered by Women in CS

When asked to describe the obstacles women encounter in their CS program, the students illuminated a range of impediments that showcase the uphill struggle women face on both societal and familial levels. Many connections are presented between the different obstacles that the students reported, such as the linkage between the problematic social perceptions ubiquitous to Indian culture, the dearth of support women receive, and the family restrictions or pressures women must contend with before entering college or the workforce.

A large majority of students (62 % total response, 47 % first response) labeled a structural restriction at some level as a hurdle women had to deal with to do well in CS and get a job. These students mentioned the difficulties for female students caused by colleges or the hostels that women reside at while attending college. Because of curfews imposed on women at the hostels, or times at which women were no longer allowed to work in the laboratories, female students had a more difficult time completing group projects, especially when trying to work with their male peers. These students further reported that employers queried women about whether they had permission to work from their parents or husbands, whether they would be able to travel, and what the women's marriage plans were. According to them, these types of questions were never asked of male applicants. Interview excerpts below show "structural restrictions," which women face to do well in CS studies and join the workforce:

> I will give you a simple example. Recently, I did a project for which I needed some things that were not available in the close by market. It was not easy for me to go to the other market and return to hostel on time. So, I had to get hold of guys and request them to do a favor for me. They have no problem getting anything from anywhere… What comes naturally for boys, girls have to struggle for the same things, even for such small things. (National Technical Institute)

> Yes. I stay in a hostel. So, I cannot go for night help. I must finish everything between 7 and 8 pm… These are hostel rules. But, boys have no problem in getting these extra things. There are no hostel restrictions for them. So, they end up getting more knowledge because of such opportunities is automatically given to them. (Regional Technical Institute)

> Yes, ma'am. Companies prefer boys for job because they can take a job anywhere. But for girls they are not sure if we can relocate ourselves or whether we will remain with the company once we get married. They ask questions to find out these things but they do not ask boys such questions during placement. We have to convince them that our parents are different and they will allow us to work away from home or that we do not wish to get married for another 4–5 years. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Ma'am, lots of obstacles for women. Like in job placement, unless you are extremely good, companies will not hire you. They think we will get married and quit the job. So, they will hire guys even if they are average and girls only if they are exceptional. (Historically Muslim University)

Over half of the students (52 % total response, 36 % first response) presented evidence that the obstacles women encountered came from gendered societal perceptions about who should go into technical fields. These answers illuminated the

deeply rooted social beliefs that engineering was a male-oriented subject and that women were not right for the field. Another aspect of the social attitudes that presented hindrances for girls were the ideas that women were not supposed to go for post-11th and post-12th class education and that their role was to become wives and stay-at-home mothers. Students from all institutions brought up these beliefs, some saying that they deeply affected how parents and teachers treated girls, and even stating that many women internalize these ideas. These biases reflect authority figures' priority toward men over women, such as teachers who showed heightened interest in the education of male students or parents who chose to spend money only on their sons' education. Below are some interview excerpts, which show the persistence of Indian "gendered technical education":

> When we had a workshop in the first semester, we were supposed to chop a piece of metal and then file it. No girl was allowed to use the machine. Teacher said that physically it will be better if boys use the machine and girls watch them how they are doing it. Such things always come up for girls. (National Technical Institute)

> People think that girls can't do CS because they do not have technical mind or engineering is for men only, engineering is men's job. I think this perception is the biggest obstacle. (Regional Technical University)

> Yeah. Society believes that women are not better than men in technical education. This is a common assumption, which everyone makes, because of which many women believe that they are not better than men… God has made us equal. We both have brains. But the common assumption is that men are better. So, this kind of thinking makes life very hard for a woman. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Yes, definitely. All rules are made by men for themselves. So they have set a lot of restrictions on women. It has made Indian society rather a male-dominated society. For example, men must work and women must stay at home. Men must study and women must get married. Men must go for technical lines and women must go for arts lines. Men must have freedom to do what they like and women must get permission to do what they would like to do. These are obstacles which women face most of times. (Historically Muslim University)

Some students (34 % total response, 17 % first response) explained that women were often forced to make compromises within the family, putting their desires aside to go along with parental decisions. Family pressures certainly present a major obstacle that women have to overcome to enter the field of CS, backed constantly by a context of social attitudes that compel girls to heed their parents' word. The following interview excerpts show the "family constraints" that prevent women from moving ahead in their own desires:

> So many of my friends were as good as me, but parents did not want to spend any extra money on their daughters so they can join coaching, which they did for their sons. (National Technical Institute)

> Yes, ma'am. There are often obstacles. I want to go for higher studies after this degree. But, my family is not allowing me to go outside [this city]. They feel insecure. For my brother, they allowed him to go abroad. For him, they do not feel insecure. Still, my family is better because they allowed me to study here. Many friends of mine were not allowed to go into professional college because they were girls. (Regional Technical Institute)

> I think I am somewhat privileged. My parents are educated and open-minded. But not everyone is lucky like me. Many of my friends are treated from their childhood they must learn household works so that they can get married. They go to school to get a good match. If you are not educated up to high school or so you will not find a good match. This is very partial, very biased. Parents are educating their daughters so they can find a good husband. Boys do not get education so they can get good wives. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Society places lot of restrictions on girls. Like most of my friends have already been married. Parents get worried if girls do not get married by 20 or 21. But for boys it is okay. They can get married late. So, there is a pressure on me also. And every time I have to argue with my parents to let me study. (Historically Muslim University)

3.4.4 Incidents Related to Being a Woman in CS

When asked to describe specific incidents that are related to being a woman in their CS program, a small minority of students (17 %) had nothing to say. They simply stated, "No," "Nothing," or "I don't think so." The overwhelming majority of women (83 %), however, reported a wide range of different incidents that they faced because of their gender. These incidents ranged from what may be construed as trivial teasing to outright bias toward male students. Although most incidents were specific to the CS program and occurred on the campus, some pertained to family and education.

To begin, one-quarter of students (26 %) mentioned activities that fit into the category of biased treatment, mostly from teachers. Students described a range of biases that showed professors having unequal expectations of male and female students with the result being that women had to work harder and perform better to achieve the same acclaim. Biased or preferential treatment also took the form of teachers singling out female students for questioning or reprimand. Below are some interview excerpts on "teaching-related incidents":

> In our training program, there were two girls and a bunch of boys. All of us gave our bio-data to the trainer. He looked at boys' bio-data and took them. He did not conduct any interviews. But when it came to us, he interviewed us. He wanted to see if we have the knowledge and we are mentally prepared for the training. (National Technical Institute)

> In my second semester when I entered into the practical exam, I was very nervous. But to my amazement, professor did not ask me any question about the subject. Instead, he was asking stuff like what does my father do and how many siblings I have. These questions had nothing to do with the practical. He has his mind set that girls cannot do engineering, and he did not hide his mind. I was pretty hurt at that moment. Then he said that I could go. I got really frustrated. I asked him to ask me questions on the practical. Then he asked me one question, which I was able to answer. I got pretty good marks. Now I am having fun telling this, but at that time it really hurt me that girls cannot do engineering. (Regional Technical Institute)

> Actually, there is a difference between boys and girls. Our teachers will give things first to boys or will make boys group leaders. We only get things if there are extras. We only become group leaders if there are no boys left. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> In the first semester, we had a workshop. We were divided into groups for practical. I was the only girl in the practical group. So, I got picked out a lot. It was not in a very bad way. It was more like too many questions were directed toward me. It seemed to me that they wanted to prove that I am wrong and they could say that I am not supposed to do it like that. It was not very disturbing, but it was not pleasant either. (Historically Muslim University)

The next set of incidents narrated by the students (21%) centered on gendered restrictions either from curfews in the hostels in which they lived, from being excluded from male hostels, or from being prohibited from going out at night by themselves. A gendered restriction was created by the fact that male and female students could not enter each other's hostels, thus curtailing the female students' abilities to network with their male peers. This was an issue because the male hostels are seen as impromptu networking sites. It also gave the male students an edge with regard to complicated assignments and group work. Travel for possible internship, additional training, and job interviews was also a problem for women; it is more socially acceptable for a man to travel alone than for a woman. Below are some interview excerpts on "hostel-/travel-related incidents":

> There is one thing that comes all the time. Because sometimes we have to do assignments in groups, it is hard to find students. Generally, boys do not like to form groups with girls. I have many friends who are boys. But when it comes to doing an assignment, they do not include me. It is mostly because I can't go to their hostels or they can't come to my hostel. So, we have to work in the labs and not many students like to stay in the labs throughout the night. (National Technical Institute)

> Because I am a female, I get less exposure compared to boys. They can go out in the evening and meet other people. Going out is not a risky thing for them. But, I can't do the same. It is a risky thing for me… So, they end up learning a lot more because they have more people to interact with and share knowledge with them. We miss out on such opportunities. (Regional Technical University)

> Generally the problems with the girls are they can't move in the evening. Even our hostels they are closed after 6:30 pm. In summer it is around 8 pm. So, we are bounded. The boys are not bounded at all. If they want to go out of the hostel they can go. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> My parents require me to be home as soon as classes are over. So, I can only work with others in between classes, which no one likes to do. (Historically Muslim University)

Another set of incidents narrated by students (18%) was specific to home and family. These students explained that they received less support than their male siblings regardless of that support came in the form of financial assistance or emotional encouragement for higher education. This was mostly because sons are seen as providers for the family, whereas girls are expected to leave home after marriage. Some students explained that parents and relatives also feel that women should not waste too much of their time with a technical education when the ultimate goal for them is to get married and raise a family. Below are some interview excerpts on "family-/home-related incidents":

> Most of my male friends discuss their future plans with their parents, whether they should go for higher education or work. If higher education, whether they should do it in CS or in business. When I discuss my future plans with my parents, they say you should get married after your study, and then you should do anything you like. Marriage is not a variable in my

> male friends' future, but it is in mine. My parents supported me in my study. But, now they are not supporting me to go abroad for a PhD. They want me to settle down first. So, I want to take a job to enjoy my life. (National Technical Institute)

> Because I am a girl, my parents were not keen on spending money for me on coaching when I was in 11th and 12th standards. They did not hesitate to spend 50,000 rupees for my brother. It is same with my other friends. Parents think girls will leave home after marriage so there is no point to spend extra money on them. Generally, girls are equally intelligent as boys, but parents are not prepared for that. (Regional Technical Institute)

> I am the only child of my parents. My dad wants me to be independent. He wants me to be ambitious. But, then he did not let me go to [X university] because he did not want me to be alone in a new city. [X university] is much better than this one. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> One classmate of mine had to drop out in the second semester due to the pressure from her parents. She wanted to study but now she is getting married. She is learning cooking and going to beauty parlors. Her parents say that she can study after marriage also, but it rarely happens. Many of my friends want to study but they are under pressure from their parents to get married. I know some will not be able to further their dreams. (Historically Muslim University)

Finally, some students (15 %) reported incidences of "teasing" – a euphemism for street sexual harassment or molestation of women by men. Students referred to it as a common occurrence, and one even stated that it could be unbearable. The harassment happened both on and outside the campus. Students noted that on their way to campus, they had to go through a "tunnel" of staring, rude comments, and sometimes even touching. On campus, the harassment usually came from male peers and was something the women tried to ignore. Below are some interview excerpts on "teasing-related incidents":

> Well, students tease a lot. They try to touch. (National Technical Institute)

> I take a bus to come to the college. I always get teased. People will stare at me, look at me from top to bottom, whistle at me, say something cheap in my ears, and sometimes even touch me. I can't say this to my parents because they will stop my education. (Regional Technical Institute)

> I hate being teased. If I tell my parents that boys tease me, they will say then why are you going to university? Are you going to get touched? I do not tolerate teasing, but I can't do anything about them. (Predominantly Sikh University)

> Maam there is a lot of teasing. It is not on the campus or in the department. It is outside. But to come to campus, you have to travel outside. I cannot repeat the words that I hear from men… I am not a Muslim, but feel like wearing a burka to avoid being teased. (Historically Muslim University)

3.5 Discussion

All four feminist theories – reconfiguration, cyber, cyborg, and technofeminism – differ with regard to the reasons behind, and solutions for, the gendered nature of IT but agree in seeing computing as a masculine field, an area that is dominated by men

and, thus, inclined to keep women out, unless some steps are taken by women and for women. How CS became a masculine field in the USA and Europe is beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted, however, that with the IT revolution in the USA and Europe, the social context of CS changed. In the 1980s, CS was constructed as a field suited for a small minority of geeks/hackers, who are different from other CS students yet dominate its culture. American and European women, living in a postmodern society, make their personal choices as they want and according to how they want to be perceived by others. They have many choices available to them. If they select CS, they will belong to a field constructed for geeks/hackers and perceived as being antisocial. This does not appeal to many women in the USA and Europe.

This case study, on the other hand, has shown that CS is constructed differently in India. The CS culture in India consists of dedicated, hardworking, intelligent, meticulous, and smart students (men and women). Students interviewed did not say that the Indian male students are attracted to CS because of its geek/hacker image. In fact, students rarely mentioned the word geek. Students were fascinated by computer technology and spent long hours to figure out its inner working. Yet, they did not view CS people as obsessive to the extent of being antisocial, which is a widespread perception in the USA and Europe. CS people in India are not seen as lacking social skills.

As the present case study has shown, female students selected CS as their major based on a practical calculation of the field, namely:

1. Robust potential for employment in national IT companies as well as in multinational companies inside and outside India
2. The omnipresence of computers in non-IT industries
3. The high-pay scale compared to other jobs
4. The opportunity to be working on leading-edge technology
5. The use of mental, rather than manual strength
6. Working indoors at a desk in a less threatening environment, rather than outside in a construction site in an intimidating environment
7. Having the flexibility to work from home at any time

There was no disagreement among female students interviewed on the suitability of the CS field for women. This case study, therefore, adds important nuances to previous research about CS and CS cultures and to theories about the exclusion of women from these fields. It brings into light a range of characteristics, which attract women to CS in India, previously not associated with a CS degree and a CS job in the West. These characteristics constitute a picture distinctly different from the "geek" culture, described as distancing women from the CS field. The case study thus illustrates how CS can be constituted as a "women-friendly" field. The results can also be interpreted as providing an empirical example of what Plant (1997) describes as the emerging world of women and IT set against the old world of patriarchy. Women in India found that the CS degree could be empowering for them and contribute to a shift of power from men to women in the Indian society.

An important question is why women's representation in CS has increased in recent years in India. One answer to this lies in India's rapid economic development and industrialization, which has led to changes in the traditional role of women. Although, following its independence from the British in 1947, India was underdeveloped in relation to the West, it sought to catch up with the scientific and technological advances made in the West by developing/acquiring modern technology and industrializing its economy. Before 1990, however, the Indian government controlled its modernization and industrialization with licenses and regulations. In 1991, the government changed its approach by implementing economic liberalization policies. Now, India provides a more favorable business environment for both national and global corporations (Varma 2009). The IT industry has become a key element in India's attempts to fortify its national economy and develop as a "soft power" in the world. In this context, the Indian IT sector has grown tremendously. It is projected that the total number of IT workers will have grown to 3,750,000 by 2015–2016 (Aggarwal 2008a). Although it began as a demand for low-end skilled IT workers, the demand patterns of IT have changed in favor of high-end skilled workers, requiring CS or an equivalent degree, such as electrical engineering and mathematics (Aggarwal 2008b). The IT industry has, therefore, emerged as a place to provide quality employment to a large number of technical people. As the present study has shown, education in CS equates to high-paying quality jobs for both men and women. The attraction of CS for Indian women, however, is not limited to just their communication ability, as held by cyber feminist theory.

Since independence, Indian women have been getting education as expected by their parents, family members, and communities in large. This education, however, was seen as a means to learn social and home skills; it was not seen as a means to have a job unless there were pressing economic issues. Typically, women were expected to pursue medical and teaching career paths, and not engineering ones, which were seen as suited for men. The growth of IT jobs, however, has led to a greater acceptance of the idea of engineering careers for women. Of all the options open to women in modern India, IT seems to have taken over from medical and teaching careers. This is mostly because CS has been constructed as a field suited for women as this case study has shown; the same is not true, however, with other fields in engineering, where the presence of women remains low. The students interviewed compared CS with physics and other engineering fields to show the changing nature of CS for women. This case study, therefore, shows some support for feminist theories that point out an underrepresentation of women in science and engineering fields.

Typically, an early exposure to computers is considered an important factor in generating interest in CS among students (Adya and Kaiser 2005). Very few female students in this study, however, were exposed to a computer regularly before enrolling in their institutions of higher education. This shows that female students viewed the CS field as suited for women even without having much experience with computers. This study, therefore, does not provide support for the digital divide – the growing gap between men and women in terms of access to IT – as a reason for a lack of interest in CS. This does not mean, however, that the use of computers and

Internet access should not be equitable between men and women. My results show that female students found CS courses quite difficult initially, compared with their male peers, because of a lack of exposure to computers.

In addition, female students viewed many teachers to be inconsiderate of their lack of an adequate background in CS, and they could not get help from their male peers on group projects since they had to return to hostels/homes due to curfews. Despite such difficulties, these female students did not entertain the idea of leaving CS since they felt lucky to be in the CS field. This again strengthens the view that CS is viewed as the best field for women in India.

Another key issue often used to explain CS being less attractive for female students in the USA and Europe is a lack of female role models, which reinforces the image that the CS field is not meant for women (Bonetta 2010). This case study shows that this was hardly an issue for Indian female students. They were attracted to the CS field despite not having any role models. This is not to suggest that female role models would not help to increase representation of women in CS. Instead, the female students were primarily concerned with a lack of computer resources and opportunities to do well in CS in India.

Yet, the relationship between gender and CS in India has its own complexity due to the "patrifocal" Indian social system. Under this patrifocal system, women are subordinated to family: inheritance is patrilineal, residency is patrilocal, family roles are differentiated on gender lines, marriage is controlled by family, and women are expected to practice chastity, domesticity, and obedience (Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994). Typically, children in India are not raised to be independent and self-sufficient; instead, they are supposed to depend completely on their family for their personality growth and career development while valuing family loyalty, integrity, and unity. Within such a framework of family values, male children are raised to be assertive and to see themselves as the provider for the family and for this reason tend to have family resources at their disposal. Female children, on the other hand, are viewed as a drain on family resources in respect to their marriage and are raised to be self-sacrificing, docile, and accommodating. Ultimately, parents' decisions affect most aspects of their children's life, including education, career choice, and mate selection.

The reasons why CS is viewed as well suited for women are not in contradiction with this Indian social context. Female students believed that a CS degree would make it possible for them to get a highly paid job, become independent, and feel respected. Yet, they could not have enrolled to study CS without their parents' permission and their family's approval. In fact, their preference for CS was closely linked with their family's preference for the subject. Parents favor CS among engineering career paths because it fits well with their perception of the type of work girls should be allowed to do; parents do not approve of other engineering fields since girls would be on construction sites and involved in physical activities, which they consider unsafe for women. Even employers ask prospective female graduates whether they have permission from their parents to work. According to the female respondents, such questions are not posed to their male peers. This shows that feminist theories about gender and IT are still relevant in the Indian context, although the

basic premise, about CS as a male-dominated field, does not hold in India. Theories, such as cyborg and technofeminist theories, are useful and important in order to outline complexities and contradictions in the relationship between gender and IT.

Female students' comments show that they are well aware of gender issues and are mostly pessimistic about women's status in Indian society. Interestingly, most of their comments are defined by the wider society's gender bias, since the Indian social system is constructed to favor men. This suggests that gender is divisive in CS, not because of the nature of the field but mostly because of the Indian patrifocal system. Even with the gendered treatment of female students by family members and society as a whole, they did not doubt the appropriateness of a CS major for them. In fact, they believed that with a CS major, their standing in the family and society as a whole will have moved upward. This study thus illustrates the importance of taking the social and cultural context into account when considering relationships between gender and IT. This means that some of the previously mentioned theories need to be used with care when adopted in a cultural setting different from the one they were developed in. One such example could be the technofeminist theory's assumption that computer technology will not be liberating for women until they start designing it. The women in this study found that computer technology offered them a liberating potential, regardless of the designer behind it.

This case study has shown that the socioeconomic context must be taken into consideration to understand how gender interacts with CS education. Underrepresentation of women in CS education in the USA and Europe cannot be considered to be a global phenomenon; indeed, large numbers of women are opting for CS majors in India, and, of all the engineering related disciplines, CS is perceived to be the best field for Indian female students. This questions many theses including that CS is a masculine discipline. At the same time, this study shows the prevalence of gender issues.

3.6 Conclusion

Women representation in CS in India shows a complex paradox of empowerment and marginalization. At one level, CS appears to have emerged as a powerful tool to empower women. It allows them to strengthen their abilities and skills, which is much needed as India emerges as a knowledge society. It should be noted that the findings from the present case study, therefore, are limited to female students who are pursuing bachelors' degrees in CS. However, with a CS degree, female students hope to overcome various social barriers, increase their employment choices, and improve their quality of life. They believe a CS degree will open up avenues that were previously unavailable to them. Traditionally, women have been excluded from the scientific and technical sphere, both deliberately and indirectly, due to their low level of education. CS education has opened up a window for women to the world beyond household boundaries. It is, therefore, no surprise that female students in this study viewed CS as a liberating major/profession. While CS education

creates many new opportunities, at the same time women are marginalized as they face enormous challenges if they are to do well in CS education and find employment. Family members do not encourage them to be independent and career oriented; instead, a woman's primary goal is seen to be starting a family by getting married. This value system contributes, consciously or unconsciously, to the unequal division of resources and support at home and in schools between girls and boys. This continues at institutions of higher education, since female students do not have a great amount of support both in terms of resources and access to laboratories due to home/hostel restrictions. Despite majoring in CS and thus being viewed as smart, competent, and intelligent, the Indian value system places women in a secondary position to men, and female students narrated several examples that showed biased treatment by teachers and double standards by parents.

Nonetheless, female students not only envisioned financial independence but also social freedom from rigid perceptions of the role of women with CS education. Instead of being forced into a marriage and/or having children, the female students believe they would be able to convince their families to allow them to pursue a different path. For them, the benefits accruing from a CS career, namely, a high social status and independence with a well-paid job, outweigh the short-term biased treatment from teachers and gendered restrictions at home and at the institutions of higher education. Economic independence facilitates freedom from the social obligations imposed on women. The possibility of women opposing their families' goals for them to get married is highly unlikely without the economic security achieved through a well-paid job. Finally, this case study shows female students' attachment to CS. They believe that after graduation, they will be able to enter the IT industry and enjoy the prevailing work environment. It should be noted, though, that just because women are being educated in CS does not guarantee they will have equal access, opportunity, and satisfaction in their employment as men – a further dynamic within this paradox of empowerment.

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Chapter 4
A Perfect Match?

Cultural Clashes and Gendered Work Ideals in Transnational IT Companies

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A "good cultural match," referring to compatibility regarding language, ways of working, cultural norms of social behavior, and attitudes toward authority, has been described as important in determining the success of offshoring information technology (IT) production and services (Krishna et al. 2004; Lacity et al. 2009). Dealing with cross-cultural barriers and avoiding cultural clashes between client and supplier are highly relevant for the Indian software industry, which is built on transnational customer-provider relationships and, to a high degree, conducted by multinational companies with headquarters outside India. Previous studies have documented the existence of cultural clashes in this context when the Indian local organization has resisted Scandinavian corporate values about flexibility (Gertsen and Zølner 2012) or refused to implement American equality policies (Poster 2008). This chapter argues that some cultural clashes between onsite and offshore in a transnational business context can be understood and at least partly explained by the diverging ideas about which qualities characterize ideal employees in software development.

Although highly relevant, gender has mostly been left unexplored in previous research on cross-cultural issues in global IT offshoring. This chapter investigates global software offshoring relationships from a gendered perspective using the theoretical framework about "gendered work ideals" as originally developed by Joan Acker (1990, 2006, 2012) and used and adapted by others (cf., e.g., Peterson 2005,

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2007, 2015; Kelly et al. 2010). Gendered work ideals, prescribing full-time availability, a strong work orientation, mobility, and no responsibilities outside of work, correspond to the assumed characteristics of male workers rather than female workers (Mescher et al. 2010). These work ideals are described as universal and persistent despite shifting gender norms and despite changes in the characteristics of the labor force (Sallee 2012). Previous research, however, shows that the notions of the ideal worker vary both within different models of work organization (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012) and across societal contexts (Tienari et al. 2002). Therefore, if, how, and to what extent the work ideals in a specific profession or organization are gendered is an empirical question to be investigated.

This chapter investigates the work ideals expressed by Swedish and Indian managers involved in offshoring of advanced IT services from Sweden to India. It reports on how managers, both in Sweden and in India, perceived the ideal offshore software developer. Although the work ideals coincided in several aspects, some divergences also existed between how the requirements were defined. As we will show, these divergences contributed to creating cultural clashes between Swedish and Indian managerial strategies to create a "perfect match" between onshore clients and offshore supplier.

The aim of the chapter is twofold: first, to contribute with an empirical analysis of work ideals in a transnational business context, consisting of two companies involved in Swedish/Indian IT offshoring, and second, to explore gendered work ideals in a transnational business context in order to add new dimensions to a concept developed in a purely Western company context.

Introducing the idea of "cultural clash" between Swedish and Indian organizational structures, values, social beliefs, and norms, risks reproducing simplistic constructions of "West" as "modern" and "East" as "traditional." It is therefore important to recognize the work done by postcolonial and transnational feminist scholars. Although the cultural differences are important to articulate, we need to be careful so that these differences do not appear to be fixed or immutable, since they are linked to political, economic, and historical changes (Ganguly-Scrase 2003). Although we do not use postcolonial theory as part of our theoretical framework, we do reflect on our results using this approach. What we are investigating is basically a neocolonial relationship. It is the companies in the West who have the initiative and whose work ideals weigh heavier in the collaboration, since it is they who ultimately provide the jobs. In addition, we are investigating a small and privileged segment of the Indian middle class. It should be noted, however, that in this chapter we gloss over ethnic and caste differences, just as the managers we interviewed did.

The chapter is structured as follows: the next section presents our theoretical framework and the concept "gendered work ideal." We also introduce at this point previous research dealing with gendered work ideals in "the West" before presenting the Indian work context, which has not yet been investigated using the "work ideal" concept. This is followed by a section on method where we present the methodological considerations that guided the collection of empirical data in the project. Subsequently we outline our results and the analysis. This section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection analyzes cultural clashes in relation to how

work ideals vary between different models of work organization. The second subsection analyzes cultural clashes in relation to how work ideals become gendered in relation to the societal contexts. The chapter ends with a concluding discussion section where we discuss the implications of diverging conceptions of the ideal software developer for collaborations in transnational IT companies as well as the more theoretical implications for the conceptual framework used.

4.1 Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

4.1.1 Gendered Work Ideals

The analytical tools used in this chapter were inspired by the theoretical framework developed by Acker (1990, 2006, 2012) to understand how gendered assumptions about women and men, femininity and masculinity, are embedded in organizations and reproduce inequalities. One of the concepts that Acker often uses to refer to supposedly gender-neutral processes in the workplace is "work ideal." The idea of the universal and abstract ideal worker is institutionalized in organizational processes and manifested in managerial practices, such as recruitment, wage setting, promotion, and dismissal of employees (Acker 2006). The ideal is part of the organizational logic that includes certain expectations regarding employees' behavior, the number of hours worked, and a focus on work that is based on the idea of a worker "who exists only for the work" (Acker 1990, 149). This ideal of a disembodied worker prescribes a devoted employee who gives priority to paid work, is mobile and able to travel if needed, and is willing to work long hours.

The closest this universal and abstract ideal comes to a real worker is "the male worker whose life centers on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children" (Acker 1990, 149). Women workers on the other hand are "assumed to have legitimate obligations other than those required by the job" (Acker 1990, 149). Women have been, and still are, seen as the primary carer of children, and managers have considered them unable to fulfill the demands of the ideal worker as they are "less likely to follow the expected path of continuous, full-time employment" (Kelly et al. 2010, 283). The universal and abstract work ideal thus produces gender inequalities as it presumes a gender-based division of labor and a separation between the public and the private sphere (Acker 2012). It is, therefore, related to what is known as the problem for workers to attain a satisfactory "work-life balance" (cf. Sallee 2012).

In addition to the universal ideal of the unencumbered abstract worker, there are also locally constructed ideals, stipulating the more specific qualities required of the holder of a certain position or job (Kelly et al. 2010). In her later writings Acker expounds:

> The ideal, abstract worker is only part of what employers seek when they are hiring: employers, of course, have specific qualifications in mind, such as education, experience in particular fields, evidence of competence, etc. (Acker 2012, 218)

We call these work ideals "situated work ideals" as they are based on "real life ideal workers" in certain cultural and social work contexts (Acker 2012, 218). Situated work ideals refer to the specific qualities, knowledge, skills, personal conduct, and behavior that characterize an ideal employee in a particular work organization (Tienari et al. 2002). In contrast to the universal, abstract work ideal, the situated work ideals can favor women by emphasizing skills and competence typically associated with femininity:

> The ideal worker for many jobs is a woman, particularly a woman who, employers believe, is compliant, who will accept orders and low wages. This is often a woman of color; immigrant women are sometimes even more desirable. (Acker 2006, 450)

Men are thus not the ideal workers for all jobs.

Yvonne Benschop and Hans Doorewaard (2012, 226) capture the complex logic of the gendered work ideal when they write: "The gendered character of the ideal worker is supported by two factors influencing the gendering of jobs: the gender connotations of care responsibilities and of qualification profiles." We have used the distinction between these two factors to structure the presentation of our results in this chapter. Below we will also rely on this distinction when we continue with presenting some previous studies that have used the concept of "gendered work ideals" to study actual work contexts.

4.1.2 The Gender Connotations of Qualification Profiles

The persistent gender inequalities at work rely on the gendering of jobs and on distinctions between women and men and between the meaning of masculinities and femininities (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012). One of the most fundamental gendered connotations of qualification profiles is based on the gender distinction between males as skilled and rational and females as unskilled and emotional (Bendl 2008). Moreover, masculinities are associated with managing, control, and performance, while femininities connote sensitivities and subordination (Metcalfe and Linstead 2003). Qualification profiles involving technical skills have also typically been associated with masculine connotations. Studies suggest that women are perceived to possess technical skills less often than men, regardless of their actual competence or education (Faulkner 2007; Peterson 2007; Dhar-Bhattacharjee and Takruri-Rizk 2011). According to previous research, the qualification profile for software developers, the occupation this chapter focuses on, typically includes self-confidence, taking initiative, and working independently and therefore seemingly discounts women, at least according to the logic of the gendered work ideal (Peterson 2010). Other studies show that the most important skill IT employers are looking for when hiring both entry-level and mid-level employees has been "communication"

(Luftman and Kempaiah 2007). Women have a chance of becoming a closer fit with the work ideal if qualities associated with "the collaborative and supportive work attitudes that we often label as female" (Metcalfe and Linstead 2003, 97) become desirable in organizations, as suggested in team-based organizations (Kelan 2008).

Benschop and Doorewaard (1998) illustrate how the gendered connotations of qualification profiles can vary due to different models of work organization. They analyze situated gendered work ideals in two different organizational work contexts: Tayloristic organizations and team-based work. Tayloristic organizations are built on principles of fragmentation and separation and are characterized by maximum division of labor, simple jobs, bureaucracy, and lack of flexibility. This is also a type of organization that promotes horizontal and vertical gender segregation with women and men performing different jobs, working in different departments, and having different responsibilities. The Tayloristic ideal worker is full-time available, career oriented, and highly qualified and displays an instrumental reasoning, accepts authorities, and "concentrates obediently on performing specialized, small tasks without thinking" (Benschop and Doorewaard 1998, 9).

In comparison, team-based work organizations are typically more flat where performance and control tasks are integrated and where autonomous work groups have a high level of independence. Because there is less division of labor and less segregation in general in these organizations, they are assumed to produce less gender-based division of labor. The team-based ideal worker is available full time and is career oriented but, in contrast to the Tayloristic ideal worker, also enjoys autonomy in fulfilling the job and displays an entrepreneurial attitude in thinking about improvements to the work.

Benschop and Doorewaard (1998) conclude that although different, the work ideals in both contexts are gendered as masculine. The Tayloristic work ideal is, for example, associated with authoritarianism, paternalism, and careerism, while the team-based work ideal is characterized by careerism and entrepreneurialism (cf. Collinson and Hearn 1994).

4.1.3 The Gender Connotations of Care Responsibilities

The gendered connotation of care responsibilities is the other main aspect that influences the gendering of jobs and supports the gendered character of the ideal worker (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012). The gender order in a specific society permeates work organizations through gendered norms and assumptions about the roles, positions, and "places" of women and men – in the public and private sphere. These so-called societal arrangements impact on and shape "what it means to be qualified (means), available full-time (opportunity) and work-oriented (motive)" (Tienari et al. 2002, 255). Notwithstanding the universal character of the abstract work ideal, the extent to which it excludes women supposedly fluctuates due to generous government-sponsored parental leave as in the Scandinavian countries, for example, or due to organizational policies and programs to provide work-life support (Sallee

2012). Erin Kelly et al. (2010) also illustrate how workplace initiatives to decrease work-family conflict for employees can actually challenge the universal, abstract ideal worker norm that privileges paid work obligations over unpaid family care work.

Janne Tienari, Sigrid Quack, and Hildegard Theobald (2002) present a cross-societal, comparative analysis of the "ideal worker" in middle management positions in one German bank and one Finnish bank. They argue that work ideals vary across societal contexts and that they are "based on different gender orders which penetrate organizational life and become incorporated in different, though predominantly masculine, conceptions" (Tienari et al. 2002, 251). Gender order is defined as a societal structure of distinctions of femininity and masculinity and relations between women and men that is reflected, for example, in the gendered division of labor and is institutionalized in, for example, welfare-state policies concerning family and employment. The gender order also "encompasses perceptions of equality and inequality between men and women in the society in general and the labour market in particular" (Tienari et al. 2002, 254).

Tienari et al.'s (2002) results suggest the existence of differing notions of the ideal worker in their German and Finnish cases. In Germany, women emerged as the second choice for management positions when young male recruits displayed an undesirably high mobility and left for other banks or were attracted to more specialized fields within the bank. In Finland, women emerged as natural choices for management positions due to a lack of qualified and interested male applicants. The authors describe the differing notions of women in relation to the ideal worker in the two different countries with reference to the wider societal contexts of the two different bank organizations. The German organization was permeated by a notion of a gendered division between the public and private spheres of life. The assumption that women have the role of carers and will leave the work organization after the birth of children resulted in strict vertical gender segregation in the bank. This was also a society with high incentives for women to stay at home to care for children. The Finnish organization, on the other hand, was permeated by norms about full-time work and continuous employment careers for both women and men. In Finland, state policies are based on the dual-earner family model. Also in the Finnish context, however, the ideal worker had male connotations, although not in relation to women's exclusion from continuous employment but in relation to women's failure to fit in with specifically managerial positions (cf. also the Chap. 6 by Hearn et al. in this volume about the gender order in the Finnish society).

4.1.4 Gender Connotations in the Transnational Business Context

The theoretical framework outlined above has been developed within a Western work context and thus needs to be complemented with research relevant for the transnational offshoring context that we set out to analyze in this chapter. Previous

research implies that there are several significant differences between the Western and the Indian business contexts that are of importance for the gender connotations of care responsibilities and qualification profiles. Women in India can therefore be expected to face conflicts between norms for ideal femininity and ideal worker norms that differ from those encountered by women in the West.

4.1.4.1 Care Responsibilities in the Transnational Business Context

As we noted above, the extent to which women can fit the universal work ideal depends not only on norms and values within the companies but also on the societal context. The Swedish welfare society is characterized by "women-friendly," dual-earner, and dual-carer policies that support less traditional gender roles and encourage gender-equal parenting (Korpi et al. 2013). The team-based organization, typical for the IT business, has also been associated with high levels of work flexibility that can be used by employees to balance work and family life (Perrons 2003). This might suggest that women are not necessarily excluded as ideal employees due to the long-hour work culture combined with care responsibilities (Roman and Peterson 2011).

This context is drastically different from Indian society, described as permeated by attitudes about women as the primary caregiver (Arun et al. 2006; Gupta 2014). India is a country characterized by societal ideals of men as breadwinners and women as the heart of the family (Rajadhyaksha and Bhatnagar 2000). The long-standing societal norm of arranged marriages and regulation of the relationships between sexes among young people can also be expected to influence the lack of fit between women and work ideals in so far as they restrict women's behavior (Fuller and Narasimhan 2007; Donner 2008). These societal ideals are internalized by the employees, but also by the Indian management of companies, affecting their practices and policies (D'Mello 2006).

Traditional gender ideals have been a cornerstone in creating the Indian middle class (Donner 2008; Vijayakumar 2013). This implies that wives and mothers have the moral obligation to take care of the family, even if some of the practical work can be delegated to servants. The problem for women in combining work and family is thus, above all, a question of living up to social conventions. Research also shows that the expected standards of femininity in the Indian context still entail that women display "submissiveness" and "docility" (Shanker 2008).

Indian working life is largely based on a male-provider model, with an expectation that duties outside work will be taken care of by somebody else (Donner 2008). A male provider can work both long hours and late hours in the office (Fuller and Narasimhan 2007). Flexiwork and working from home are an exception in many companies and normally a privilege for people higher up in their careers (Sahay 2007). These kinds of working hours are not possible for people who have caring

obligations, and in India daily caring obligations fall on women, while men have the obligation for providing for their family, including their parents and siblings (Radhakrishnan 2009). Previous research illustrates how the approach to work-life balance issues also differs between Indian and Western companies (Chandra 2012). The Western approach to work-life balance entails offering employees spatial and temporal flexibility as a key aspect. The Indian companies focus instead on employee welfare issues and socializing after working hours – offering the employees cultural, recreational, health, and educational programs (Chandra 2012; cf. also Radhakrishnan's Chap. 5 in this volume).

4.1.4.2 Qualification Profiles in the Transnational Business Context

Also, when it comes to the gender connotations of qualification profiles, differences seem to exist between how work ideals are gendered in the Western compared to the Indian business context. While requirements for technical competence have been described as disqualifying women as ideal employees in the West, in India, women are not expected to be technically less competent than men (D'Mello 2006; Fuller and Narasimhan 2007; Poster 2013).

In addition, the new and emerging IT industry in India has been depicted as "degendered" and as providing Indian women with an opportunity to develop a "new identity" (Lau 2006). This has resulted in the situation that Roli Varma (cf. her Chap. 3 in this volume) describes that while the academic field of computer science is viewed as masculine in Western countries, women's participation in this field in India is relatively high. As Varma illustrates in her chapter, however, gender is still a relevant factor to investigate in the Indian IT industry.

In order to be able to provide a multifaceted analysis, we also need to take into account differences in the organizational structures and management ideologies between Sweden and India. The Scandinavian corporate values, emphasizing flat hierarchies, participative management, consensus orientation, and individual decision making (cf., e.g., Holmberg and Åkerblom 2006), stand in sharp contrast to the Indian values. According to Martine Cardel, Gertsen, and Mette Zølner (2012), Indian leadership emphasizes clearly visible hierarchies and authoritarian management power but also management involvement in the employees' professional development as well as their personal lives and their families. Ekin Pellegrini, Terri A. Scandura, and Vaidyanathan Jayaraman (2010) describe Indian management ideologies and organizational values in a similar manner, referring to them as "paternalistic." They explain how paternalistic managers "combine benevolence with control of subordinates' decision making" (Pellegrini et al. 2010, 392).

4.2 Method and Methodology

4.2.1 The Case Study Companies

This chapter draws on interviews made in two IT firms, both employing professional IT workers with a higher education background in Sweden and India. The interviews were made within the framework of the research project "Offswing" coordinated at Uppsala University in Sweden, focusing on the so-called "soft" issues in advanced IT offshoring from Sweden to India. The interviews were conducted in the Bangalore and Chennai offices of these companies. In the section below, we present the two organizations, under pseudonyms for reasons of anonymity.

Of the two organizations studied, one is a start-up, and the other is a well-established large multinational corporation. Both are engaged in developing software programs for both Swedish and other European clients. Allsoft is a small start-up IT organization set up by Swedes in India. It has less than 100 employees in India. The company mainly works with Swedish clients and has management and marketing functions in Sweden. Allsoft is managed by a group of Swedes (two with a background in Southeast Asia) in India. One of the sales arguments put forward by the company is that the presence of Swedish staff offshore helps to smooth collaboration and eliminate cultural clashes.

Bellsoft is a multinational IT company with headquarters in the UK. They acquired a previously Swedish-owned company, and by this acquisition, the Swedish employees became part of a global arena, with collaborators in different countries and an order to offshore some development work to the company's offices in India. The number of employees in the company's Indian offices is about 5000, and they serve clients in different European countries and the USA. Bellsoft is involved in program development, IT support, and some business process work.

There are considerable differences between the companies. Bellsoft, because of its size, had more structured policies, and processes and the management in the Indian office were practically all Indian. The transnational collaboration in the teams that were studied was between team members and team managers in the Swedish and Indian offices of the company and only rarely directly with the customers, who mostly communicated with the company's Swedish offices. Allsoft was managed by Swedes in both Sweden and India, and the developers communicated directly with customers.

Women were a minority in both companies, both in Sweden and in India. The managers described that between 10 and 25 % of their employees in India were women, and this was explained by the fact that only 10–20 % of the applicants for positions as software developers were women. More men than women graduate from engineering and computer programs in India, even if the ratio of women on these programs is higher than in most Western countries (NASSCOM 2009).

4.2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Initially, senior management at Allsoft was contacted so as to secure access. The suggested interview sample consisted of employees at different points in their careers, middle managers, and human resource people. At Allsoft basically all female employees and a corresponding number of male employees in roughly the same positions were interviewed in India, as well as the Swedes engaged in this company, both management and trainees. At Bellsoft, four developer teams were chosen by the company's Swedish offshoring coordinator, and both Swedish and Indian members of these teams were interviewed, as well as leaders of some other teams and Indian human resource personnel. Human resource personnel and team leaders in the different companies collaborated with the research team in identifying suitable interviewees.

Data was collected by face-to-face interviews between January and August 2012 in Sweden and India. The interviews in Sweden were conducted by two Swedish researchers and those in India by both the Indian researcher and one of the Swedish researchers. In all, 107 people were interviewed. Since many of the managers were men, there was a higher proportion of men in the final sample, although 20 % of the interviewees were women. Most of the interviews were conducted in offices and meeting rooms at the respective companies. Each interview lasted between twenty minutes and an hour and a half. Almost all the interviews were recorded. All the interviews in India were in English, while the interviews conducted in Sweden were in Swedish. All interviews were transcribed in the language in which they were recorded. The authors have translated the quotations from the Swedish interviews in this chapter.

The interviews were semi-structured, and different interview guides were used for employees and for senior managers and human resource managers. The interviews with the employees focused on the employees' educational background; position; career aspirations; work tasks and working conditions; work-life balance; relationships with colleagues, managers, and customers; differences in organizational cultures between Sweden and India; and differences in working with clients and customers other than Swedes and Indians. The interviews mainly focused on work issues, and therefore the informants' family background, such as class and caste, or rural vs. urban origins were not elaborated. The employees' educational background was a diploma course, a bachelor, or a masters' degree, mostly, but not always, in disciplines related to information technology. The different levels of education indicate that their mainly middle-class backgrounds also varied between lower and upper middle class.

The interviews with senior managers and human resource managers focused on how the initial cooperation between Sweden and India started and how the managers recruited employees and put together a team to manage and deliver the projects, initial phases of the project, and challenges in setting up communication routines. They were also asked to comment on the cultural differences that affected everyday work, failures and successes in communication and delivery, work-life balance, and differences in organizational cultures between Sweden and India.

The interviews were analyzed by coding and categorizing (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006), assisted by the analysis program Atlas.ti. The analysis involved a combination of inductive and deductive techniques. An existing framework of previous research and theoretical concepts was used, but within this framework, the primary objective was to understand, interpret, and represent the subjective viewpoints of the interviewees in order to capture the qualitative richness of the data.

The method used to collect the data has some limitations. Since the interviews took place within the organization, it is probable that some interviewees were not able to express themselves freely, in particular, because access was provided by managers. A number of the interviews were also conducted in a language, which was not the native language of the interviewer, the interviewee, or both.

4.3 Results and Analysis

4.3.1 Cultural Clashes over Qualification Profiles

In the case study companies, the Swedish perceptions of what constituted an ideal worker clashed with the Indian ones in several aspects that could be related to the organizational context in Sweden and India. Both Indian and Swedish managers expressed frustration over cultural clashes in their collaboration, and some of these cultural clashes had differences in work ideals as their ultimate cause. Diverging situated work ideals affected what policies and practices the Swedish and Indian managers preferred and promoted in order to create a "perfect match" between employees and companies. The most prominent of these policies was related to recruiting and retaining ideal workers.

Not surprisingly, both the Swedish and Indian managers mentioned technical competence as the most basic aspect of the situated work ideal for software professionals. Consequently, technical competence was evaluated in the first stage of the recruitment process. At the next stage in the recruitment process, however, the diverging situated perceptions of the qualities of the ideal workers clashed.

One of the most frequently mentioned qualification requirements for an ideal software professional in the Swedish interviews was being "independent," meaning taking responsibility, showing initiative, and being "proactive." One of the Swedish Allsoft managers described their company philosophy in a way that was characteristic for how the Swedish managers perceived the ideal worker: "Our company culture is based on that if I give you an assignment, then you'll do it and you let me know if you run into problems." At Bellsoft this Swedish emphasis on the ideal worker being "independent" and "proactive" resulted in a cultural clash between Swedish and Indian managers. According to the Swedish team leaders, the Indian Bellsoft human resource offices did not consider this aspect enough in the recruitment process. One of the Swedish Bellsoft managers described how the recruitment of junior software developers in India had resulted in problems when the new recruits failed to match the Swedish expectations on them being independent and

taking the initiative: "That was really a clash, because we had two guys who did nothing for two whole years. We thought they would build a system for us." It worked better when the recruitment was taken over by an Indian team leader with previous experience of the Swedish work ideals. This was an example of an Indian team leader who had adopted recruitment practices based on the Swedish work ideal:

> Right, the first thing was what I felt and then realized in Sweden, even if you don't know the technology much, what they really look out for is someone who can go and get things done. […] So I was mainly looking for people who had the attitude to do things by themselves. And then the technology in terms of what we're supposed to do, and trust me when I say that I took people from different technical backgrounds by just looking at them and the way they're performing in Bellsoft earlier in different projects. And I know they're performing very well in this project so technology is second to me than the person and the attitude. (Bellsoft team leader, India)

The Indian offices in this way often strived to satisfy the needs of their Western clients and coached their staff to correspond to the ideals. An Indian Allsoft team leader, for example, explained how he perceived it to be important for the employees not only to have the technical skills but also to have the "right" attitude to fit into their "family," in order to protect organizational values and the work atmosphere. The Swedish managers expressed frustration, however, over the fact that some work ideals were more difficult than others to transfer to the Indian business context.

The clashes between different work ideals described above meant that the Indian managers and software developers needed to meet requirements and ideals that in some respects were new to them. Despite some of the Indian managers' efforts to accommodate the expectations of the Swedes, in the hierarchical Indian context, the quality of being "independent" was rarely seen as important or highly valued (cf. Pellegrini et al. 2010). Instead, the traditional Indian ideal prescribed that employees should execute their tasks to the satisfaction of their managers and get frequently rated for their ability to do this. This ideal obviously collided with the Swedish ideal where even junior staffs are expected to take responsibility and ownership of their tasks. The Indian managers seemed well aware of this clash and therefore also recommended specific management strategies in order to overcome problems with Indian employees' lack of independence and autonomy:

> It's a cultural issue. […] I mean your team leader will tell me to do a certain thing. If I'm also a Swede, and once my manager tells me, because of my culture, I do it. But in India it's not so. In India you require a couple of reminders for follow-ups, So what happens is the Swede gets surprised when something does not get done. So my suggestion is, when something is told, immediately set up reviews also, you say that okay these things you're supposed to do, let's us take stock after three days, seven days, fifteen days. (Bellsoft manager, India)

This kind of management strategy, involving frequent monitoring and evaluation of the employees, was an important part of the Indian management ideology and something the Indian employees were accustomed to. To be amenable to management evaluations was even part of the Indian work ideal. An ideal worker in India would have a desire for constant improvement and would appreciate structured

feedback to know which characteristics and qualifications to improve. The Indian ideal worker was therefore clearly associated with youth. In the Indian context, youth was seen as having many valuable qualities: young people were seen as career hungry, hardworking, flexible in terms of traveling and work hours, and eager to learn new things. This specific idea of the career-oriented ideal worker also meant that the Indian managers had a higher tolerance for the high rate of turnover among the Indian employees. Their perception of the career-oriented ideal worker reflected the idea of an Indian male worker in a breadwinner role that constantly tries to improve his income and status by changing workplaces often.

The Swedish managers had greater difficulties with accepting the high attrition rate among the Indian employees. Their emphasis on experience, thorough domain knowledge, autonomy, and independence meant that they understood the Indian attrition rate as a major problem. Creating and maintaining independent and autonomous teams is challenging when new employees are constantly introduced in the team and have to be trained. The high attrition rate forced the Swedes to redefine the characteristic of an ideal worker as someone staying at the company at least during the lifetime of a project. On the other hand, the composition of the Swedish workforce with middle-aged professionals was not seen as an ideal by Bellsoft's Indian human resource manager: "I know, I am conscious about it, that with age it is extremely difficult to pick up and be responsive to new ideas immediately." The diverging work ideals were thus differently related to age in the two cultural contexts. They were also closely related to gender.

The divergences between a work ideal, situated in a Swedish work tradition, which emphasizes employee initiative and independence, and a work ideal, situated in the Indian work tradition, which requires an employee who takes orders and obeys, reflect different management ideologies and organizational structures (Salminen-Karlsson 2014). The Swedish managers understood the Indian hierarchical organizational structure as problematic because it prevented the employees from developing into self-sufficient and assertive employees. The two different situated work ideals expressed echo to a great extent the different masculinities identified by Benschop and Doorewaard (1998) as characterizing, respectively, a Tayloristic work context and a team-based work. While the Swedish work ideal reflects masculine constructions based mainly on an entrepreneurial attitude, the Indian work ideal is associated with authoritarianism and paternalism, and although both work ideals to a certain extent exclude women as ideal workers, they also create hierarchies between men and exclude certain enactments of masculinity.

The qualification profile of an ideal team member, which was independent and autonomous, also involved expectations regarding employees' communicative skills. To be able to communicate within the team as well as with customers was an essential part of the Swedish work ideal:

> Because our co-workers need to communicate with Sweden we need people that are a little more social and have the talent for asking and listening at the same time. (Allsoft manager, Sweden)

The qualifications asked for, however, did not resemble "the collaborative and supportive work attitudes that we often label as female" (Metcalfe and Linstead 2003, 97) and which previous studies have linked to teamwork. Instead, the style of communication that was valued involved displaying self-confidence when taking individual initiatives to approach customers and managers, a style that previous studies have analyzed as part of a stereotypical masculine performance at work (cf., e.g., Peterson 2010). In the interviews, the Swedish managers expressed frustration with the Indian software developers who were said to be too reticent in expressing their doubts or problems in front of managers. This was another aspect of the ideal employee, which was sometimes difficult for Indians to live up to, as they were used to a hierarchical organization where they were not expected to initiate communication with clients or managers. One of the Swedish Allsoft managers explained how he perceived the problem with Indian employees not fitting the situated work ideal: "They are a little more timid, careful, and silent. They don't take the initiative to talk and when they talk, they express themselves with a very limited vocabulary."

A particular aspect of the ideal employee's communicative skills was related to the fact that the transnational counterpart was in a non-English-speaking country. The Indian pronunciation of English varies depending on the speaker's geographical origin, class, caste, and education. Some software companies conduct English language training for the benefit of those employees who had not been privileged with an English-speaking educational background. Thus, English is pronounced in a variety of ways, and some of the accents can be experienced as problematic even by native English speakers. For the Swedes, it was crucial that the Indian employees spoke English in a way that they could understand. For some of the Swedish managers, a recruitment interview was therefore important in order to check that the accent of the candidate was understandable for a Swede. The language issue was often described as a one-way problem. While Swedes were complaining about the Indian English, the Indian employees did not express any dissatisfaction with the Swedes' knowledge of English.

To sum up, so far we have highlighted a number of different cultural clashes associated with the diverging situated work ideals in this transnational business context. We have also related these work ideals and the cultural clashes to organizational values and structures and to management ideologies. We have demonstrated that the Swedish managers expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that several of the key aspects of their situated work ideal were not easily accepted and transferred from the Swedish organizational culture to the Indian work context. The Indian managers, on the other hand, were critical of the Swedes' requirement to take part in hiring people for their projects and to find those who had the right kind of attitude to their work according to the Swedish ideals and whose English was understandable for Swedes. The Indian human resource offices perceived this as an intrusion from the Swedes. Some Bellsoft managers in India perceived the Swedes as particularly frustrated, compared to other customer countries, and felt that the Swedes wanted to micromanage the Indian work processes. In a concrete sense, this also concerned different incentives the Swedes wanted to use to retain employees who worked for them, for example, salary increases for men and flexible working condi-

tions for women. According to the Indian Bellsoft managers, giving extra incentives for people working toward Sweden would disrupt the local structure:

> If the quality is suffering it is your right to demand quality and it is our duty to provide quality. But then, you can't say, "I own these resources so if he is going out and he is resigned from the company pay him extra." But we can't do that because we have a certain set of people here, they have a certain salary band. You should leave the decision to the local management to handle it. (Bellsoft manager, India)

Using the concept work ideal as a tool to analyze cultural clashes over qualification profiles therefore reveals more than just how organizational practices, such as recruiting and retaining ideal employees, are linked to management ideologies and organizational structures. Such analyses can also reveal an underlying conflict between two partners in a transnational business relationship caused by diverging perspectives on their respective roles and responsibilities.

4.3.2 Cultural Clashes over Care Responsibilities

We now turn our attention to how society's gender order impacted on notions about the availability and work orientation of the ideal worker. The following analysis will highlight, for example, how ideas about gender equality permeated working hour ideals and the paradoxical consequences of assumptions about Indian women's immobility.

The IT sector is known for its long working hours. In the Swedish offices of Bellsoft, however (the only company with developers in Sweden), employees recounted that they seldom worked longer than their 8-h day. In contrast, long hours and late hours were a norm in India, in particular at Bellsoft, where the ideal software developer was explicitly described as working long hours. Some of the Swedish managers and colleagues had observed the long-hour working culture in the Indian business context and expressed concerns about it: "I've thought about it, when are they free and how much do they actually work? Do they feel that they have to work all the time?" (Bellsoft employee, Sweden). Even if both companies had an official 8-h policy, long hours in the evening or during weekends were not seen as particularly exceptional in cases when deadlines or special requests from a customer needed to be met. They were exceptional enough, however, to sometimes be characterized as "hero stories." One of the Indian team leaders in Bellsoft was asked to describe a particularly successful delivery and replied by describing a "huge team effort":

> In this current project it was a huge team effort, let me say. The entire team was focused and we had a very good project manager on site also, his name is […]. The entire team is very cooperative and worked like twelve, fourteen hours and so people worked on weekends, supported on weekends. So, the entire team and everybody wanted this project to be a success. (Bellsoft team leader, India)

Although the Indian employees said that they occasionally worked overtime if there was a deadline to be met, they also appreciated the official policies of the companies. Both companies prided themselves on providing reasonable working hours, which were expected to be specially valued by women. A Swedish Allsoft manager explained: "We look at it from a gender equality perspective. We prefer an 8-h working day." This way of associating policies about working hours to issues concerning gender (in)equality was common in our material, although few of the Indian managers took a stance similar to this Swedish manager.

When asked explicit questions about gender and gender (in)equality, most informants framed these as family-related issues that concerned women in the Indian context. Female employees as a group were almost always seen as tied to their families, which was considered problematic in relation to being a software developer. If women actually did continue working after marrying and becoming mothers, their obligations outside of work were expected to put constraints on their work. Although some wives and mothers continued to be employed, their care responsibilities made it difficult for them to work long and late hours and be flexible and mobile. Consequently, when overtime was needed, male employees were sometimes asked in the first instance. That women were not perceived as being as flexible and available as men could also be manifested in the salaries:

> For the same qualification background job you get the same. But when the increments are given sometimes we may say that woman may get a little less. For example, the manager will say that I am giving 2 % more to a man because he is available for me 24/7 on the days but being a lady I can't disturb you after 7 o'clock, I can't disturb you before 9 o'clock, I can't disturb on a Saturday, Sunday. So this man has done, is available all through so I give him 1 % more so that can happen, it can happen anywhere. (Bellsoft manager, India)

Even though almost all female employees denied that there was a gender pay gap in their companies, some of them also explained that their own salaries might be lower because of this lack of availability.

In addition to women's caring duties, the requirement for the ideal worker to work long and late hours had another gendered aspect in the Indian context, not previously observed in the writings about how the universal work ideal excludes women in the Western work context. This aspect concerned the perception that it is unsafe to be outside late at night and problematic for reasons of decency to work late hours with male colleagues (D'Mello 2006; Donner 2008). In general, both Indian managers and Indian colleagues asserted that women should not work at night:

> 3:30 is when we start shift in the afternoon and we end 11:30 in the night and we don't put lady staff in this shift unless they're comfortable. Basically we don't do any bias, because we don't want the male staff to come and complain saying that what's the difference between male and female staff, everyone is same. But to be honest, even Indian men have that feeling okay it's not safe for them to travel late nights even though there is a cab available and security available. For safety reasons we don't put them in the last shift and it's a company policy. (Bellsoft manager, India)

This is an example of how a societal gender order affects management practices and becomes institutionalized in a company policy and creates organizational seg-

regation and inequalities in the labor market (cf. D'Mello 2006). This company policy also reflects inequalities between women and men in the Indian society (cf. Tienari et al. 2002). The ideal Indian femininity involves being a wife and a mother in a way that clashes with the universal, abstract work ideal. The gender connotation here, however, also involves an aspect not visible in the Western context: the Indian ideal femininity, reflected in this company policy, connotes submissiveness and docility (cf. Shanker 2008). This policy, therefore, highlights an ideal femininity in a society where there traditionally has been a separation of the sexes and women have been seen as vulnerable and in need of protection. Perceptions such as these contribute to the lack of fit between women and work ideals since they restrict women's behavior (cf. Fuller and Narasimhan 2007; Donner 2008).

The specific Indian gender order, described above, could be taken as an indication that Indian women would be very far from a fit with both the Western and the Indian universal work ideal. As we will show below, however, our empirical data highlights a paradox when it comes to women's fit with the universal abstract work ideal in India: women could be constructed as both loyal and disloyal employees.

Several of the informants, both Indian and Swedish managers, explained that the lack of technically competent women was a problem since women were considered to be valuable employees due to their loyalty. One essential aspect of the universal, abstract ideal worker is the lifelong commitment to the workplace and company (Acker 1990; Sallee 2012). Finding loyal employees was of great importance in Allsoft, the small company, since it was more vulnerable to employee turnover, but this was also mentioned in Bellsoft. In the Indian transnational business context, characterized by high attrition rates, employee commitment and loyalty were redefined and hardly expected to be lifelong. It was also an aspect of the ideal worker that was clearly gendered, although not in the sense that it excluded women as generally suggested (Acker 2012). Instead, several of the managers expressed their will and desire to employ women for reasons related to commitment:

> Highly educated girls exist, no doubt. And they are more loyal to the company, too. If they feel that it's a good company with good values that gives them a good wage – then they stay. They don't have a great need to move between companies in order to increase their rewards as many guys do. (Allsoft manager, Sweden)

Previous research has also described women as more loyal to companies than men and less disposed to change workplaces in order to pursue a career (D'Mello 2006). An explanation for this could, of course, be a lack of opportunity due to a glass ceiling, instead of women's active choice. But for men, the obligation to be the provider puts them under great pressure to fulfill the requirements of working life and succeed in the competitive environment (D'Mello and Sahay 2007). This is true from the very beginning, since marriage prospects are still influenced by a man's financial potential and career achievements (Prakash and Singh 2014). Vandana Chandra (2012) describes how men's home environment both requires them to excel in their career and supports them in fulfilling their work role. Moreover in India, changing workplaces is considered an important career strategy which the Swedish managers disapproved of, as one of them explained: "We are not interested

in people who are only focused on their paycheck but more in those who have the genuine interest."

Recruiting a woman could thus be seen as a safe investment compared to recruiting a man. Women were therefore described as sought-after employees and difficult to recruit, which called for special recruitment strategies. The Swedish Allsoft manager continued:

> I don't think they come to us. Women are very popular. They are much, much more loyal than men. […] They go to the large companies. It's really, really difficult to employ women software programmers. I even… I even discriminated. I gave the women in our company responsibility to recruit women. Because it would be nicer for the women if women were responsible [for the recruitment process]. But it didn't work out. They go to larger companies. (Allsoft manager, Sweden)

While the Swedish and Indian managers constructed women as loyal ideal workers in this aspect, they also, paradoxically, realized that this loyalty was time limited. Women were therefore also described as disloyal. Exhibiting the ideal characteristic of loyalty most often only lasted, and was expected to last, until the woman got married or became a mother. After that, the female employees were said to leave the company – either to follow their husbands to other locations or to become full-time mothers. However, some of the Swedish managers interpreted women's "disloyal" behavior toward the company as a consequence of the lack of opportunities for mothers to continue to work in the Indian labor market.

The Swedish Bellsoft team leaders were therefore concerned about the lack of flexibility in the Indian offices in terms of handling individual employees' needs and attending to what was seen as women's specific needs. Bellsoft had rules, regulations, and policies for retaining women, including a target figure for the percentage of women in the workforce and meetings between the human resource manager and women employees to discuss issues. A women's network had also recently been started. Nonetheless, Bellsoft was less flexible than the smaller company in this study, and this was where a cultural clash appeared. When Swedish Bellsoft team leaders wanted to find individual solutions for recruiting and retaining women, they met with resistance from the Indian human resource office. A Swedish manager who was affected by Bellsoft's policies expressed his dissatisfaction with the inflexibility of the Indian human resource department:

> In some deliveries we have seen that we would very much like to keep a woman after she has had her child. And she wants to continue working and could work two or three days a week. But it has been turned down. Because they didn't allow distance work. (Bellsoft manager, Sweden)

According to this manager, the Indian human resource department prevented the development of a more flexible work organization that would support and retain mothers in the company.

Also, the general equality policies were not always followed at the middle management level. For example, despite the career development programs officially being open for both women and men, some Bellsoft managers were said to be more reluctant to recommend women to them, because of the perceived risk of them leaving the company:

> The training program announcement offers everyone with skill to come. A man gets a preference, a woman doesn't get a preference. So, because the managers feel the woman, after training she may not come to work, she may resign and go, whereas a man, I think if he completes the training at least he will be useful for the organization. (Bellsoft manager, India)

Any mention of managers who would have made corresponding estimations of the risks of their male employees changing companies was not found in the interviews, in spite of the general impression of men being more prone to change jobs for career reasons.

Allsoft, as a small company, did not have comprehensive programs for support and promotion or for gender equality. Instead, they focused on finding individual solutions. Both companies had difficulties in retaining married women with children and often did not succeed. Bellsoft had the advantage of having offices in several Indian cities, which meant that if the reason for attrition was the husband's location, the company could sometimes arrange a transfer for the woman to an office at that location.

To sum up, using the concept of work ideal as a tool to analyze cultural clashes over care responsibilities can reveal how company gender equality policies, or a lack of such policies, are linked to societal gender orders. It can also reveal paradoxes in how femininities and masculinities are defined and how gender segregation is reproduced in relation to understandings of employee commitment and loyalty to the company.

4.4 Concluding Discussion

4.4.1 Empirical Contribution: Diverging Work Ideals and Cultural Clashes

When Swedish and Indian managers describe the ideal software developer, both similarities and differences appear. Aspects that we have discussed here are technical competence, loyalty to the company and the project, engagement manifested in willingness to work long hours, and being independent, responsible, and proactive. Furthermore, both the similarities and the differences have gendered aspects.

Technical competence is a characteristic that is valued by both Swedish and Indian managers. In India, it is the baseline: it is what you get recruited for. For Swedes, it is extremely important that the Indians have a good technical competence because it justifies them being in the project in the first place. In Sweden, however, compared to India, the focus is less on technical competence. This is because, firstly, in the local Swedish context, there is no need to focus specifically on technical competence: applicants normally have the necessary technical competence they claim to have according to their educational qualifications, and so it needs less attention. Secondly, since Swedish organizational structures are flat and the culture stresses

teamwork, soft skills become more important relative to technical competence only (Salminen-Karlsson 2014).

The appreciation of the employees' technical competence can take on gendered forms. In the Indian context, technical competence is valued and gender neutral, and women are perceived as technically competent and confident and thus to have the potential to be ideal employees. A technically competent woman may enjoy high esteem for her skills in India, while she does not necessarily get that appreciation among the Swedes who do not expect her to be as technically competent as a man and who put somewhat less emphasis on technical skills (cf. Peterson 2007). Technical competence, however, does not make women ideal workers in the Indian IT sector, where long working hours and availability are even more important than in the West, and women are seen as not being able to comply with these, because of their obligations outside work and because of cultural constraints. While women in the West experience problems with achieving the status of ideal IT employees mainly due to their work identity, it is the opposite for women in India.

Loyalty to the company is something that is also valued in both contexts, but to different degrees. The Swedish ideal worker stays with the company and grows into the company culture and acquires domain and client knowledge. In India, the attitude is more ambivalent. Being loyal to the company is an advantage, and companies and managers have incentives to keep their employees. At the same time, young male employees, in particular (who are the absolute majority), are rather expected to change jobs in search of better income and better CVs, and a young male software developer who would be satisfied with staying at the same company or same team would be likely to be regarded negatively as lacking ambition. For women, the situation is different. The fact that women change jobs less often is recognized as advantageous for the company, but it also turns them into secondary employees who do not show ambition and participate in "the race." The expectation that they will leave the company for family reasons contributes to marginalizing them.

A culture of working long and late hours is valued in the Indian setting, while the Swedish managers do not particularly applaud it – even if they do not complain when they reap its benefits. This is the main issue separating genders among the Indian software developers and makes it very difficult for women to be ideal software developers. The long working hour culture effectively divided men and women into two separate groups, one of which was far from the ideal. Both the late-hour culture and the difficulties of women to stay late at the office were presented as something unquestionable in the case study companies, even though both of them officially had an 8-h working day. Here, a prevalent Indian organizational culture and work ideal overrode the expectations of the Swedes. The Swedish managers and colleagues, who did not visit India for longer periods, were only dimly aware of the long-hour culture. Thus, the disadvantages caused by women's restrictions in regard to time and space were maintained, even when that might not have been necessary.

Employees, who are independent and proactive, who take full responsibility for their part of the work, and who communicate about problems when they appear, represent a strong Swedish ideal, which both men and women are expected to fulfill. In India, this is not an ideal when it comes to software developers, but rather a

managerial ideal. The Swedish expectations that the Indian software developers would conform to this ideal effectively separated Swedish and Indian developers into two groups, of which the Indian one was far removed from the Swedish ideal. As there were few women in both settings, this divergence points out a major cultural clash between two local masculine ideals and practices.

4.4.2 Conceptual Contribution: Work Ideals in a Transnational Business Context

Our analysis has highlighted that the different kinds of work ideals produced multiple masculinities and femininities, privileging some over others. Our empirical data, therefore, highlights that it is a simplification to assume that gendered work ideals simply exclude either women or men or include either all women or all men. Instead, the chapter highlights how the transnational business context adds nuances to how the universal, abstract work ideal has been understood to exclude women and include men.

As the analysis has demonstrated, certain Indian femininities were constructed in relation to some of the most essential aspects of the universal work ideal described by Acker (1990): the employees' loyalty to the company and their ability and desire to work long hours and be both temporally and spatially flexible. In both aspects, women's role outside work was seen as constituting an obstacle for them in working life, and thus, in spite of women's loyalty, these aspects constructed men as the more ideal employees. As was also outlined in the analysis, however, even a man, who would be considered as an ideal employee in India, was not always seen as such in the eyes of the Swedish managers due to diverging situated work ideals.

Our results show that the so-called universal, abstract ideal worker that Acker (1990) described is a construction clearly shaped by the Western context it is situated in. The concept of "gendered work ideals" reflects the Western context in that it, to a certain extent, assumes that men's and women's roles in society are much more similar than they are in India. Acker, for example, does not relate the concept of an ideal worker to a situation where women's work roles are so tied to their private roles that all discussions of women's roles in the company are explicitly based on a conception of their private roles. In the Indian IT industry, conditions outside the workplace play a role not apprehended by Acker, in particular for women.

Managers at both companies pointed out that it is common in India for grandparents to take care of their grandchildren. With the salaries available in the IT sector, it is also entirely possible to employ household help. This does not relieve middle-class mothers from the obligation of being responsible for the household, however, and for children's upbringing and education. To be able to work, a woman with children therefore has to have engaged and supporting parents or in-laws that are not in need of care themselves (Rajadhyaksha and Bhatnagar 2000), and even with the help of relatives, it is seldom possible for her to live up to the ideal norm of long and late hours.

The chapter has also illustrated that the concept of "gendered work ideal" can be used to highlight how multifaceted transnational work ideals are and how cultural clashes can be explained with reference to conflicting situated work ideals. Work ideals are not always easily transferred and institutionalized from one work context to another. Who is considered an ideal employee in an IT transnational organization depends on where the company is located, the culture of the country, the size and age of the corporation (multinational or small start-up), and the nature of the business and the clients of the company. Previously, the work ideal concept has been used to analyze the Western work context and to delineate the exclusion and subordination of women employees at work. In cross-cultural studies, this concept can also be used to highlight the construction of different masculinities and hierarchies between men. Investigating transnational work ideals underlines how culture, ethnicity, language, age, and class intersect with gender and create hierarchies, not only between women and men but also between men.

The results highlight how work ideals diverge according to organizational structures and management ideologies, but also how they are linked to the very different national cultural dimensions of Sweden and India (cf. Bredillet et al. 2010). Even if software industries are much more Western than most of the workplaces in India, traditional values still influence the management ideologies that are used, which in our study is reflected in the fact that the Indian work ideals resemble the Tayloristic ideal more than the team-based ideal (Benschop and Doorewaard 1998).

While the large Indian offices of Bellsoft were practically all Indian, employees at Allsoft were working under direct Swedish leadership. This also meant that the understandings of the ideal worker among the managers differed. With the different management structures of the companies, our study gives certain insights in neocolonialism and also its relationship to gender equality policies. Even if Sweden and India do not have a common colonial past, the present-day Western colonialist thinking regards it as a self-evident fact that the Indians should strive to be the ideal workers in the Swedish sense to keep the Swedish customers happy (cf. Blomqvist et al. 2015). An example of the power relationship was the often one-sided issue of language, where the Swedes who found it difficult to express themselves in English were met with patience and helpfulness, while some of the Indians actually tried to learn Swedish. Yet, language was described as a problem more often on the Swedish than on the Indian side.

Allsoft managers, who were directly involved in the day-to-day management in the small start-up company, had developed their understanding of the ideal employee (as well as their perceptions of gender) in the European setting. The Swedish managers in Allsoft had spent considerable time in India, and two of them had a background in South Asia, even if they had grown up in Sweden. Thus, they had an understanding of the Indian culture as well as an understanding of the needs and preferences of the Swedish clients and a will to comply with them. The mission of the founders was to export Swedish management and development models to India. Following the line of reasoning of M. N. Ravishankar, Shan Pan, and Michael Myers (2013), neocolonialism in this case was a reflection of a certain ideological

discourse, of superiority and inferiority of cultures, regardless of the exact national background of the parties involved. During the years of the company's operation, the managers had conceded to a hybrid model of managing, in that while still asserting that the basic values are Swedish, they have also incorporated Indian management techniques.

The differences in the perception of what constitutes an ideal worker caused problems in the collaboration between Swedish and Indian managers at Bellsoft. At Bellsoft, the Indian management, in particular those who had long-standing collaborations with Swedes, had created what Ravishankar et al. (2013) would call hybrid ideals. The Indian offices were managed by Indians, who wanted to promote ideal Indian employees' careers to foster a younger generation of Indians to take over. The management used both Western managerial techniques and a paternalistic Indian approach (Salminen-Karlsson 2015). The ideal employees were expected to exhibit both entrepreneurial and compliant characteristics. The Indian management processes were to a certain extent seen as a nuisance by the Swedish collaborators, while the Indian management thought it would be much easier if the Swedes would accept the Indian organizational practices to the same extent as earlier offshoring collaborators, as those from the UK and the USA had done, for example. The Indian Bellsoft management did not hide the fact that they did not fully share the Swedish ideals. This attitude was probably facilitated by Sweden's position in the global order as a country with a perceived lower position than the USA and the UK.

Gender equality policies, as they are formed in large multinational companies, in themselves can be seen as a part of the neocolonialist discourse. They normally originate from headquarters or are modeled the same way as in the West, with more or less adaptation for the local context (Dhar-Bhattacharjee 2013). Winifred Poster's (2008) reflections on how the headquarters of transnational companies try to impose their gender equality policies in different cultural contexts, and how these efforts are ignored or adapted, also hold true in our study. The policies at Bellsoft were a good example of this, where the Indian office of the international company tried to implement some gender equality measures following general Bellsoft policies, being successful in some and less successful in others. At Allsoft, the Swedish background of the managers had not resulted in particular gender equality policies. When coming into an Indian setting, these Swedish managers left the Swedish gender equality discourse behind but did not investigate those gender equality issues that could be relevant for their employees in the Indian setting.

Possibly, as indicated by both Bellsoft and Allsoft managers, the differences in work ideals are particularly large between India and Sweden, causing more problems than might be found in offshoring collaborations between other countries, making the "perfect match" difficult to achieve. Further investigation is thus needed of these issues, both from a Sweden/India perspective and in respect to other pairs of countries.

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Chapter 5
Culturalism as Resistance

Exploring the Contradictions of Gender Policies in Indian Multinationals

Smitha Radhakrishnan

Since the 1990s, global organizations in the knowledge economy have increasingly been adopting diversity management strategies in their human resource departments that include policies that aim to improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women (Evans 2012; Sharp et al. 2012). These strategies have become an increasingly central part of the work of human resource teams in every imaginable type of organization. Firms justify the implementation of gender policies with what has come to be known as the "business case" for diversity, a concept that includes a vague but expansive set of benefits, including enhanced image and competitiveness, higher profits, and better business in general (Cox 1993; Herring 2009; Guerrier and Wilson 2011). Social justice arguments for diversity in organizations are perhaps the only type of justification *not* included in the "business case" (Evans 2012). In the last decade, diversity management policies with a significant focus on gender have proliferated in organizations around the world, far beyond the Western industrialized contexts in which they first emerged (Robinson et al. 2003; NASSCOM-Mercer 2009).

The widespread character of such policies belies their decidedly mixed record, at least in the (almost exclusively Western) contexts that have been studied. In some conventionally masculine production settings, such as offshore oil platforms or auto manufacturing plants, gender diversity policies have become integrated into the very structure of work, generating new meanings of masculinity and femininity and challenging prevailing cultural norms (Ely and Meyerson 2010; Lepadatu and Janoski 2011). In office settings, including engineering, however, studies have shown gender policies producing ambivalence at best and inadvertent reinforcement of male dominance at worst (Reskin 2000; Kalev et al. 2006; Faulkner 2009; Kalev 2009; Sharp et al. 2012).

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Analysts have paid scant attention to the rapid proliferation of such policies in non-Western contexts. Furthermore, although gendered organizational analyses are attentive to male dominance, the presumed gender neutrality of bureaucracies, and the implicitly male ideal worker, seldom do gendered analyses of the organization acknowledge a broader national or cultural context outside the occupation or the organization (Acker 1990; Cockburn 1991; Wajcman 1998; Sharp et al. 2012).[1] This oversight in the scholarly literature parallels a similar oversight in the implementation of diversity management, which overwhelmingly relies upon a universalizing "best practice" framework (Guerrier and Wilson 2011; Evans 2012). A historically situated, empirically grounded examination of diversity management policies allows us to see context-specific arenas of gender flexibility and rigidity, while also providing a critique of the "best practice" approach to diversity management with regard to gender.

Indian technology firms offer a particularly salient opportunity to examine the transnational, cross-cultural circulation of gender inclusivity policies and thereby to decenter the universalism in the prevailing literature on diversity policies.[2] The Indian technology sector has experienced a rapid expansion since the late 1990s but has also undergone a transformation in ownership structure. Mostly American, but also European, firms dominated the sector during India's initial ascent to the center of the global information technology (IT) industry. In the last decade, however, Indian-owned firms have come to dominate the sector, although these companies continue primarily to serve clients abroad. Previously, the imperative for gender diversity policies flowed from the USA to India in the context of relationships between American companies and their subsidiaries.[3] Today, however, gender diversity policies come from *within* Indian companies, albeit in response to client norms, and gender policies have been implemented in Indian firms such as Wipro, Infosys, and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), led by the National Association for Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), the industry's official trade organization (NASSCOM-Mercer 2009; Kaul and Singh 2012). The ascendance of Indian IT also marks a moment of ascendance for the nation as a whole, as India is becoming an increasingly powerful geopolitical power. In parallel with liberalization's apparent successes, nationalist discourses have gained traction at home and abroad (Corbridge and Harriss 2000; Fernandes 2000; Mathew and Prashad 2000), discourses that are gendered at their heart (Oza 2006; Radhakrishnan 2011). While

[1] For an exception, see Linda McDowell (1997).

[2] My usage of "gender diversity" policies versus "gender inclusivity" policies in this chapter varies to reflect the contexts in which they appear. In the literature on gender policies in the USA, the term "gender diversity" is predominantly used. In contrast, the literature on India refers to "gender inclusivity," and this term was used by my informants as well. It may be that this variation reflects the type of transformations that gender policies have undergone in the Indian context described here. But this point requires further analysis and inquiry that lies outside the scope of this chapter.

[3] For example, Winifred Poster (2008) shows how diversity policies entered Indian firms in the 1990s. The American company introduced notions of diversity, but local firms reconfigured those ideas in ways the American firm did not necessarily expect or intend.

crucial for understanding the everyday negotiations of IT women, nationalist discourses seldom fall under the purview of gendered organizational analysis.

In this chapter, I investigate new diversity management policies aimed at improving the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in the context of Indian IT. I pay special attention to large, Indian-owned firms with continued linkages of dependency to American clients. I ask: How do *new* discourses, policies, and practices surrounding gender in Indian-owned IT firms relate to *existing* discourses and practices regarding women in these firms?[4] And how is this interaction between new and existing discourses situated within a broader context of interactions between Western (in this case, primarily American) firms and Indian ones? These interrelated research questions are informed by a gendered organizational perspective but also aim to critique and transcend the Western-centric bias of this literature. The tendency of the existing literature to focus on Western workplaces allows for a universalization of certain "best practices" and logics. This universalizing tendency means that gender policies circulate easily without explicit attention to context, and I aim here to argue for the importance of the broader cultural and institutional context.

5.1 Multiple Gendered Logics at Work

Following Joan Acker (1990, 2012), I view the organization as a site of various interconnected gendered processes, which I aim to identify and examine more closely. Specifically, I examine the "gendered logics" that underpin Indian-owned IT organizations. Acker (1990, 147) defines the "gendered logic" of an organization as the "underlying assumptions and practices [that] appear to be gender-neutral." Acker includes consideration of "written work rules, labor contracts, managerial directives […] and systems of job evaluation" as examples of such logics, which signal a larger gendered substructure. Although Acker did not pursue an empirical study of gendered logics in her subsequent work, in her recent review of studies utilizing her early framework, she agrees that this is a critical perspective that deserves to be taken up again (2012). My approach is also informed by Dana Britton's (2000) critique of the gendered organizations literature, and I seek not to conflate the gendered dynamics of occupations with those of specific organizations. Here, I examine the gendered aspects of the IT profession in India separately from changing gender discourses within Indian-owned organizations in an effort properly to historicize and situate the implementation of gender diversity policies.

This chapter also goes beyond the gendered organizations literature by explicitly including within the scope of my analysis the broader national and cultural context, with attention to class and gender, as well as to the relative position of the Indian IT

[4] Reflecting the dominant literature on gender diversity, I intentionally equate the term "gender" with "women" in this chapter, since an expansion and critique of that mainstream usage lies outside the scope of this chapter.

industry in the global IT sector. Gendering processes at work, in all these arenas, undoubtedly influence and shape gendered processes in organizations, yet these larger processes are seldom included in most gendered analyses of organizations. It is precisely these systems of power that inform the underlying "gender logics" that Acker identifies.

5.2 Methods

This chapter draws upon interviews and documentary analysis to uncover the changing discourses surrounding gender and gender diversity policies in Indian firms over the course of the last decade. I focus here on three interrelated sets of data, each of which comprises a section of this chapter.

The basis for this research comes from a large study of 137 Indian IT professionals working in Bangalore, Mumbai, Silicon Valley, and South Africa between 2004 and 2005. Ninety of these interviews were done in India (60 with women and 30 with men, working in firms of varying sizes and ownership structures). These interviews were conducted in English, transcribed, and then coded by hand. Apart from the interviews, extensive ethnographic research was conducted with 14 of the interviewees, with interactions in many settings over a period of many months or years. I rely upon this broad research experience to situate trends of sex segregation, gendered notions of the nation, and professional femininity at the level of the IT profession as a whole.

To delve into the details of exactly how issues of women's recruitment, advancement, and retention were being dealt with in Indian firms prior to the implementation of formal diversity policies, I focus on a subset of 43 interviews, conducted with IT professionals working in 14 Indian-owned firms of varying sizes in Bangalore and Mumbai, thus excluding professionals working in foreign firms in which diversity policies may simply be mandated by the parent firm. This dataset includes interviews with 34 women and 9 men, a composition that reflects my interest in women rather than the composition of the industry as a whole.[5] The sample is overwhelmingly managerial (30 of the 43 interviewed were at a middle-management level or higher) and mostly composed of programmers (31 of the 43 were program-

[5] Although my original large study had planned to focus on professional IT women, as the project progressed, it became clear that I needed the perspectives of men to gain a fuller picture of the gender dynamics in the workplace, as well as constructions of femininity. Of my 137 interviewees, 31 were men, so the subset used in this chapter offers roughly the same proportion of men and women as my full sample set. In this chapter, interviews with men provide insight into how higher-level managers, who were more likely to be men, perceived and dealt with gender issues in their particular companies and in their particular roles. While this chapter deals specifically with issues like maternity leave and advancement, I have written elsewhere about how men perceive mentoring relationships with women in their workplaces, and how women in their workplaces influence their ideas about the ideal partner to marry (Radhakrishnan 2011).

mers, but also includes 4 technical writers, 2 graphic designers, 2 administrators, and 1 with other specialties). I focus on the discourses of employees working in Indian-owned firms in order to uncover the gendered logics surrounding issues of professional women's advancement in that particular organizational context. This allows me to focus on the environment in Indian firms specifically, since I expect the ownership structure to shape the gendered logics that inform the organization's everyday environment. For this subset, I recoded the original interview data, first by hand and then with the help of an Excel spreadsheet, identifying the themes of gendered expectations in the workplace, the changing environment for women in the workplace, and experiences of advancement. In a few interviews, I found that employees discussed their experiences with specific gender policies, precursors to the formal gender diversity policies that have been implemented throughout the industry from 2005 onward.

Finally, I conducted a set of five interviews between 2008 and 2012, that is, after the industrywide imperative for diversity became well established. All these interviewees were program directors involved with articulating and implementing diversity policies in three different Indian firms. These interviews were also conducted in English and then transcribed. Coding was done by hand and focused on narratives of implementation, effectiveness, and the perceived challenges for these policies. For this more recent time period, I also relied upon documents found on company websites, as well as on NASSCOM's website, to understand the changes in discourses surrounding human resources during this time period. These documents include speeches at national summits for diversity, company documents that represent diversity to the world on their websites (similar to those examined by Guerrier and Wilson [2011]), and internal documents shared with me by one human resource manager working at a large Indian firm between 2005 and 2010.[6]

Together, these varied materials, collected over several years of research, provide insights into the gendered logics at work in Indian IT firms, but also the constant cultural navigation with an implicit American corporate norm, often unnamed, but ever present. Firms aim to distinguish themselves from these norms, but must also conform to them to continue their relationships with clients.

Because of their limits in terms of scope and time of collection, this data cannot stand in for a thorough empirical study on the current dynamics of continuity and change surrounding diversity policies in Indian IT firms. Nonetheless, this study usefully contextualizes these policies from angles that much of the contemporary literature on such policies overlooks or takes for granted. It first situates practices of sex segregation within the industry in the broader context of gendered nationalism in India. These material and cultural practices constitute what Acker (1990) calls the "gendered substructure" upon which the gendered logics of the workplace are built. The interviews from 2004 to 2005 situate the organizational environment in which gendered logics played themselves out just before diversity policies arrived, and the

[6] Throughout this chapter, I use pseudonyms for interviewees and for the firms in which I conducted research.

more recent interviews with program directors provide insights into how those logics work with and against a "best practices" approach to diversity management.

5.3 Situating the (Gendered) Indian IT Professional

In the context of Indian IT, gender constitutes a salient cultural and economic terrain. Professional IT women are central to the economic and symbolic success of the Indian IT industry, but occupy a position filled with contradictions. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the symbolic and cultural significance of professional women working in IT while also examining how women are integrated into a male-dominated industry in which elite Indian men are also engaged in the project of constructing a new idea of India as a technological superpower. This overview draws on my own previously published research, as well as anecdotal observations from my research, when thorough studies on specific issues are absent. When possible, I draw on secondary sources.

Women comprise approximately 30 % of the Indian IT industry (NASSCOM 2006).[7] In the urban middle-class families that most Indian IT workers come from, engineering is viewed as a good job for women, due to its air-conditioned, clean work environment and because all work takes place at a desk, thus not requiring travel throughout the city. Because of these positive associations for women, Indian college women feel confident about future careers in computing and engineering (Varma 2010). In terms of its symbolism, the presence of large numbers of women in IT indicates to the world that India as a country has progressed with regard to women. In American media depictions, professional IT women are shown to be distinctively Indian, marked by Indian clothing, bindi, and jewelry.[8] Indeed, the figure of the IT woman offers a compelling cultural icon not only for the IT industry but also for India as a whole, projecting a forward-looking, technologically savvy feminine persona that still remains "authentically" Indian.

The professional femininity that IT women enact demarcates a specific way of being Indian that is appealing to a wide audience in India and, increasingly, also in

[7] This figure is an estimate based on the 2006 report cited, which reports that 30 % of the IT workforce are women. Surprisingly, more recent reports on Indian knowledge professionals published by NASSCOM do not include statistics about gender composition of the industry, and I have been unable to locate other reliable statistical sources that update this number. The NASSCOM gender inclusivity report (2009) cited in this chapter offers an overall number of 670,984 female professionals in the industry in 2008, but does not offer enough information to calculate what proportion or what segment of the industry this comprises.

[8] Between 2004 and 2006, several mainstream magazine covers in the USA portrayed a technical Indian femininity as a symbol of a new economically powerful India. See, for example, the February 2004 edition of *Wired* magazine; the March 6, 2006, edition of *Newsweek*; or the June 26, 2006, cover of *Time.* In 2004, a series of columns by Thomas Friedman in *New York Times*, highlighting India's tech boom, also focused on IT women, implying that their progress symbolized the arrival of India as a whole.

the USA and beyond (Poster 2013; Chandra 2014). Although culturally distinctive, this femininity is still compatible with a Western, cosmopolitan sensibility. In my previous work (Radhakrishnan 2011), I have called this cultural orientation, "appropriate difference," a sensibility that convincingly balances the cultural imperative to be "true" to one's own culture with the economic imperative to be seamlessly integrated into the global political economy. One of the most salient aspects of this "appropriate difference" is the imperative that professional women put "family first." My previous work (Radhakrishnan 2009) focused extensively on the normative pressures that educated, urban middle-class women face from their families and spouses to either quit or scale back their careers when they become mothers. Pursuit of an ambitious career after having children requires women to perform, on a daily basis, a delicate balancing act if they are to retain their symbolic standing as "Indian." The expectation that women will put their families first also comes from the workplace, and the gender policies I discuss in this chapter focus on the decisions women make at the crossroads of motherhood because of these pressures. While such pressures are by no means culturally unique, in the context of Indian IT, such pressures are linked to questions of identity and nation, which are challenged at the individual's peril.

The masculinities produced in the Indian IT environment are equally salient, producing new symbolic meanings for Indian culture at home and abroad. Winifred Poster (2009) has argued that Indian IT has produced a dominant "techno-masculinity" that designates high status in the Indian context. Aneesh Aneesh (2009), meanwhile, has argued that computer coding itself has created an algocracy in India, wherein those (men) who are in control of code appear to exercise legitimate, merit-based cultural and economic power. Unlike professional IT femininity, which draws its global appeal from that perfect balance of "Indian" and "global," the masculinities of IT are realized in sheer technical prowess, without reference to any cultural paradigms at all. These distinctions are reflected in the clear gendered divisions that persist within different sectors of the industry.

In my research, I found that sex segregation is perpetuated in Indian IT work through poor retention rates on the one hand and hiring and promotion practices that underscore the idea that women are naturally suited to certain kinds of work on the other. With regard to retention, the human resource personnel I interviewed informally claim that among new recruits, the ratios of men to women are almost 1:1. Most women, however, leave their IT careers forever within the first 5 years, due either to marriage or childbirth (NASSCOM-Mercer 2009, 11). As a result, the majority of women in any firm tend to be at the lowest levels, with very few women working above the middle-management level.

The gender parity among new recruits suggested by my research needs to be corroborated by more thorough industrywide data, which is currently lacking in the literature. However, my discussions with high-level human resource personnel, as well as my observations of the compositions of the 14 different firms I visited over the course of my research, suggest that the recruitment process perpetuates patterns of sex segregation that are quite persistent. Human resource and technical writing are two areas of work within IT that are dominated by women. Human resource

departments often hire women with nontechnical educational backgrounds, but it is also common for women to move into human resources as their careers advance. Indeed, human resource departments are perhaps the only areas of work at Indian multinational firms in which women regularly occupy the highest positions. Many of those women were of prime engineering talent when hired.[9] In my findings, technical writers comprise another sector of IT work dominated by women. These writers work with corporate clients to develop all kinds of written content for products, ranging from instruction manuals for printers and computers to the text portions of user interfaces for complex programming products. Writers make up a small but critical talent base for Indian IT, and almost all of them are women with educational backgrounds in the humanities or social sciences. The technical writers I interviewed explained to me that the majority of those they worked with are women, while they observed that in other areas, women comprise a visible minority.

Both human resource and technical writing are relatively small areas of hiring, though. Primarily, IT firms hire entry-level workers with technical skills, increasingly with engineering degrees or some kind of equivalent vocational training certification. In these batches of "freshers," sex segregation coalesces through promotion patterns. Young women, who are successful at basic coding projects at the entry level, experience rapid mobility early in their careers, but then tend to level off at the middle-management level, if they had not dropped out altogether by this time. Usually, they attain this level 5–6 years into their careers, but at that point, they frequently move from programming work to quality and maintenance work, which is less deadline driven and considered by both men and women to be more suited to women's priorities.

This overview of the interrelated material and symbolic dimensions of gender in Indian IT highlights the peculiar mix of empowerment and constraint that the industry presents for women, who are at once highly visible and more confident in IT than their American peers, and subject to naturalized discrimination within the workplace and social pressures to exit the workplace early in their careers. These pressures appear in gendered articulations of the nation that continue to be salient for the urban middle-class women in Indian IT. The positive associations of the profession for women mean that there is space for gender flexibility and negotiation, even as there are also abiding patterns of sex segregation and differential treatment. Given this context, I now turn to the everyday environment of the Indian IT

[9] These findings are based on observations from my research and discussion with interviewees about this topic. There is a striking lack of systematic data on these issues within the existing literature. The most recent industrywide report on gender, the NASSCOM-Mercer (2009) report on gender inclusivity, presents highly problematic data in which growing numbers of women in the industry are conflated with higher proportions overall (see p. 10), and when "percentage of women" is discussed, it refers to the distribution of all women in various organizational roles in the sector rather than being attentive to patterns of sex segregation within roles. For these reasons, I rely heavily upon my own observations in this section, which provides a crucial context for understanding the gender dynamics of the industry.

workplace before gender policies were implemented, a context in which changing gender norms for women were dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

5.4 Navigating Gender Before Diversity Policies

Despite the policy vacuum surrounding gender diversity in the mid-2000s, equal treatment between men and women in the workplace was a topic much considered and discussed among employees. A vast majority of the IT professionals in the subset of interviewees working in Indian-owned firms (36 of 43) recognized changing norms for women in the IT workplace, such that women were starting to be treated more and more like their male counterparts, especially when it came to the expectation to "be professional." Some provided conflicting narratives of the same topic, stating that women were held to the same expectations as men, but also saying that women would not wish to put in the same hours as men. The prevailing narrative of work hours was clearly articulated by 24-year-old Prerana, a programmer working in Bangalore, who saw rising expectations for women as a positive trend:

> Earlier there was this mentality, that "Oh! This is a lady – she would not be able to work past six o'clock. She will want to go home." But lately, there is a shift… People are there till 10 or 11 pm, even women. Men, they are there the whole night, probably to 2 or 3 in the night [*sic*]. If required, even ladies do it, but it is less.
>
> [Do you think it is a positive change – that women stay later than before?]
>
> I mean, they are being professional… They are committed to the work. Sometimes, you know, men feel like, "Okay – she is just working to pass the time.' But this is not the way it is. People are professional; if work demands they [women] will stay on too.

Prerana's narrative emphasizes that those who truly participate in the IT industry work long hours. Thus, women could only truly be "professional" about their jobs if they subscribe to these demands. In this narrative, assumptions about the masculinity of ideal workers, in this case termed "professionals," come into focus. Despite this presumed masculine norm, Prerana's narrative, like that of many I interviewed, suggests that before formal diversity policies were implemented, women were becoming more fully integrated into Indian technology firms by enacting what they perceived to be neutral "professional" values.

In the absence of formal policies, mothers frequently made arrangements with their employers for maternity leave. The seven mothers in my sample who had children while working had all taken maternity leave, ranging from 3 months to 2 years. Sometimes, these women benefited from paid maternity leave policies. When paid maternity was unavailable, the women I interviewed took unpaid leave; their jobs were waiting for them when they returned. The men I interviewed perceived maternity leave – informal as it often was at the time – to be a desirable feature of the IT workplace because it allowed for better retention among women, compared to other industries. Ravi, a senior-level IT professional explained:

> I have seen a number of examples where a lady has stayed home, managed her kid and then got back after two to three years. Particularly in the IT industry, we go out of the way to make women's lives as tolerable as possible, and not make them want to quit.

Such informal, but substantive, accommodations and attitudes toward women in IT were a commonplace in 2004, but there was little or no cohesive "gender diversity" or "gender inclusion" frame holding these arrangements together. Thus, these case-by-case accommodations for women were relatively uncontroversial. Ravi, like many others I interviewed, did not presume that professional Indian women would want to be like men, but rather wished to accommodate their priorities as much as possible.

In a few cases, interviewees shared their experiences with early gender diversity initiatives that were implemented in a piecemeal way at the behest of clients. Mital, a 24-year-old engineer working at a large firm I call Global Systems (GS), explained in 2005:

> In higher management, there are very few women. [But in the] finance [vertical],[10] every year [the client] has an initiative, and this time it was the gender ratio. And part of that initiative was to improve the women's ratio. And it percolated down to the vendors as well: that a certain number of managers who are women should be there. So, then, in that particular account, I could see there were more women. But it was because [the client] pushed us to do it. GS wasn't looking at it ourselves. This year, I can see very few women in management.

In this case, GS implemented the policies as a onetime concession for their client. In contrast with Poster's (2008) findings in Indian subsidiaries, Mital suggests that at GS, notions of diversity in the early 2000s might not necessarily have "filtered" through local understandings, but were rather implemented superficially and dismissed once the client's gender initiative had concluded.

All these narratives suggest that there was a contradictory set of gendered logics at play before the introduction of formal gender policies. As Prerana pointed out, there was a masculine norm in Indian workplaces concerning what it meant to be "professional," a norm that increasing numbers of women were adopting. At the same time, upper-level managers were clear that women needed special policies if the company wanted to retain them, and women did regularly take maternity leave and return to their jobs. Transformative gender policies were, however, never really on the table for most firms and were implemented temporarily when required by clients.

[10] GS is organized into vertical businesses, referred to as "verticals" that each cater to different global industries, developing specialized products and services. GS has a finance vertical, a healthcare vertical, a utilities vertical, etc.

5.5 Culturalist Responses to Gender Inclusivity

Between 2003 and 2006, advocates for women within large Indian firms began pushing to establish clear policies on gender inclusivity, spurring the rapid proliferation of these policies. By 2007, almost all Indian firms had specific programs in place geared toward improving the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in their ranks (Kaul and Singh 2012). These policies were usually formulated in relation to American gender policies, although the specifics of that relationship differed between firms. At the same time, gender inclusivity policy requirements were emerging at an industrywide level. These imperatives fostered discourses surrounding the conflicts between motherhood and a woman's career that reflected specific understandings of what the gender challenges were in the Indian IT industry. In this section, I examine two narratives from human resource leaders involved in implementing diversity programs at their large Indian-owned firms, each of which highlights different modes of engagement with American gender policies, as well as correspondingly different conceptions of the specificity of gender inequalities in Indian IT. I then analyze a speech given at an industrywide summit that highlights the consolidation of a particular discourse surrounding gender issues in India – one that resorts to blaming women for their guilt over parenting while having a career.

5.5.1 Lavanya at InTech: Resistance and Universalism

In at least some firms, the process of adaptation proved controversial because gender policies were perceived to have American corporate baggage. In a 2012 interview, human resource director Lavanya explained that in 2005, as a part of the newly formed diversity team at InTech, she held a meeting with senior executives – mostly men – to convince them of the importance of gender diversity in every aspect of their business practice. Although the initiative was itself a product of a push from the highest level of the firm's leadership, many of the men at that meeting said that diversity was for Americans and not needed in India. This conception, explained Lavanya, took years to change, and it was the "business case" that finally helped to mainstream gender inclusivity policies into the everyday workings of the firm. In Lavanya's firm, then, resistance emerged within the firm, with advocates for gender policies and corporate leadership on one side and an entrenched upper management made up of mostly men on the other.

Lavanya was the only human resource manager I spoke with who described an overt resistance to gender policies when they were presented as a requirement, and she was also the only person in my sample who said that she did not believe that the gender challenges in India were in any way culturally unique. The issue of women "opting out" at childbirth, for example, presented exactly the same challenges in India as it did elsewhere in the world, in her view. Citing her own experience with her company abroad, she explained, "Women drop out for babies in the USA and in

Germany, just like they do here." Lavanya's interpretation asserts that women face similar issues in IT globally, a view that I found to be in dramatic contrast to her peers. Lavanya's interpretation implies that gender policies may not necessarily face different challenges in India than they do elsewhere, and she therefore advocates for similar policies in all corporate contexts. While Lavanya did not describe in detail the extent to which the policies she mobilized in her firm were "copied" from similar policies in American firms, her conceptualization of gender in Indian IT seems to suggest that she would have at least been open to that possibility.

5.5.2 Padmini at Datacom: Resistance as Deflection and (Culturalist) Reinterpretation

In other firms, and perhaps most significantly at Datacom, which was from the outset an industry leader in framing gender inclusivity policies, human resource managers deflected and actively managed the influence of American perspectives on gender policies in their firms, specifically with regard to American gender consultants. Padmini's narrative of gender policies at Datacom is useful because it resonates in important ways with discourses that circulate in industrywide spaces like NASSCOM. This is unsurprising because Padmini herself was a key figure in mobilizing NASSCOM around gender issues, using her own experience at Datacom as an example.

At Datacom, leaders were already committed to the core principles of diversity, establishing and growing inclusivity initiatives as early as 2003. When American diversity consultants were hired to help the firm develop specific policies, Padmini found their models inappropriate and inadequate for the Indian IT context. She claimed that the American consultants hired by Datacom did not understand that childcare was a fundamental problem for women in India, while getting women into positions of power was not an issue, since, in her view, "it's strictly meritocratic here [at Datacom], it's not who [you are], but what [you do] that counts." Instead of emulating the models they offered, Padmini educated them about gender in India:

> I keep telling them [the consultants] that what's applicable for your African-American women and women of color and women of this or that ethnicity, and whether they are up there [in the organization or not], is not going to mean anything for us. Because you have to come to the grassroots level and understand.

Padmini explained that foreign gender consultants have preconceived notions of India as a place of uneducated, devalued women and rampant child marriage. She had to explain to them that India is also a progressive place for women, as evidenced by prominent women in politics and banking, the wide acceptance of coeducational institutions, and the prevalence of cultural practices such as matrilineage, which privileges women over men in the South Indian state of Kerala. In this narrative, Padmini presents a nuanced picture of India to foreign gender consultants, thereby rejecting both a subordinate position of imitation (i.e., your policies will not

work here) and a view of India as a place defined by gendered oppression. Padmini's account, while accurate in many respects, contains more than a hint of defensive nationalist pride, mobilized in gendered terms meant to emphasize just how little the American consultants understood.

Padmini came to the meetings with consultants with her own convictions about what was needed at Datacom in terms of gender inclusion and sensitivity and, because of Datacom's wide influence, by extension the Indian IT industry as a whole. In her view, gender policies had to address individual "blind spots" throughout the organization and support women in middle management to continue with their careers after having children. Padmini told me that she found that the Western models available to address issues of gender inclusion and sensitivity were inappropriate for the Indian context in which the main problem was support for women at the mid-level of their career. Padmini's narrative makes clear that she and her team personally vetted each of the gender policies they implemented, rejecting those elements they found inappropriate for Datacom, and implicitly, for the Indian IT industry as a whole. Her exclusions were based on her conviction that much of what the American consultants offered did not address the problems that Indian IT women faced.

It is unclear whether or not Padmini faced overt resistance from employees of the sort Lavanya experienced when various programs were rolled out. But what is clear from Padmini's narrative is that *she* (personally, although almost certainly with the support of C-level leaders) resisted the influence of the "American" aspect of these policies. While she wanted better gender policies and better support for women, she wanted policies that were specific both to India *and* to the IT industry, and she drew on her own experiences from the human resource office to inform those policies. While she rightly focuses upon the challenges posed by motherhood, she ignores the issues of sex segregation and internal advancement. Her construction of the specific problems women face in their careers drew from her own understanding of where the real problem for women lay: with Indian women, themselves. When explaining the need to "come to the grassroots" to understand, Padmini said:

> The problem with Indian women is that we've never been independent in our life, right? Until a certain age, your parents decide what to do. And after you get married, your husband and in-laws decide what to do. Probably the minute you have children, the children decide what they want you to do. So, it's a very vicious cycle. […] It's easy to frame policies. We have [them all]. You name it: one-year childcare sabbatical, part-time, flextime, daycare, lactation centers… but the major mind-set change we need are only from women. Most of the time they're confused. […] It's easy [to say] organizations are not doing enough. We forget that the women themselves are a part of the organization, and if they don't want to bring a change and participate in the activities you create for them, then the change never happens.

In Padmini's opinion, her organization has already put into place everything possible to support a woman's career. The arrangements she mentions are the standard fare of progressive gender policy, mostly generated in the USA, but Padmini went to great lengths in the interview to underscore how these policies were created *within* her company. Padmini views the existence of these policies as signs that the organization *has* done "enough," even as she continues to expand her advocacy and network with other firms on the same issue. The obstacle to the success of these

policies is, in her view, Indian culture itself, which produces dependent women who cannot make their own decisions.

5.5.3 *Industrywide Discourses: Professional Indian Women Are Not There Yet*

The idea that Indian women – particularly Indian mothers – have cultural characteristics that conflict with the needs of the Indian IT industry is a commonplace narrative that permeates the discourse on gender in Indian IT. In a keynote speech by industry leader Subroto Bagchi (2007), delivered at NASSCOM's second summit on gender inclusivity, Bagchi sets up this conflict. Bagchi begins his speech by discussing the economic need for Indian boardrooms to "take a nurturing view of the future" if they stay competitive and continue to expand, a perspective that requires more Indian women in the boardrooms of Indian companies.[11] Then he poses a question: "Are women professionals in India ready to join the multidisciplinary boardroom of the future?" He answers "no." In the subsequent explanation of this answer, he describes prevalent stereotypes that Indian women face in the workplace, how women stereotype themselves, the glass ceiling, and personal guilt. In this narrative of professional Indian womanhood, however, personal guilt is the biggest stumbling block. Bagchi explains:

> Women professionals around the world are far more at peace with their parenting capabilities than their middle class, Indian counterparts. If you have something large to achieve, go do it. Do not sit there moaning the crooked line on your child's drawing and blaming your organization for it. Your kid would be just fine [*sic*].

By singling out guilt over inadequate parenting as a uniquely Indian and female preoccupation, Bagchi is able effectively to mobilize an argument that resonates with the women in Bagchi's audience because guilt over not being there for children is a common theme in discourses of mothering in IT and emerges in tandem with the pressures women face to be symbols of national tradition *and* progress.[12] By focusing on personal guilt as a cultural characteristic of Indian mothers that must be overcome, he is able to encourage women to rectify this cultural handicap and fall into line with their peer "women professionals around the world." Bagchi thus

[11] This justification for gender diversity (the so-called business case for gender equality), which Bagchi evokes, relies on an essentialized construction of feminine managerial capacity and is one that flows from the US corporate context (see Robin Ely and Debra Meyerson (2000), and Nanette Fondas (1997)).

[12] While the single women I interviewed never mentioned guilt, mothers frequently did. Padmini of Datacom also mentioned guilt as a central problem throughout her interview. When she discussed her own career when she had children, she said, "somewhere in the back of my mind, I felt guilty, which I know is not appropriate." Later, when discussing the importance of interventions, she explained that the primary form of education that gender policies give women is that, "it is okay to go slow [when you have children]… and not to feel guilty."

blames Indian women for their guilt in order to urge them to recommit themselves to their careers.

Padmini and Lavanya's views represent two contrasting approaches to gender policies in two large Indian multinational IT firms and thus offer a starting point for reflecting on how different firms, and different individuals within them, may interpret and implement these policies. Lavanya contends that the character of gender inequality in corporations is similar in many countries; thus gender policies that have similar characteristics are as appropriate in India as they are in Germany. Lavanya is resistant to the idea that there is something specifically "Indian" about Indian multinationals that makes gender policies ineffective. Thus, she was critical of those in upper management who viewed gender policies as inappropriate for the Indian setting. Padmini, in contrast, espouses a view that Indian gender policies need to be built from the ground up and sees herself as a person generating knowledge about gender in Indian organizations – knowledge that forms the basis for appropriate policies. While this view sounds more appropriate, Padmini's narrative of "the grassroots level" rests upon the internalized patterns of dependency and poor planning among Indian women. The focus of her policies is to address "blind spots" and foster sensitivity so that when women reach the crossroads of motherhood, they will make choices that will allow them to continue working. Such an approach, consistent with Bagchi's framing of the culturally specific guilt that Indian women experience, points the finger at individual women. Indeed, Padmini claims that true change must come from women themselves.

The divergence between Padmini and Lavanya raises new questions about the relationship between universality and cultural difference with regard to gender in global organizations. On the one hand, if universalized gender policies are adopted wholesale from American companies, there is sure to be resistance or subversion from within the company that may attenuate the benefits that women receive. On the other hand, if a purportedly "ground up" view simply puts the problem squarely back on the shoulders of women, then formal policies become little more than what Christina Evans (2012) called an "ideological cover." Neither account considers the possibilities for building bottom-up, organizationally specific gender policies that are centrally informed by data on sex segregation within the industry and gender-specific patterns of recruitment and retention. Indeed, such data is absent from industrywide accounts of gender, such as the NASSCOM-Mercer report cited earlier. These reports rely largely on the assessments of in-house gender advocates like Padmini, who are themselves entrenched in taken-for-granted ideas about the inherent cultural faults of Indian women.

5.6 Discussion

This data suggests that the implementation of gender policies in Indian firms has been conflicted because it represents an adaptation of what is widely regarded as "American" norms in an area thought to be quintessentially "cultural" – the careers

of women, especially mothers. The factors contributing to this conflict are manifold. First, Indian companies continue to be beholden to mostly American customers, who comprise their primary client base. Therefore, an updated program of diversity policies is critical to the legitimacy of Indian firms, burnishing their image to Western clients. There are also many powerful advocates for gender diversity policies within the industry who strongly push the business case for diversity, while providing much needed support to women working in these firms; these advocates lead their organizations in innovating policies for an audience comprising of both clients and employees. This research also, however, uncovers what I interpret as resistance to these policies, often articulated in the same breath as support. Although Indian firms wish to participate in a set of powerful global norms that place extra value on women employees, upper management in Indian IT firms do not wish to be viewed as imitators. The ambivalent implementation of gender policies allows firms to assert the cultural uniqueness of Indian women, and, thus, a measure of cultural autonomy from especially American corporate culture. Most advocates of gender policies within firms assert this cultural distinctiveness in two interlocking ways: as resistance to Orientalist constructions of Indian women as oppressed victims, which come from American consultants and clients on the one hand, and an affirmation of the inherent culture of Indian women, which no policy can change, on the other hand. These twin assertions led gender diversity advocates in the industry to design and implement policies, but then place the burden of policy failure on the shoulders of individual women, thereby minimizing the importance of company policy in transforming the gendered environment of the workplace.

In this chapter, I have suggested that gender is, in practice, an arena with great flexibility in Indian IT firms and that gender policies, by focusing specifically on motherhood to the exclusion of all else, may be ironically narrowing that arena of flexibility. This is because the most vocal and influential advocates of gender policies are themselves products of the same environment and navigate the contradictory positions of ascendance, continued subordination, and a national cultural context in which, in order to be "Indian," urban middle-class women must put their families first.

In their study, Rhonda Sharp and colleagues (2012) argue that sexual politics – among other things, the fundamental presumption that women will continue to be primarily responsible for the work of reproduction – are untouched by gender policies, and this insight certainly applies in Indian firms as well. I have highlighted here, however, that in Indian firms (and perhaps in many other contexts as well), sexual politics and male dominance are tied deeply into constructions of national and cultural identity. This does not necessarily make them more rigid. On the contrary, the multilayered cultural associations for women and IT in India make this set of constructions a rich set of cultural norms for mobilizing change. To fully leverage these possibilities, however, gender policymakers in Indian IT firms must both acknowledge their conflicted engagement with American policies and examine gender within their firms as something more than just motherhood and the choice to quit or stay. The presumption that professional IT women "put family first" so centrally constitutes their symbolic power, that Indian IT firms reinforce it. As a result,

these organizations may be diverting attention away from areas that are vitally needed for achieving equity and offering women a range of appealing choices in their careers.

5.7 Implications and Directions for Future Research

The ambivalent, albeit thorough, integration of gender policies into Indian companies offers us an important opportunity to revisit the theoretical underpinnings of gender policies themselves, as well as the universalizing principles upon which they are based. The very logic of "best practices" argues that a specific set of policies or internal processes produce the "best" results, without considering what the very implementation of such practices represents to those in the organization who are meant to benefit from them. This logic becomes even more limited when these "best practices" refer to gender as if it were a terrain of internal process that works in similar ways throughout the world and that in each place, it works in isolation from what is taking place elsewhere. I have suggested in this chapter that because gender continues to constitute a set of symbolic and material meanings central to how Indian firms see themselves in the world, gender inclusivity policies can never be a culturally neutral set of imported practices.

Rather than presuming that successful implementation of a package of gender inclusivity policies heralded a new beginning for professional Indian IT women who continue to experience discrimination and marginalization in their field, this chapter gives importance to the informal arrangements that existed even before these policies arrived and how, even in their arrival and implementation, men and women alike aim to emphasize their cultural distinctiveness. Unexpectedly, for a range of actors within Indian multinationals, gender policies may be providing an opportunity to remake, in modified form, notions of India as a geography in which women remain victims of their culture.

Although this chapter forms but a modest starting point for a broader evaluation of gender diversity policies and strategies in Indian IT firms, I venture from this analysis to suggest that Indian IT firms construct policies not from imported best practices, but from a deep and sustained engagement with men and women working in particular organizational contexts. When managers and programmers alike feel that the policies are about them and not about the client, a new climate might be generated. It is also clear that specific steps to encourage women to stay in the programming track, encourage men to take maternity leave, reward men who reduce their hours when they become parents, and encourage women to plan their careers before the decision to become parents would dramatically change the everyday experience of work for most workers. These are recommendations that may be appropriate in many other contexts, but are made with specific reference to this one.

There is no doubt that a fuller study of the current climate surrounding gender diversity and inclusivity initiatives is needed to unpack in greater detail the complexities outlined here. The differences outlined in Padmini and Lavanya's accounts,

wherein resistance to the implementation of American gender policies took place in different arenas, offer an opening for thinking about why gender specialists in corporations think about gender in national, cultural terms that are either entirely similar to elsewhere in the world or fundamentally different. In addition, all the human resource interviewees working on diversity attested to the importance of metrics in measuring the success of gender initiatives, and this is another critical area of study for understanding just how these policies travel and take shape in an abstracted way. Examination of internal documents from several firms would be required for an analysis of these metrics. In addition, interviews with women who have taken advantage of relatively new gender policies, as well as those who have not, are needed to assess the changing character of gender as a terrain of cultural identity in Indian IT.

Such inquiries, not only in India but also in other geographic contexts that view themselves as distinctive from the West, open up the possibility of producing an alternative to Acker's classic (1990) article, in which she proposes five distinctive aspects of the gendered organization. In Acker's work, as well as in the work of other feminist theorists of organizations, the internal world of the organization is viewed as the primary arena of analysis, with little examination of how that organization is situated within broader systems of gendered power.

In Indian IT firms, gendered organizations are situated in relationships of dependence in relation to American firms. I have shown that recent gender policies have emerged in the context of engagement with American corporate models that put Indian firms in the position of being imitators or emulators at the very moment they are enjoying dominance in the global software industry. Just as importantly, however, employees coming from mostly urban middle- or upper-class backgrounds are centrally involved in constructing a powerful idea of India as technological superpower. In this symbolic and ideological arena, professional IT women mark Indian culture by putting their families first, even as they take advantage of exciting educational and career opportunities. As a result, their everyday navigations are subject to scrutiny in relation to entrenched patriarchal notions of gender and nation, both outside the workplace and within it. The internal gender politics of Indian firms are thus positioned not only in relation to a set of global political economic relationships in which they find themselves subordinated but also in relation to a moment of nation building in which the IT sector plays a central role. Examination of the narrow issue of gender inclusivity policies in these firms helps to argue for a more expansive theory of the gendered organization, one that links everyday gender within an organization to national discourses of gender and identity, and global systems of economic and cultural inequality.

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Chapter 6
Top Men in Transnational Companies

The Construction of Men, Masculinities, and Work-Family Intersections Within "Gender-Neutral" Contexts

Jeff Hearn, Marjut Jyrkinen, Mira Karjalainen, Charlotta Niemistö, and Rebecca Piekkari

This chapter examines how top men managers and professionals construct gender and masculinities, especially in relation to national-transnational and work-family relations. We emphasize here how the gendering of men is reproduced within what may appear as several linked and supposedly gender-neutral contexts: first, the corporate; second, the national; and third, the transnational. Our analysis draws on two data sets from large transnational companies, most of which are in Finland – a national context that, somewhat paradoxically, brings together elements of relatively less gender inequality in law and outcome, with a widespread ideology of "gender-neutral" citizenship. Some of the companies are located in the knowledge sector and are particularly intent on projecting a competent, success-laden, "(post) modern," and progressive gender-neutral image. Our primary focus in this chapter is on men and masculinities. We have written extensively elsewhere on gender relations more generally, both in relation to the studies reviewed here (e.g., Hearn et al. 2008, 2009) and in relation to other organizational settings (e.g., Hearn and Parkin 1995, 2001; Hearn et al. 2002, 2012; Karjalainen 2007; Jyrkinen 2014).

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Moreover, while there is a considerable, and growing, research literature on men managers, professional men, and associated managerial and professional masculinities, much of that concerns rather different groups of men in different kinds of organizations.[1] We wish to make clear that in focusing on such high-level men, we do not make an assumption that their "masculinity," their practices, and their talk necessarily or simply result from the gender composition in the companies and the proportions of men and women in top leadership. Rather, we seek to contribute to analysis of shifting historical forms of gendered management and managers in national (Kerfoot and Knights 1993; Roper 1994) and transnational arenas and in relation to both work and family.

6.1 Studying Transnational Men and Masculinities

In the light of the so-called globalization of business life and the expansion of transnational organizations, the *concept* of "transnational business masculinity" has become influential in academic circles to describe masculinity among contemporary globally mobile managers. Superseding "bourgeois-rational masculinity," this form of masculinity has been suggested to be increasingly hegemonic and directly connected to patterns of world trade and communication dominated by the West and the global "North" (Connell and Wood 2005). Raewyn Connell (2000, 52) sees this form of masculinity as marked by "increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of image-making)." This conditionality emphasizes how managers in transnational companies need to be understood in more individualistic terms than as lifelong "corporate men." Transnational business masculinity also differs from "[t]raditional bourgeois masculinity by its increasingly libertarian sexuality, with a growing tendency to commodify relations with women" (Connell 2000, 52).

This pattern of "transnational business masculinity," however, represents only one of several versions of the practices of senior managerial men. It is premature to see "transnational business masculinity" as a general, universal form. Indeed, detailed empirical work has shown considerable variation in different national and transnational locations in regard to how corporate leaders live their lives, with the pattern of their lives varying between different national contexts (Reis 2004) and

[1] For example, Linda McDowell in *Capital Culture* (1997) looked at British men bankers on trading floors (cf. Ho 2009; Longlands 2014); Jesper Blomberg (2009) showed how two different "categories" of men in the Swedish Stock Exchange, analysts and brokers, view and treat each other and retreat from "femininity"; Michael Roper (1994) and Deborah Kerfoot and David Knights (1993) examined changing patterns amongst British managers from more "paternalist" to more "modern" and "technocratic" corporate strategy; Frank Barrett (1996) compared aviators, surface combatants, and supply corps in the US Navy; Patricia Yancey Martin (2001) examined managerial decision-making in US universities; and James Messerschmidt (1995) researched engineers and managers in the space industry.

with complex intersections of local place, space, and locality (Gorman-Murray and Hopkins 2014, Part 8), even for those in transnational finance industry (Longlands 2014). Moreover, leaders of transnational organizations can still remain intensely national in their self-identification (Tienari et al. 2010), creating possibilities for hybrid forms of local/transnational leadership (Hearn 2014).

In addition, the complexity and multistrandedness of men's relations to transnational processes and change are being increasingly recognized and theorized (Donaldson et al. 2009; Hearn et al. 2013). Transnational processes entail both the reaffirmation and subversion of dominant groups of men and dominant forms of masculinities. More precisely, transnational change is not only about movements and communications across given national borders but also concerns the blurring of nations and national borders and the formation of new social configurations (Hearn and Blagojević 2013; Hearn 2015). Thus, the impact of increased transnational influences upon managerial and professional men and masculinities cannot be reduced to one single "transnational business masculinity."

In this chapter, we engage with these debates by focusing on men and masculinities in the context of men's transnational corporate work and careers, specifically in large transnational companies that are involved primarily or substantially in knowledge work. We draw on detailed empirical data from two studies and data sets which are focused on knowledge companies and knowledge work in rather different and complementary ways, as explained below. The first study, the "Large Companies Gender Equality Study," conducted between 2000 and 2005, included an initial documentary study, a questionnaire survey of the gender equalities and gender policies in the 100 largest companies in Finland, and an interview study with 40 middle and senior managers in seven selected transnational companies, all of which in some way involve knowledge work and its management, though not necessarily as their prime product or business.[2] In this chapter, we primarily draw on the personal interviews while using the other data for contextual purposes.

The second study, the "Knowledge Sector Top Managers' Work-Life Balance Study," conducted between 2012 and 2014, involved more detailed qualitative research with over 100 interviews with knowledge professionals and managers in large international professional services firms. It employed the Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR) method (Bailyn and Fletcher 2007), along with a variety of documentary, observation, time-diary, and visual data, to study everyday experiences of work-life balance and boundaries, of living and working in high-intensity knowledge work and management.[3] Both studies were conducted at

[2] The first qualitative data set was gathered in the "Men, Gender Relations and Transnational Organising, Organisations and Management." This involved Jeff Hearn, Marjut Jyrkinen, and Rebecca Piekkari, who conducted the interviews.

[3] The second data set for "Knowledge Sector Top Managers' Work-Life Balance Study" was gathered as part of the research project "Age, Generation, and Changing Work-Life Balance and Boundaries." This involved Jeff Hearn, Mira Karjalainen, and Charlotta Niemistö, of whom the last two listed conducted the fieldwork.

Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland, and were funded by the Finnish National Research Council, the Academy of Finland.[4]

6.2 The Finnish Context

Large transnational corporations need to be understood in terms of their national location, the transnational character of their operations, and the interrelations between their national and transnational contexts. Transnational gender issues take on special interest in examining large corporations in the Finnish context, a country with a relatively well-developed ideology and politics of gender equality and a high-level development in information and communication technology and knowledge work. Since almost all the data presented relates to managers working in Finland, we now provide a short outline of some relevant aspects of this national context.

World Economic Forum Reports have generally ranked the five Nordic countries as leading in woman's empowerment by economic, political, educational, and health and well-being measures. The *Global Gender Gap Report* 2014 (World Economic Forum 2014) placed Finland second, after Iceland, in "closing the gender gap between men and women." Finland has among the lowest national figures for income inequality, difference between male and female earned income, and difference between male and female economic activity rates. The Finnish state, like other Nordic states, has been relatively active in promoting gender equality. The Act on Equality between Men and Women came into force in 1987 (amendments have been made in 1992, 1995, 1997, 2005, and 2014) (Bruun and Koskinen 1997; Laki naisten ja miesten välisestä tasa-arvosta 2014). From the very beginning, a key explicit aspect of the gender equality law has been to improve the position of women in the labor market. The 1987 Act stated that employers with a regular payroll of at least 30 staff members must incorporate effective equality-promoting measures into their annual personnel and training plan or labor protection action programs, that is, some form of gender equality plan or planning. The Ombudsman for Equality has the right to conduct inspections in workplaces. As such, the Equality Act obliges workplaces systematically to promote gender equality.

In 2005, the gender equality law was strengthened. Employers with 30 or more employees that do not produce a gender equality plan may now face a fine, whereas previously there were no such sanctions. The Equality Act was further amended in 2014. The most important changes include the broadening of equality planning obligations to schools and the inclusion of a prohibition on discrimination based on sexual identity and the expression of one's sexuality. There is also an obligation on employers to monitor the wages of women and men in their organization, as part of

[4] Research on these topics continues in the new research project WeAll (Social and Economic Sustainability of Future Working Life, no 292883), funded by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland.

the governmental policy to eradicate the wage gap, as codified in the amended Act (Laki naisten ja miesten tasa-arvosta 2014). In order to gain the necessary comparative information for complaints on gender wage discrimination, however, one needs to go via the Ombudsman for Equality, which is likely to slow their processing.

The 2004 Non-Discrimination (sometimes called Equity) Act translated relevant European Union directives on equal treatment into Finnish national law. This covers such grounds as disability, health, religion, belief, ethnic and national origin, nationality, age, and sexual orientation, with the list of possible discrimination grounds being open-ended (Nousiainen 2012).

As with other Nordic societies, Finland is characterized by relatively high gender equality and high levels of women's participation in politics, public life, and the labor market. Even so, various gender inequalities persist, emerging from both within and outside these formally equal structures and processes. For example, gender segregation remains in employment, and gender inequalities as well as gendered management structures thrive in business. The main focus of gender politics, debates, and interventions in Finland has been on the analysis and policy development of the gender equality agenda at the intersections of state, welfare, labor markets, education, family, community, civil society, and to some extent broad employment policy. The law requires a minimum of 40 % representation for both women and men on all state committees, commissions, and appointed municipal bodies. While there has been a considerable expansion of Finnish research on gender, management, and leadership in recent years (Lämsä et al. 2007), the whole question of gender equality has received less attention in business leadership and management.

Finland has a historical tradition of women working full time, rather than a "housewife" culture, as, for example, in Germany, Norway, or the UK. It also lacks a tradition of au pairs or nannies. However, while state-sponsored childcare is available, if requested, it is common for women to take up maternal/parental leave when children are young. Men use less than 7 % of parental leave days in Finland (Haataja 2009). A home care allowance system enables parents to stay at home, sometimes part time, until their children are 3 years old. This possibility is, also, mainly used by mothers. The home care allowance system is currently in the process of amendment, and the main political parties have discussed if the time should be shared by both parents equally. In Finland, there is also legislative support and services for parents to return to their previous employment or education full time. In spite of omissions in policies and practices, Finland has among the highest figures for women's full-time labor market participation.

While there is a strong culture in Finland of women working, there is also strong gender segregation in the labor market, with in effect two labor markets: one for women and another for men. This combination of high full-time employment of women, together with gendered labor market segregation, may partly explain, along with the history of Finnish citizenship, the particular Finnish ethos of gender neutrality. This tends to pervade the gendered practices of citizenship, caring and working, and gender segregation in labor markets. It involves widespread assumptions in

public debate and among policymakers and business leaders that inequalities between women and men have been overcome and gender equality has been achieved; thus, relative gender equality can be combined with a particular form of gender neutrality that does not strongly recognize gender and gender power relations (Parvikko 1990; Rantalaiho 1997; Ronkainen 2001), in contrast to, say, public ideologies in Sweden.

Finland has high levels of higher education, international competitiveness,[5] labor flexibility, and social and economic performance. Finnish women's high educational level, combined with the welfare state system, has led to the presence of relatively large numbers of women in top managerial positions. In 2013, Finland had the highest figures in the EU for women on boards of listed companies (29.1 %), women as nonexecutive directors (30 %), and women in its national central bank (41.7 %), though the figure for senior executives was only 12 %, just above the EU average of 11 % (*Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the European Union* 2013).[6] Notwithstanding this, the gender pay gap between women and men in Finland persists at about 17 %, higher than the EU average.

In sum, Finland is a complex case in terms of societal and social gender relations. An ideology of gender neutrality has been coupled with a relatively wide acceptance of the principle, if not the practice, of gender equality across the political spectrum that operates at least at the rhetorical level and to some extent through policies on work, education, and welfare.

In the following sections, our two studies are discussed in more detail. Both studies cover a cross section of companies and include knowledge management and knowledge professionals. In particular, the second study takes a close look at specialist knowledge companies in the mid-2010s. They explore transnational corporations where men are more "transnationally experienced" than women, working as expatriates on foreign assignments. However, these men are still very much nationally located, as in the study by Cristina Reis (2004). Many of these firms have international brands, but in fact much of the work that is undertaken is national by nature. As will be discussed later, the findings point to forms of national and corporate gender neutrality. The accounts of the men managers reveal an apparently democratic ethos in relation to their families, women colleagues, and wives/partners but only at the level of rhetoric.

[5] Finland's competitiveness, or the lack of it, has been under intense public debate since the economic downturn of 2008. The ideology of high competitiveness, coupled with a neoliberal ethos, also impacts on gender equality (Julkunen 2009). In the light of current political and policy discussions, it is possible, for instance, that the right of daycare for children will be limited in future.

[6] With such figures, much depends on the exact definitions used. For example, the 2013 Grant Thornton International Business Report survey (*Women in Senior Management* 2013) listed Finland as having women in 24 % of senior management positions, the same as the global average.

6.3 The "Large Companies' Gender Equality Study"

6.3.1 Introducing the Study

This first study focused on the 100 largest companies in Finland. It began with a review of published annual reports, and a survey of the gendered structures, hierarchies, and policies of the participating companies, with a response rate of 61 %. The participating companies had men at all levels of the organizations (as employees, middle and top managers, and as members of the board); 58 % did not have any women on their board; 20 % did not have any women on the board or in the top management; only one company had as many women as men on the board; and in 95 % there were at least twice as many men as women on the board (Hearn et al. 2002). One third did not have a Gender Equality Plan, although this obligation is codified in Finnish legislation. The number of women on the board correlated significantly with the existence of a GEP.

Among the participating companies, seven were selected for a more detailed investigation of the development of gender equality policy as well as the lives of the middle and top managers (Hearn et al. 2009). These seven represented a cross section of companies, with two of the companies relatively active in terms of gender equality (with a Gender Equality Plan, at least two other gender policies and at least one woman on both the board and in top management), two moderately active (Gender Equality Plan, one gender policy or no Gender Equality Plan and two or more gender policies, at least one women on the board), and three not active (no Gender Equality Plan or other gender policies and no women on the board). Of the 40 interviewed top and middle managers, half were women and half men.

Out of the women interviewees, 8 had a top managerial position, and 12 were in middle management, in contrast to 12 men top managers and 8 men in middle management. The interviewed women were younger than the men informants: women's average age was approximately 43 while that of men was approximately 49. These reflect the gendered patterns in management and leadership more generally: older men are "in power," and middle management is taken care of (increasingly) by women managers. Women and men managers also differed in their family relationships, with women managers tending to have more career-oriented partners and fewer children (women 1.05; men 2.50 children) and men managers generally in more conventional marriage-type social relations and lifestyles, with wives fulfilling housewife roles and not pursuing comparable careers (Hearn et al. 2008). Men managers are often in effect "father managers" (Hearn and Niemistö 2012).

6.3.2 Introducing the Men Managers

The top and middle men managers interviewed generally already had relatively well-structured career plans during their higher education studies, and a strong career orientation was a common factor among the men interviewed. Career

building took place in different forms, but in particular so that the men had multiple work experiences and tasks within the same company, with, for example, more experience working as expatriates on foreign assignments compared to the women interviewed in this first data.

The men's education and university degrees were often in highly male-dominated areas of studies and research, especially engineering and technology as well as to a lesser extent business studies and law. In that sense, engineering and related masculinities could be said to be one major influence on the men and their occupational culture. Many interviewees characterized their organizations as having an "engineering culture" (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Faulkner 2006; Holth and Mellström 2011) coupled with male bonding, and in their talk the traditional stereotypes of women and men as professionals and managers with different capabilities were strong. This included covert but even open chauvinism. For instance, a top manager with a technical background unapologetically argued for how the male-dominated engineering culture impacts on his leadership:

> Since I'm an engineer these non-engineers have been challenging as subordinates. Typically, they are women and I have had communication problems with them […]. Women tend to be more social and people oriented while *men are more likely to focus on facts and the substance matter. They take things as they are* while women focus on feelings and emotions. (Top manager, man, our emphasis)

Strong stereotyping of women in contrast to men was present in many interviews. Masculine corporate culture was not seen as a problem as such, but was mentioned as a hindrance for some women who were expected to adjust to its rules and practices. One top manager put it succinctly, "I gained a better understanding of front line operations after the time with the *boys at headquarters*!" (Top manager, man, our emphasis). The interviewees did not present homosociality as a problem with regard to recruitment or career development, but rather they cherished it.

6.3.3 Gender (In)Equality Within National "Gender Neutrality"

Interestingly, most interviewed men tended to deny that there were any gender equality problems in their corporations, or at least any serious ones, although some did at the same time admit that there were few or even no women in top managerial positions or on the company board. This was explained by the men managers themselves mostly with reference to women's and men's segregated educational background, rather than in terms of the gendered structures of organizations, a topic that many sought to deny. An assumption and ideology of gender neutrality were strongly present in the data, echoing some of the features noted in our discussion of the Finnish context. For example, one interviewee insisted that promotion is a "neutral" process in his company, although in his comments it was obvious that there were many hindrances, for example, around women's childbearing and

motherhood. Also other kinds of prejudices and discriminations, and even open racism, were present as the following quotation illustrates:

> Regarding promotion, gender does not have an effect. It is a neutral issue […]. Of course, one or two women may find themselves in the situation where the salary is not at the right level. For example, salary is seldom raised before a woman goes on maternity leave and when she returns the salary is adjusted to some acceptable level. Often, the new position is worse than the one she had before […]. Men have a break during the military service, but this often takes place before they start their career […]. For example, if you have ten top positions and you have one woman, the human resource management system starts getting alarmed! It means that more women or niggers [sic.] should be recruited! [Laughing]. (Top manager, man)

Some interviewees were clearly uncomfortable discussing gendered patterns in their organizations. Gender inequality was always somewhere else, not in their own organization (see Korvajärvi 1998), in keeping with the supposed "gender neutrality" noted. One manager (middle manager, man) was astonished that gender equality issues are studied at all. He wondered whether "equality [is] a problem to some companies? I cannot see how …." Interestingly, he explained how he belongs to a club of young men in the company, the purpose of which is to "socialize and have fun." The club's exclusionary nature did not occur to him as an example of a corporate culture where gender equality might be compromised. Another interviewee emphasized, "in our culture, everyone is equal and there is not a need for such [gender equality] policies" (Top manager, man). A third explained how he meets his customers also during leisure time: "[S]ometimes there is an ice hockey game on a Friday or Saturday night, but otherwise I try to devote my free time to the family" (Top manager, man). Different forms of male bonding activities, both during working time and more informally, emerged from the data. A preference for men, for example, in recruitment and promotion was justified by customers' perceived needs and wishes, as the following quotations illustrate:

> Some customers simply preferred to have a male [business-to-business counterpart]. Perhaps it was because of practical reasons, it was easier to book a skiing trip to Lapland with a male counterpart or arrange a sauna evening than with a female [business counterpart]. (Top manager, man)

> Previously, if you worked […] overwhelmingly with male customers and personnel, you would still most probably recruit a man. In the evenings, in social gatherings, with sauna bathing etc., it was a challenging job for a woman. However, I have seen that some women deal with this very well, others less so. The times have changed and not everything takes place anymore in the sauna. (Top manager, man)

Another clearly national feature of the men stemmed from the fact of military conscription for men in Finland. Indeed, it was also common to refer to the army as a background for one's managerial skills, and some used army-related terms (e.g., speaking of subordinates as "troops") when they spoke about management and leadership. This reflects the common discourse associated with "strategy talk" and strategizing that managers are taught, for example, in executive education and MBA programs. In addition, some interviewees showed aggressiveness toward the (woman) researcher in relation to the sensitivity of the topic of gender equality in corporations.

6.3.4 Gender (In)Equality in Home-Family Relations

While the employing organizations in question were large transnational companies, these "transnational" business men managers generally presented themselves as having a strong domestic base – in both national and family senses. It would be difficult to characterize them strictly in terms of the "transnational business masculinity" described by Connell and Julian Wood (2005). Rather, their domesticity involved in most cases both strong national associations and commitments, and strong family locations, perhaps linked to the small-country identity (cf. Reis 2004). Their careers and careerism had been much facilitated by the fact that in many cases their wives had given up their studies and/or professional life. Instead, these wives had stayed at home as "managing directors" of households and families. The men interviewed tended to praise the women in their roles as housewives. Women colleagues, they argued, were particularly capable in, for example, performing service sector (middle) managerial work but were less suited for senior management responsibilities or tasks requiring business-to-business contacts. This is illustrated in the following quotations:

> My wife takes care of the household and the children and my role is to bring the money. She is the MD [managing director] at home, while I am in the office! I do help her during the weekend in cooking or to walk the dog. (Top manager, man)

> I have consciously started to build teams by following the principle of a good sociological balance […]. Statistically, certain characteristics are more common among women than men […]. Then we need somebody *who is good at networking, at finding information and assistance* both from inside and outside. Particularly women tend to be good at this. (Top manager, man, our emphasis)

> I think women have better social skills and the results are better. On the other hand, among corporate [business-to-business] managers, the male dominate. (Top manager, man)

As in the last quote, segregation within the organization is reconstructed in terms of gendered stereotypes of women and men. Although women are valued for their social skills, those skills are not considered important for corporate management. This kind of framing is also likely to have an impact on the possibilities for promotion as, for example, experience of line management is often demanded in order to be able to proceed to the next level toward leadership positions in senior management and corporate boards.

The interviews with the men managers were also highly heteronormative, in their taken-for-granted and naturalized assumptions of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships. Also their family structures tended to be conventional. Gender and sexuality were understood from a strong heteronormative perspective, with a "non-gendering" of men throughout. For example, one man noted that sexuality was "less of a problem in our organization as the sector is so male-dominated" (Top manager, man). Nearly all emphasized how important the time with their (nuclear) family is and how they preferred to invest in "quality time" with their children and wife. The caring role, however, is already highly gendered in itself, and even more so in the context of men managers' families. In the following quotation, a man top manager

implicitly expresses how the duty to care for his own elderly mother is more the task of his wife than of himself. Naturalization of care and even the caring instinct as the woman's responsibility obviously affects individual women's careers but also has a more general impact, as gendered care responsibilities can become a barrier to the recruitment and career development of women (McKie et al. 2008; Jyrkinen and McKie 2012).

> At some stage, my wife was working part time. When we were jogging one night last spring we got an idea that she should now [when children were 19 and 22 years old] start running a business of her own involving lecturing and consulting. At the same time this would also *give her better flexibility to spend more time with our mothers, who are old* […]. One needs to reconsider these issues *depending on the stage in one's life and adjust it accordingly*. This *decision that we took* was a very good one. It is also possible that she will later on start to work full-time again. (Top manager, man, our emphases)

Since the spouses of managers were not interviewed, it is impossible to say that to what extent these decisions were de facto made "jointly" by the wife and the husband or whether they only served as a smoke screen of explanation for the otherwise selfish career aims of the man. For instance, another manager (Top manager, man) explained that his wife stayed at home "because of my career opportunities" and that "we have always moved because of my job, not hers." He continued to say that when they "were young, my wife did not have as good a job as I had so we didn't have to choose in that sense." Thus, as regards home responsibilities, he stated that he compensates his "share" by paying for a professional cleaner twice a month, "so through payment I took care of my share." The monetary compensation of home responsibilities was mentioned by several men managers interviewed.

At the same time, many men pointed out, sometimes with eagerness and pride, how much they work per day and week, often during evenings, weekends, and sometimes nights. Thus, the cultural ethos of long hours was strong in the data and contradictory to the image of the family man that many wanted to portray. Management as a naturalized men's arena compared to women's care responsibilities emerged also in the context of family leave. One manager (Top manager, man) who stated that the corporation was "family-friendly" also admitted that they "do not clap hands in favor of fatherhood leave." Thus, there were double standards as regards care and home responsibilities: one for men and another for women.

6.4 The "Knowledge Sector Top Managers' Work-Life Balance Study"

6.4.1 Introducing the Study

The second study was organized slightly differently, focusing more specifically on work-life balance and boundaries and interviewing 60 knowledge professionals and managers in 12 large international consulting corporations that specialize in

business-to-business professional services (mainly legal, accounting, management, and information technology work). Thirty-five of the interviewees were women and 25 were men, with most being interviewed twice so that there were a total of 109 interviews in the study. The research process was strongly informed by the Collaborative Interactive Action Research (CIAR) method (Bailyn and Fletcher 2007), along with self-reported week time diaries, research discussions, and company documents. The CIAR method requires structured feedback to respondents, meaning in practice going back to the second interview with initial analysis from the first one, to be sure that the interviewer has understood the respondent properly, as well as in order to deepen some areas of the interview, based on both the initial analysis and on questions that the respondent wishes to discuss more.

Within this frame, there are three slightly different sets of data: the vast majority of the data, 82 interviews, were gathered in Finland in five knowledge-intensive organizations at top knowledge management, middle knowledge management, and professional knowledge worker levels; additionally, six of the interviews were conducted in similar organizations in Ireland; and, finally, there were another 27 individual interviews with top-level managers and partners in these knowledge-intensive organizations, 17 in Finland and 10 from Australia, Ireland, Sweden, the UK, and the USA. It is these last 27 that are focused on in this current analysis. The interview data was gathered mainly face-to-face, with a few interviews by phone or Skype for those in other parts of the world.

6.4.2 Introducing the Men Managers

The top managers and partners studied represent multiple privileges, namely, being white, heterosexual, able-bodied men with master's level educations in law, accounting, business, and/or technology. Monetary rewards and status are the main drivers for the top managers in this study. Also the nature of the work and work itself are important drivers: the work is done in ever-changing projects, the managers gain fascinating insights to different industries, and they get to work with "hot corporations." They also often get "a kick" from the demanding challenges they are facing, as described in the following:

> I want new, big, fascinating challenges, things that are mind-shatteringly difficult. Challenges that make you think that I am not going to make it, that I will not survive this. And then when you succeed, it is incredible. (Top manager, man, Finland)

The challenging, "mind-shatteringly difficult" work is a salient part of their identity – they are the men who have made it and consistently prove that they are able to make it again. The top manager men, in our data, do not position themselves as specifically being at work; rather they are breathing and living the organization – to some extent because some of them partly own the company they work in and the rest of them are aiming for ownership. Once the managers make it to the top, however, they realize there is no time to rest, for the top is also layered with levels of

hierarchy and others are ready to elbow out those who show weakness or stagnation:

> You cannot call it a pack of wolves, but still. If you get weak enough you will be abandoned or eaten alive. (Top manager, man, Finland)

Therefore, the competition never ends, and the top men have to prove over and over again their capability to work hard and successfully, to be "ideal" for the work. The type of "ideal worker" in question here seemed to be highly educated, successful, white, "well-presented," heterosexual, able-bodied, and athletic, with a clear priority in work, career, and certain forms of embodiment. This ideal is simultaneously embraced yet remains hidden, as men's "white" bodies are often unconsciously seen as neutral in Western societies (Hearn 2012, 307). The importance of the body and uses of the body were clear in these organizational contexts. Top managers' work does not require physical strength and muscles, although being fit is seen as important, both as the embodied ideal worker, and for endurance in their harsh competitive working environment. The ethos in these knowledge-intensive organizations values physically embodied capital (Haynes 2012), for example, in extensive references to sport and sport metaphors, even to the extent that the preferential recruitment of former top-level athletes was not uncommon. This emphasis was much less clear in the first study where engineering masculinities were more prominent among some of the men managers.

6.4.3 Gender (In)Equality Within Corporate "Gender Neutrality"

In these organizations, there are fairly equal numbers of men and women at the lower levels of the organization (entry level and even middle management), but mainly men at the senior levels, and masculine discourses were pervasive across the organizational hierarchies. Thus, these corporations are not neat, uniform asexual structures, but they are amalgamations of groups of women workers and groups of men workers (Hearn and Parkin 1995). Yet, these large transnational knowledge-intensive business organizations also see themselves and market themselves as being the most equal organizations in the world. There is a strong rhetoric of "gender neutrality" throughout. Indeed, on a superficial level, they are equal: in line with meritocracy, only numbers matter, for example, as billable hours, sold projects, and staff efficiency measured in utilization percentages. According to Karen Geiger and Cheryl Jordan (2014, 263), meritocracy, or the myth of meritocracy, is one of the assumptions underlying capitalism and proposes that those who succeed are the most qualified, without acknowledging the advantages that come with privileges. On a formal level, there are diversity and equality programs in these corporations; and diversity and equality were strong slogans in these knowledge-intensive companies, as discussed above. These features were hardly visible in practice, however.

The double standards of equality, and especially equality in career promotions, were pinpointed by a young female respondent in the lower level of the organization talking about her male colleagues networking with managers in order to get a promotion, even if meritocracy is the "official" standard of measurement in evaluation and performance appraisal:

> A kind of a competition is visible; some people seem to go talk to the managers all the time, on purpose, in order to […] I don't know, it's a bit complicated [uneasy laughter] somehow I feel that maybe I should be there talking to them, too, but that doesn't feel right, it should be based on the feedback I receive and the results, not on whether or not I'm friendly with someone who makes the decisions. (Junior professional, woman, Finland)

Further, the ambiguous role of "diversity" in the organization was vividly illustrated by a top manager who celebrated diversity in their corporate rhetoric, claiming diversity as one of their "key values":

> Our workers are horribly much from the same mold. If we wouldn't put "Diversity" up there for everyone to see, the truth of what we are would be revealed. (Top manager, man, Finland)

He claimed that those values or characteristics that are nonexistent in the organization are elevated to slogans. One way to silence inequalities is to make a lot of noise about the organization being equal or even obscure homogeneity by giving diversity a very public profile. In many ways, diversity was seen as analogous to having both male and female employees in the organizations – without specifying their level or power in the organizations. Talks about visible social categories, such as skin color, ethnicity, and disability, were largely absent in the data, and less visible categories, such as sexual orientation or religion, were also downplayed.

The organizational tendency to not explicitly voice or portray diversity was explained in a slightly different way by some interviewees, namely, by employees' own individuality and individualism, as in: "We are all individuals here." Individuality is strongly present, and talked about explicitly, in the interviews, and the neoliberal ethos of one's "own choice," which was frequently used in the interviews, positions the respondents as privileged individuals with endless possibilities and freedom of choice. Paradoxically, however, the many individual representations of individuality were almost identical to each other. In these knowledge-intensive organizations, such similarity – such similar and non-diverse "diversity" and "individuality" – is maintained by actively recruiting employees with similar characteristics.

Moreover, these large professional consultancies conducting confidential management, financial, and legal business-to-business consulting had a very strong international public profile and identity. This involved emphasis on high-pressure work and deadlines and keeping abreast of and even leading rapid modern, or perhaps postmodern, change in organizing, technological innovation, and business methods. Relating to this, personal and corporate successes, of various kinds, were widely discussed, while failure and fears of failure remain silenced at the organizational level. From the outside, their international organizational cultures might appear to be highly international, crossing time zones and places. Yet, interestingly, the international aspect was much less important in the lives of the interviewees,

since they worked mainly on the national language, for example, on legal matters and accounting. They were, in fact, rather local and national, for example, in their orientation, and also in bringing together a national and a corporate ideology of "gender neutrality," whatever the reality of gender structuring of the organizations.

As discussed above, values of dominant neoliberal forms of capitalism, such as meritocracy, ignore structural, cultural, and gendered constraints and place endless weight on individual choices and possibilities to succeed based on one's own merits. The capitalist logic of the business sector, however, suggests that, in order to build a successful career, extreme flexibility regarding working hours (overtime in the evenings and at weekends, often in an ad hoc manner) is needed. As one respondent warned, there are career costs arising out of being inflexible:

> Because, it would be like you would be a professional tennis player but when it is time to participate in Wimbledon you don't go because you are mowing your lawn at home. (Top manager, man, Finland)

This suggests that in order to be a "winning player," that is, a successful professional, one cannot be tied to domestic chores and risk missing out on key events. In practice this often means that if the worker has family, someone has to take care of it while the "winning player" pushes long hours.

6.4.4 Gender (In)Equality in Home-Family Relations

These conditions create a demanding atmosphere for workers who would prefer to maintain their boundaries regarding work and nonwork. Although there is considerable societal variation in the extent to which the traditional male breadwinner model operates, since our data is global, it seems that women with small children tend to opt out or "opt low," mainly as a result of neoliberalist individual "choice" (Harvey 2005; Elliot and Lemert 2006); their careers stagnate in an organization that is built on expectations of a traditional model of career advancement (see Hall 2002). Because they are often married to men with similar careers, women decide, or are left, to take care of the family, while their male spouses work at full steam to succeed in their careers. Thus, the often ad hoc micro-decisions or micropolitics of family life may have long-term effects on men's and women's careers.

Organizations that formally espouse gender equality, therefore, can provide homes for men and masculinities that can partly be produced and reproduced on a male breadwinner model (Crompton 1999; Lewis 2001; Pfau-Effinger 2004), as illustrated here:

> Interviewer: Does your wife work in a similar field, or does she do something totally different?
>
> Top manager: She has a master's degree in economy and she has worked full-time during all these years. And … *she has naturally not had a similar kind of career to me*. When our children were small she did work but did more regular hours without overtime, during office hours. Now when the children are older she is able to work more. But this is how we view it: *my career has been more money-making than hers*. (Top manager, man, Sweden, our emphases)

Even if such an answer would not be anything out of the ordinary in some social and societal contexts, in the seemingly gender-equal Sweden, this is portraying a traditional view on gender roles and gender contracts within the family in question and possibly in some ways even in the society in question (Hirdman 1988; Duncan 2000). On the other hand, this top manager wanted to point out that he had always spent a lot of time with his children. A very similar mixed narrative was told by a US top manager whose wife had only lately returned to work as a nurse 2 days a week. This top manager had been the primary breadwinner for many years, yet regularly spending time with his children, driving them to their hobbies, and helping them out with homework. In the Finnish interviews, we also heard various mixed or hybrid narratives. On the one hand, there was strong "macho talk" and work-related metaphors of extreme sport challenges and comparisons to how Robert De Niro, in the film *Raging Bull*, was bleeding from his ear in the boxing ring but not falling down and on the other hand narratives of childcare and devotion to family – often by the same top manager.

Interestingly, the narratives from the top managers from different countries were rather similar. On the surface, a very "traditional" masculinity was narrated to us, yet in the interviews most also introduced some features of apparent caring and devoted fatherhood. The privileges were, as often, not verbalized or even noted, but rather taken for granted (Collinson and Hearn 1994, 1996; Hearn and Collinson 2006; Hearn and Niemistö 2012).

6.5 Discussion

Research on work-home balance has tended to neglect global and transnational matters, while research on global management often neglects work-home relations. This chapter has interrogated the complex interrelations of constructions of men and masculinities with national-transnational and the intersections – in and between both senior professional knowledge work and its management and everyday lives and work-life boundaries. More generally, we locate our analysis in broader discussions of gender, men, and masculinities within national-transnational processes and patriarchal relations. The first study considered here (the "Large Companies Gender Equality Study") was concerned with the largest Finnish companies, and gendered transnational aspects are highlighted in the interview material in terms of the interviewees' own work biographies and lives. In contrast, the second study (the "Knowledge Sector Top Managers' Work-Life Balance Study") examined high-profile international knowledge companies, mainly in Finland, focusing here on the top managers and corporate partners.

The "Large Companies Gender Equality Study" showed connections between three arenas in the gendering processes of transnational management, both within corporations and within managers' own lives: careers, transnational managerial work, and personal, family, and marriage-type relations. Many men managers had a housewife at home or a wife who worked part time or had a far less career-oriented

work history. Only one of the men managers had a wife or partner with anything like a comparable work career. In contrast, the women managers tended to be single or have a working – sometimes with comparable work career and sometimes less career-ambitious – husband or partner who participated more actively in home responsibilities. In contrast, the women managers often did significantly more time management and balancing of home and work requirements than the men managers. While the women managers were often innovative in solving double burden demands, sometimes assisted by supportive bosses and companionate marriages in their careers, the men managers appeared strongly traditional. Some men emphasized that their wives had "volunteered themselves" to give up their careers. Additionally, for men managers, there were more traditional expatriate assignments than for women managers. Men's extended periods of time abroad appeared advantageous in the development of their varied, core-oriented careers. Expatriate assignments among the men managers also seemed to reinforce traditional gender divisions, as wives tended to stay at home with the children while their husbands were abroad.

The transnational consulting companies in the "Knowledge Sector Top Managers' Work-Life Balance Study" were formally international, but in practice their work was overwhelmingly business-to-business and largely national, not least in dealing with nationally based legal and financial matters. These companies celebrated internationality and multinationality, as part of their cosmopolitan branding, but in fact they were locally owned national enterprises. In the Finnish case, companies, the owners, and the employees were Finnish, with command of the Finnish language, due to the language requirements and special expertise areas of national corporate finance, tax, law, and business practice. Their image was dynamic, forward-looking, and future-oriented, but actually they were quite traditional and somewhat bureaucratic in their organizational practices. In this sense, they might be contrasted with other knowledge-intensive businesses, such as some gaming design companies. Moreover, their main concerns, in terms of both the nature of the work and the work-life balance of the knowledge professionals, managers and companies were strongly gendered and also, in many senses, national in character.

The corporations researched in both studies were still largely traditional in terms of their hierarchical form, even with the (post)modernizing corporate image of the knowledge sector companies. They were characterized by clear gendered structures and homosocial practices founded in and reproducing the "ideal (male) worker" (Acker 1990) and the "ideal (male) manager" (Collinson and Hearn 1996), with few perceived responsibilities and priorities other than their own managerial work. In these organizations, men's collective power was preserved partly through hegemonic constructions of men and masculinities – often via the managerial ideal of white, heterosexual, able-bodied men (WHAMs) (Hearn and Collinson 1994). Dominant embodied forms of masculinity were socially and historically sanctioned performances or, more precisely, men's material-discursive practices, widely rewarded with power and popularity (Robinson 2005) and, for some, a means of advancing into and occupying the top positions. This embodied ideal was simultaneously embraced yet remained unnamed, hidden, or represented as "neutral"

(Hearn 2012), within supposedly "gender-neutral" organizational, national, and transnational contexts. These powerful corporate leaders in and of contemporary capitalism and transnational patriarchies are in one sense "men of the world" (Hearn 2015), yet they are also located and sustained locally in their workplace, their work-life relations, and their national context.

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Chapter 7
Shifting Masculinities in the South Asian Outsourcing Industry

Hyper, Techno, or Fusion?

Yasmin Zaidi and Winifred R. Poster

The expansion of the information and communication technology (ICT) industry has generated interesting shifts in global relations and financial flows, with a potential to reverse the historical global North-south relation grounded in a colonial past. The changes wrought by the ICT industry have influenced how work is organized, and the ripple effect is on how relations, especially gender relations, are organized and experienced. This chapter will focus on shifting masculinities in the knowledge work organizations and, their lesser cousins, the call centers. Based on research in two countries (India and Pakistan) at different levels in the hierarchy of the world economy (software engineers and developers and international call center workers), the chapter looks at the interplay between the global and the local and how it plays out in professional and personal relations. Hegemonic masculinity is challenged here, undermined, and reshaped by what has been called techno-masculinity (Poster 2013b), where the "geek" with an arsenal of techno-skills does not require the brawn or the capital infrastructure of the industrial age to demonstrate prowess and shine on the global stage.

Are these emerging South Asian masculinities transgressive or regressive of gender relations or both? Does a country's context and position in the outsourcing industry hierarchy make a difference, or are there some common threads that can be drawn across these different sites? What tensions mark this new terrain, where local masculinities compete with, shape, and are shaped by the global? Critically, do we see what Ashis Nandy (1983) has seminally termed a *hyper*-masculinity, what Winifred R. Poster (2013b) calls *techno*-masculinity, or is there a fusion of the local and global? Understanding these dynamics and comparing them within two similar

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yet unique countries of South Asia, home to 1.5 billion people, provide an insight into how the macro and the global impact the micro and the local.

In India the analysis draws on research from a series of contained fieldwork periods spread out over the last two decades involving interviews with ICT managers, engineers, factory workers, and call center agents, observations of work environments, and document analysis. For Pakistan the primary research was carried out in two sites with two international call centers over 2 years and included participant observations and interviews with management, young male and female employees, and their families.

After a theoretical discussion on masculinities and a brief description of the methods, the chapter presents the empirical evidence for the emergence of masculinities that do not neatly fit into the earlier theoretical constructs and instead terms these "fusion masculinities."

7.1 Understanding Masculinities in Transnational Workplaces

7.1.1 From Hegemonic Masculinities…

Masculinity are "those practices and ways of being that serve to validate the masculine subject's sense of self as male/boy/man" (Whitehead 2002, 4). Masculinities are expressed through the identity work: the performances and displays that are context and culture specific yet carry certain hegemonic strains that are similar across cultural and geographic boundaries. Hegemonic masculinity has dominated research on masculinities in the past two decades, but it is also a contested term attracting criticisms for its perceived static meaning. Hegemonic masculinity applied to the study of organizations uncovers their gendered nature and reveals how it is institutionalized, particularly in the military and the police. These exaggerated traits of what it means to be a man may not be similar across contexts, but it is normative in its measurement of men against a presumed ideal and the subordination of women.

However, a new understanding has emerged of masculinities experienced and shaped by diverse men in diverse contexts. The discourse on masculinities thus includes an "explicit recognition of the geography of masculinities, emphasizing the interplay among local, regional, and global levels" and a "more specific treatment of embodiment in contexts of privilege and power" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 829); the struggles of the colonized come to mind.

This view of hegemonic masculinity, ever changing and contested by "local masculinities," also challenges the notion of a "hyper-masculinity" (Nandy 1983) defined by traits of risk taking, violence, and subordination of women. More recently, the practice of hyper-masculinity on Wall Street (vividly portrayed in the

film *Wolf of Wall Street*)[1] and on the stock exchange floor (Salzinger 2003) has come to the fore.

Thus hegemonic masculinities can be conceptualized as an amalgam of social practices, institutions, and societal norms, all grounded in a peculiar sociohistoric context that are used flexibly by men, aligning or distancing themselves from these norms as desired through the interaction (Wetherell and Edley 1999). This understanding of hegemonic masculinities allows for the interaction of local masculinities with the regional or global ones, giving agency to actors and revealing the richness and complexity of "doing masculinities" and the mechanisms that emerge from the contradictions so encountered.

7.1.2 …Via Techno-Masculinity…

Nowhere are these contradictions more manifest than in the information and communication technology industry. The global flows of ICT and finance have swept into agricultural economies dominated by precise and segregated gender norms. Individuals anchored in these societies swirl into the global competitive market, adopting and adapting new workplace norms and compromising, challenging, and shifting notions of what it means to be a man.

Techno-masculinities describe one set of such norms exhibited by professional ICT workers in the global South who are gaining ascendancy over their counterparts in the global North (Poster 2013b), posing a challenge to their long-held and institutionalized dominance – a dominance that, through the processes of colonization and capitalist imperialism, has been ingrained in the way in which the South views itself. Conventional masculinity, based on physical and military prowess, moved to accommodate the neoliberal agenda based on technological prowess (machines, cars, and computers) and expertise. Such prowess has been perceived as the domain of the West, with few technological advances attributed to the global South.

While knowledge in the South Asian subcontinent was a marker of high caste, age, or spirituality, during colonial and postcolonial times it became increasingly the domain of the elite defined in economic terms – wealth, income, and proximity to the structures of colonial power to name a few. Notwithstanding the debates about what constitutes knowledge, in its conventional sense it could only be accessed by the privileged few who had the necessary (English) language skills.

In the new economy where information and "algocracy" (Aneesh 2006, 2009) are delinked from capital and the need for extensive infrastructures of production, where the commodity is information and where location and ethnicity are hidden behind layers of technology and "virtual bodies" (Hearn 2006, 949) and have the potential to generate new identities, the average man can attain power through his

[1] The 2013 successful film is based on the memoirs of Jordan Belfort, *The Wolf of Wall Stree*t, and is directed by Martin Scorsese, starring Leonardo DiCaprio. http://finance.yahoo.com/news/wolf-wall-street-says-ll-184200507.html

ability to harness the technical expertise and appropriate technology produced elsewhere. In the transnational arena, in global workplaces, these techno-masculinities are most visible in the outsourcing of software development to companies in the global South, notably India, and in the call center industry.

Drawing on previous work by Poster (2013b), as well as Nandy (1983), Connell et al. (2005), and others, the concept of techno-masculinity is used to explain the similarities and differences that crop up in a globalized workplace and to explore South Asian techno-masculinities at different levels, given the role of the Indian ICT industry in the global market and the small but important role of the industry in Pakistan.

Examination of India reveals the increasing dominance of its ICT industry on the world scale. It also explores how Indian male professionals – the techno-entrepreneurs, the knowledge workers, and the cyber managers – are gaining momentum relative to those of the USA and other global North countries. At the lower levels of the information economy, Indians are asserting their techno-masculinities as workers in the field of ICT service. This involves more micro-kinds of agencies: interactional power within conversations between an employee and customer. Here, the information economy offers tools for working- and middle-class men in India in the form of knowledge power, technical skills, and virtual mutability (Poster 2013b).

India's investment in technology schools paid off as it emerged as one of the countries that were poised to take advantage of the boom in ICT-related growth. The availability of qualified technical professionals has led to the outsourcing of production and jobs to India and the migration of Indian, mostly male, professionals to the USA and to European countries. Indians are also in the forefront as technology entrepreneurs. The Indian IT and business process management (BPM) industry has grown from $100 million to $100 billion in two decades (Chandrashekhar 2014), adding 2 million people to the industry in the last decade. Starting from call centers and low-end IT work for international companies, the industry moved up the global hierarchy offering management consulting and research and development services. It is the largest private sector employer with 3.1 million employees, more than 1 million of whom are women (NASSCOM n.d. a). In just one area of the IT-BPM industry, engineering, the global offshore revenues of traditional and emerging engineering products are expected to reach $100 billion, of which India expects to get around 40 % equivalent to $40–45 billion by 2020 (NASSCOM n.d. b).

A new breed of technology entrepreneurs – echoes of Silicon Valley – is entering the market, offering software products. The country's annual revenues from software products are expected to grow to $11 billion by 2015. Many are leaving lucrative jobs to set up their own firms and look for innovative solutions to India's problems, such as a low-cost prescreening device that can identify up to five major eye problems and can be used by minimally trained technicians (Wadhwa 2010).

As skilled knowledge workers, Indians and the Indian diaspora have created networks from which have emerged a "transnational capitalist class" (Upadhyay 2004) supporting other Indian professionals through mentoring and venture capital. These networks are well positioned to leverage economic and political resources, for

example, the appointment of an Indian-American as the first "Chief Information Officer" for the White House in 2009 or the election of Bobby Jindal (engineer, Indian origin) as the first nonwhite governor in the state of Louisiana.

Clearly, these individuals are no longer followers; rather they are emerging as the vanguard of the era of new technologies. Clearly too, ICTs have the potential for men from the global South, irrespective of class, language, and geography, to transcend these boundaries of domination and gain a place among the global valorized community of "geeks" and "nerds." The emergence of techno-masculinities may pose a challenge to hegemonic masculinity. Understanding how techno-masculinities are formed and the challenge they pose not only to the imagery of manhood but also to its basis of power and shifting ethnocentricities is important.

The first departure point for understanding the emerging masculinities is the salience given to being a member of a group that has access to, and understanding of, technology beyond the conventional motorbikes and automobiles. Admission into the club is not dependent on the possession of social or financial capital alone. As technology entrepreneurs, software developers, data processors, and others like them, the new man is defined by his place in the ICT landscape, with its own multilayered hierarchy. Information, knowledge, the Internet, and its networks are all resources that techno-masculinities can draw upon. These new masculinities have shifted the location of power from the global North and increasingly also shifted the centers of economic power. The flows are best described with the example of the Indian expatriates, many of whom are ensconced in Silicon Valley or the technology corridor in Massachusetts, USA,[2] investing in technology businesses in India. Simultaneously wealthy Indian corporations increase their investments in American and European companies, often buying up businesses, for example, the purchase of Virgin Radio Holdings (Scotland) by the Times of India (Timmons 2008). Indian businessmen are increasingly replacing North-south business partnerships with South-South partnerships.

Indian managers in multinational firms pose a challenge to techno-masculinities of the North as well, as they resist, reinterpret, and devise policies that differ from that prescribed by the head office, for example, expanding "flex time" and "alternative work options," adding subsidies that were not available to the senior managers at the head office or ignoring gender equity and diversity guidelines (Poster 2008).

Even at the lower end of the ICT industry – handling back office clerical work or consumer sales and services, among other things – techno-masculinities are exercised when customers (from the global North) interface with the employees (from the global South) during virtual interactions. Using technical knowledge, emotional management and labor (Hochschild 2003), and gender bias, techno-workers exercised superiority, "man" power, and stereotyping to look down upon their customers, for example, American consumers, who "like children," cannot even find "the start button on the computer" (Poster 2013b, 124). Call center workers see

[2] Immigrants were founding members of half the start-up firms in Silicon Valley in 2005, with the largest group belonging to India (Wadhwa et al. 2007), and 12% of all biotech firms in Massachusetts have been founded by Indians.

themselves as more tech savvy in relation to their North American customers who have to be walked through basic computer skills.

However, not all global workplaces are sites for exercising techno-masculinities. It is at the lower-end work of call centers that studies in the field have concentrated to reveal the tensions between local and global and to study the micro-interactions that shape workers identities. There is a need to dig deeper and research on how this ambivalence is managed at a personal level, especially in terms of shaping masculinities.

7.1.3 …To Fusion Masculinities

While the concept of techno-masculinities does pose a challenge to hegemonic masculinity, it does not satisfactorily answer how, within a presumed hierarchy of software engineers/developers and customer service representatives, does the possibility of being an IT hero influence men's perceptions of themselves and their practices of masculinity. Call centers are lower in this hierarchy: a place where customer service representatives and salespersons work with the clients in the North, providing scripted technical assistance and selling products. This interaction also weaves new forms of masculinities into old ones, offering resistance but also engendering acceptance. While ICT is integral to the functioning of the call centers, the work of its customer service agents typically does not require any technological prowess and the qualities required for the emergence and display of techno-masculinities. Yet, their expression of masculinities is affected by their interaction with technology and clients located in different cultures. If not hegemonic and not techno, what shapes and agentic expressions do these new masculinities offer?

What is common to both these situations, call centers and software firms, are the reversed flows of information from the global South to the North, the reversal of (or at least a dent in) the colonial relations of white and colored, and possibilities of reshaping the terms of interaction between the two.

Are they, as Poster (2013b) suggests, techno-masculinities and, in the case of the call center workers, a form of "techno-lite" masculinities given the difference in IT skills? Are these hyper-masculinities with exaggerated displays of technological prowess, or in the absence of such prowess, are these "fusion" masculinities: imbibing new patterns of practices from the interaction with the "other" in the West, fusing the old and the new, and retaining those practices that bolster power?

We argue that the different, often contradictory, masculinities are managed through a fusion of old and new, the fusing of masculinities as experienced in India and in Pakistan with those encountered through the transnational workplace. These "fusion masculinities" are temporal certainly but also selective as men choose what shapes and adds to their masculine self and ignore or reject other influences. As noted, "[m]asculinities are configurations of practice that are constructed, unfold, and change through time" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 851) and are subject to regional as well as global influences. Despite being situated firmly in the context

of capitalist patriarchy, these configurations, multilayered and contradictory, offer possibilities of change. Fusion masculinities then result from an enactment of work-role identities of a globalized workplace within the context of culturally appropriate and hegemonic masculinities that are in themselves shaped by local and regional social, economic, and political exigencies. Sometimes these new fusion masculinities contradict the contextually appropriate masculinities, sometimes they transcend gender norms, and oftentimes they reflect an attempt to accommodate, not challenge, such norms in an attempt to manage the stress of competing masculinities.

Intraorganization culture – formal and informal – reflects the hybridization that occurs when global and local meet. While encouraging women to join the ICT industry, adhering to strict anti-harassment policies, organizations also resort to "normalization" (disciplining behavior to fit gendered norms), "confinement" (Poster 2013b) and relegation of women IT professionals to routine tasks or "documentation," and being sensitive to local customs (restrictions on the external work, travel and late hours of female employees) (Poster 2008, 2013a). In principle at least, caste, an important indicator of place in life, is set aside in the interest of merit, and only those who have merit are hired and promoted. In reality, the IT industry is predominantly upper-caste Hindus, especially in the higher echelons, and their social and work group is also of a similar caste and class (Baas 2007).

The hybridization resulting from local-global interactions where techno-masculinities actually fuse traditional cultural norms with new, provides the space for fusion masculinities to emerge. Techno-masculinities facilitate the emergence of fusion masculinities, much as the call center emphasis on certain aspects of customer service sets the stage for the same.

Following the next section on methods, we use empirical data to illuminate this discussion, taking a closer look at the interactions between local, transnational, and global masculinities, and what emerges, in two sites in two countries of South Asia – countries that are uneasy neighbors with a history of wary relations, not quite enemies, not quite friends.

7.2 Methods

The empirical data used in this chapter is a result of research on international call centers conducted by the authors independently and separately of each other in India and Pakistan. The research strategy for each has some similarities: both interviewed employees and managers in selected international call centers observed the "production floor" where employees interact with each other and their clients and attended training seminars and joined the agents in the cafeteria during their breaks.

International call centers are uniquely suited to studying "identities in interaction" for a number of reasons. To begin with, call center work is quite standardized across countries. The employees work long hours with minimum breaks (in India and Pakistan, this entails long night shifts to match the workday in North America) and attend over 200 calls in a night. The work space is also similar with long rows of

workstations in drab, dimly lit halls. The workforce is quite young, ranging between 18 and 26 years of age, and often college educated. However, recruitment is primarily based on ability to speak English without a local accent or, even better, speak it with what is considered an American or British accent – thus education takes second seat, and call center employees with high school education earn at par with college and university graduates, sometimes even supervising them. These young people earn the same starting salary as their more educated peers in other jobs.[3]

7.2.1 India

In India, the research involved fieldwork, first in 1995 and 1996 with ethnographies of computer manufacturing and engineering firms, and interviews with eighty employees, managers, and officials of three call centers in the New Delhi area and suburbs in 2003 and 2004 and additional research between 2009 and 2012. The centers were selected through several informants: personal connections, suggested by the industry association and a government official. The selected call centers varied in size, ownership, and global positioning – BigCo, a multinational firm with about 3000 employees; MediumCo, a joint venture firm with an American company having about 200 employees; and SmallCo, an Indian-owned firm with forty employees. A total of 50 formal (semi-structured) interviews were conducted with calling agents, about 15 from each firm and a few from some additional firms for more breadth of comparison. Interviews were conducted in English and lasted about an hour. The employee lists provided by the human resource departments were used to select the sample with respondents chosen randomly, with balanced samples according to gender and occupational level. Two thirds of the sample is male, illustrative of the national distribution of employment. Most of the population is also young, highly educated, and urban.

More informal, unstructured interviews were also conducted: 20 interviews with human resource managers, quality control personnel, recruiters, trainers, nurses, and others and 15 interviews with industry experts, government officials, and employee associations. More recent data collection is drawn from newspapers, governmental reports, and international data archives.

7.2.2 Pakistan

In Pakistan, the research was carried out in two international call centers in two different cities. The cultural difference of the two cities was a factor in their selection. Callco was based in Islamabad, the capital city that draws its population from a mix of ethnicities and is less rigid in terms of gender norms than Lahore, the second site.

[3] Around $300–400 per month in Pakistan, lower in India; with sales commissions and bonuses, it translates into a good income for a fresh high school or college graduate.

Lahore, in the agricultural heartland of the country, retains its rural roots and adheres to more conservative gender norms. TechSol based in Lahore was part of an international group of call centers and, unlike Callco, owned by an individual based in the USA. Both served clients primarily in North America and a few in Europe. At the time of the research, both call centers had seen a decline in business, and downsized to less than 500 employees, because of the global economic downturn. Callco employs approximately 30% women, though more than 80% are short listed for vacancies; they do not take up job offers presumably because of the night shift requirements.

The research took place from 2008 to 2010 and included 67 interviews. Thirty-four interviews were conducted with female agents, 21 with men workers, and ten with families and husbands or fiancés of the women who had been interviewed. The purposive sample recruited participants primarily through snowball sampling and a few through fliers posted at the work sites. On average, the respondents were 24 years old with 14 years of schooling (in Pakistan the equivalent of a college degree) though quite a few had a master's degree or were enrolled in graduate classes. While salaries are low compared to international standards, the entry-level call center agent earns approximately $300–500 per month, quite generous compared to the national average.

Open-ended interviews around pre- and postemployment aspirations, role of family and kin, ideas about work and marriage, perceptions of working in a mixed environment (male and female colleagues), generated responses and conversations that provided valuable insights into the lives of the respondents. Interviews were often conducted in the cafeteria or a private space in the office premises as employees were reluctant to use their off-work time, used to catch up on sleep or housework and studies, and few women were able to meet outside of work premises, citing family constraints.

7.2.3 Studying Up and Studying Down: Software Houses in India and Call Centers in Pakistan

Comparing and contrasting changing masculinities at two levels of the ICT industry, in India and Pakistan, is not without irony, given the relations between the two countries and their different trajectories in the global ICT industry. Indians have had a different political and democratic history from Pakistan with strong social movements that engender a sense of self as Indians. Moreover, India's ascendancy in technology and as an emerging economy has placed it more firmly on the world stage as a country that will soon be in the top five economies of the world.

Since Pakistan gained its independence from British India in 1947, the relations between the two countries have fluctuated dramatically between an uneasy truce and war. The political rhetoric by the leaders from both countries offers an important insight into how masculinities are conceptualized in the region, with aggressive posturing suffused with religious overtones (India has a Hindu majority and Pakistan

has a Muslim majority) ignoring the common ties of a shared history, struggle for independence, and common language and culture along the north-west border of India with the eastern border of Pakistan.

The mosaic of masculinities within and between the two countries is not reflected in the political rhetoric of course; while it is difficult to capture or compare this diversity, there are some regional patterns that have shaped and influenced the "hegemonic" masculinity particular to the geographical north of the South Asia region (comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan, North India, Nepal, and Bangladesh). Placed firmly within the "classical patriarchy" belt, the culture of these countries exhibits a strong son preference, where rights of women are socially and culturally subordinated to those of men irrespective of their legal standing, and a women's position in society is heavily dependent on that of her father and, after marriage, her husband, her fertility, and the number of sons she has. Masculinity here embodies the cultural ideal: men are expected to be protectors of women and defenders of family honor irrespective of age, to be breadwinners, to defer to parents and family elders, and to respect women who conform to the cultural ideal of femininity. Increasingly however these notions have been buffeted by the winds of change riding the newest wave of globalization. Women are entering the workforce often providing for men and families as jobs become vulnerable and wages lower, and young women and men are more informed than their elders thanks to the Internet and social media. Masculinities and femininities are being reshaped and reimagined across class and caste in both the countries, pushing the boundaries of sociopolitical acceptability.

Surprisingly, there are a number of commonalities across borders and across the two hierarchical levels of software developers and call center workers. Drawing out the common threads and identifying differences allow a comparison between local-local in South Asia and a comparison of work at the peripheries (the call centers) and the higher paid, valued knowledge work.

7.3 Findings and Analysis

7.3.1 Call Centers and Masculinities in Interaction

Call center work, unlike that of the high-end software engineers, is beset with contradictions for young male employees who are unable to exercise techno-masculinities to assert their position in the social hierarchy. Even though better paid than average workers, call center work is low status and often equated to that of telephone operators, not befitting a college graduate. Where work is at the bottom of the social scale and at the periphery, male workers use different strategies to frame the work as befitting of "a man" and not as feminized labor. The performativity of masculinity in these cases involves claims on the social space of the production floor as their own.

Managing the competing demands of workplace and social norms leads to interesting configurations of masculinities that are neither techno nor hegemonic but can best be termed "fusion." The tensions between the normative masculinity and the exigencies of the global workplace are further described below.

7.3.2 "We Cannot All Be Americans"

What is clear is that all the employees are very aware that their workplace is "American," in contrast to their geographical location. For example, a female engineer gushed, "the environment is very friendly. It is quite different from the other Indian companies. It is quite different from the other multinationals. It has a total freedom" (Poster 2013a, 13). Another engineer said: "Usually in Indian companies, men and women won't mix all together. They won't talk more than a 'Hello' or 'Hi'. They will hesitate to talk. But it is not the case here. They mix well" (Poster 2013a, 13). In these "global circuits of gender" (Poster 2013a), women and men engage without the normative cultural restrictions on their physical and social interactions. Similar sentiments were echoed by the customer service agents in the call center in Pakistan, especially the women who realized that as professionals one could be friends with someone from the opposite sex, without having to see it as a relationship beyond the workplace. But it was also tempered with a realization of cultural norms as evident from the comment by Jason (call center pseudonym):

> Although we are an American company but we are working in a Pakistani culture, we have to see things according to the culture we have, actually. We cannot go, I mean, to be very honest even… practically, we cannot be all American here, that's not possible.

Those who are unable to keep this distinction become "wannabes," and according to Jason, "[t]hey are stuck between two cultures, neither American nor Pakistani. I don't think that's right. You follow things," meaning one should observe the local culture and norms.

Part of the tension between perceptions of being local or "wannabes" also stems from the fact that call centers attract individuals from different social classes. While admittedly few, women and men from the upper middle class who have been to English medium, co-ed schools may behave differently from their lower middle-class colleagues who live more conservative lives and do not have exposure to nonfamily women and to different ways of behaving and dressing. For the men to include a woman in their list of friends or engage with her in off-floor conversations is to insinuate an interest in having a relationship.

7.3.3 The Ideal Man: Normative vs. Reality

Men are expected to be protectors, irrespective of age, and breadwinners, to defer to parents and family elders, and to respect the women who conform to social gender norms. Men understand this role only too well. Twenty-three-year-old Umair

(Pakistan) joined the call center when he was 19. As the eldest son in a family of five, the death of his father propelled him into the role of protector and breadwinner for his mother, two older sisters, and two brothers. Studying and working two jobs, he managed to save enough money to marry off his sisters in a befitting way, a fact he repeatedly mentions with pride.

Men face a dilemma in their protector/provider role when sisters and wives have to step out to work. For example, many of the women interviewed in Pakistan mentioned that brothers, both younger and older ones, put up a stiff resistance to their working and especially to working nights. The brothers saw it as problematic since a woman having to work is a direct reflection on their own inability to provide. And secondly, working nights is a major shift in norms where night work can easily be conflated with sex work. As protectors of their sister's honor, these men would have to bear the double burden of ensuring nothing happened to them and also silence the murmuring disapproval of extended family or community members. Twenty-two-year-old Amra narrated how it was her younger brother who had to be persuaded to let her work despite the dire financial straits of the family, once she explained that she would leave at dusk and come back early in the morning. Avoiding going to-and-fro in the dark of the night was important as neighbors would gossip and think of her, and the family, as "bad." Night shifts are also one reason that, unlike other countries where higher proportions of the call center workforce are women, in India and Pakistan this is not the case.

Working nights allows young people a measure of freedom away from the surveillance of family (especially in the case of young women) and an opportunity to meet with others from across the class and social stratum. Surveillance is not totally suspended, however, as organizations keep a tight rein on how time is utilized on the floor; in Pakistan some parents request managers to keep an eye on their daughters and not allow them to leave the premises or even their seats; this sometimes extends to young men as well.

Men are also perceived to be "emotionally stable" and "strong" unlike women who therefore have a secondary role in the relationship. Paradoxically, this means that men are not seen as partners and equals; for example, Nosheen states, "I don't like men who want to take the consent of their wives in each and every step they take," the assumption being that women give the wrong counsel, especially in matters of business. Despite working and supporting her family, Nosheen is not particularly enamored of women's role in domestic decision-making, possibly because such a role also entails taking responsibility.

At the same time, women see men as falling short on respecting female colleagues, referring to them as "typical Pakistani men," who lose no opportunity to try to score with the "girls." The ones they liked were "not the sort of guys you would think [of as] typical Pakistani guys – they are really cool and help you and, you know, try to understand, to be more friendly toward you," says Maha of her teammates, and not "looking at you and staring at you." So, while some were adhering to the role of protector, respecting women, etc., others were not.

The justification for such behavior is explained by the men who categorized their female colleagues as those who "needed" to work (family in financial straits with

male members either disabled or deceased or simply unable to provide) and those who came to get away from home and meet other people or to support a lifestyle that the family could not provide for. These latter "girls" were further classified as "respectable" if they adhered to the dress code, did not befriend male colleagues, barely spoke with anyone on the work floor, and so forth, and the "bad" ones who had befriended several of their male colleagues often went out with them for the "lunch hour" (at midnight) and wore "Western" clothes (trousers/jeans and short tops), styled their hair (Umair asks, "Why do you need to style your hair at night?"), and spoke with an American accent. In such cases, the men dropped their normative role, since they did not have to be particularly concerned about the "honor" of the "bad" women. Umair was of the view that it was easy to distinguish between the two and to assess if the female colleague was there because of necessity and need or working "just to get out of the house at night and has motives other than work." Ameer felt that they "like to be westernized and they feel sort of privilege to be one of them, which I personally think it's not right," echoing Faheem who thought "the journey from home begins with the *dopatta*[4] on the head, and in the call center it slips to just hang from the shoulders" or is cast off altogether.

However working alongside women does influence how the men behave. Usman says it is more difficult to swear or use inappropriate language (definitely a symbol of masculinity among young men of his age) and exchange off-color jokes. Others felt that working with women did not really make a difference, though in both India and Pakistan having a different work environment was noted.

7.3.4 Skillful, Confident, and Earning

Masculinities are established by focusing on the "skills" beyond just the English because one is assessed for "the aptitude actually, to take the stress, meet his goals, and then, you know, grow as well" (Jason). Another sales rep boasted how he "can talk to the topmost authority now" in a client's company since in his business-to-business calls he was "not going to talk to a secretary, a receptionist, or someone, I need to get to the topmost authority – you understand it's not easy to get to that person" (Ameer, TechSol Pakistan). Call center work generates confidence and skills Ameer brags, after having "spoken to millions of American people" to sell them something they did not particularly want or need. Despite his middle-class background, he is quick to distance himself from "the stiff necks" that some agents acquire "because they have posh accents, they can talk like Americans, and they can communicate with them in a proper way."

In both India and Pakistan call centers, workers used their knowledge, that is, the script and product training, to express astonishment at the American customers who have to be told "like little children how to put the phone, how to put the SIM card together" (Mirchandani 2008, 93). "Americans are dumb and rude," Canadians are

[4] Long scarf that often covers the head or lies across the shoulders.

"deaf and dumb," and "Brits" are "very strict" and stubborn, that is, once they have said, "no then it's [a] no."

Employees have a bachelor's degree and are often interfacing with customers who have less education than they have. This also leads to a sense of superiority, justifying the notion that Americans are dumb, with money but no brains (Poster 2007a, b; Mirchandani 2008).

Fathers of some of the interviewed men were not happy with the low status of call center jobs initially but then came around when it was presented as "working in a good corporate organization" (Raheel), meaning it is not a fly-by-night company. Americans are "frank, disciplined," have "accountability" work ethics, and are "fair" in their dealings. Jason is very appreciative of the space that the call center provides: "Even if you don't like American culture, you're still given space. You're given space to practice your religion; you're given space to practice your beliefs." American management is unlike *desi* (local/Pakistani) management – there is immediate and transparent decision-making; everyone is respected regardless of their position in the hierarchy (the opposite is the bane of workplace politics in the subcontinent where position in the hierarchy overshadows formal rules and policies).

Faheem brags that more families were interested in him as a prospective son-in-law because he works with a "multinational company," and the salary is good, especially when you log in "three hundred and twelve" working hours in the month instead of the expected one hundred and sixty and earn a bonus.

While better paid for the entry-level high school graduates, call center work is by no means a well-paid job for those with higher education. However, high unemployment and few work opportunities make international call centers an attractive option for men who are often primary or main earners in large extended families. Urban legends of the call center dream bonus of $1000 keep them focused. Almost every male employee interviewed recalled that one agent who had earned the legendary bonus within his first few months and so on, even though they had never met the man personally. One of the human resource managers admitted as much when he said that "the boys come in and want to work on the projects where they can make the (500–1000) bonus," but the "girls" take it "slow and steady, working for 2 years on one project before they move on to the higher ones" (Kamran, TechSol). The higher bonus is commensurate with higher stress and is regarded by both the women and men as being a male privilege since in their opinion few women would choose or have the capacity to manage the additional stress.

Confidence, ability to speak to the top tier, convincing sales calls; long hours and hefty bonuses, plus the call center pseudonyms Ryder, Tanner, and Brian; and the fake informal environment of the workplace – calling a boss by his first name instead of the customarily deferential "sir" – feature as one way that the male employees assert a certain brand of masculinity on the work floor.

Masculinities are also exercised through body language. Instead of sitting crouched over their headphones reading their script and conversing with customers in a soft voice, the "guys" walk up and down agitatedly, wave their hands in the air, and yell, "Yes," once the sale is clinched, and the call is transferred to the closer.

Shouts go up as a team meets its sales targets for the day. Their female colleagues just sit on their chairs and smile, but the men make the floor their own. If a sales call has not gone well, the phone is banged down, followed by choice expletives. If there is pressure to meet targets and the sales are slow, quick cigarette breaks are taken to ease the pressure; no such breaks for the women who just continue working, except the westernized ones who step out with the "boys" to the unofficially designated smoker's corner just outside the office. The drab gray or blue interiors with low lighting, rows upon rows of impersonal work stations, are converted into a battle-ground where the victims are the ones who failed their targets and the heroes are the ones who saved the team by working ferociously, making sale after sale. Announcement of their heroism is made over the speakers, a round of clapping commences, and their photograph flashes on the large TV screen for all to see. Work stops for a few seconds.

Male employees use their phone conversation to charm American and Canadian female customers, selling overpriced products. "Oftentimes we get women at night," as the men are away at work, says an agent, and "most of the time we have to flirt with them," or strike up a personal conversation, asking about their family and kids, and then weaving in a story about their own marriage and kids (even if single) because "You have to make them feel happy" (Daniel). Call center workers also indulge in emotion management for clients, helping them with tips and advice on resolving issues in their personal lives or just lending a sympathetic ear (Mirchandani 2008).

7.3.5 New Masculinities: Shaping the Old and Crafting the New

Strategies such as casting work as both professional and disciplined are used both in Indian (Mirchandani 2008) and Pakistani call centers. Dress and language, the mixing of women and men on the work floor, all are emphasized to set call center workers apart from their peer in the desi workplaces. Similarly, higher salaries are flaunted with high and visible consumption lifestyles, relative to their class and age – often eating out and having fancy mobile phones and credit cards.

Faced with often abusive and racist customers, Indian and Pakistani call center workers use strategies of education, class, and culture to resist, reversing the gaze and "othering" Americans as less educated, having money but no brains, and as people who are often lonely, without family.

As "cyber coolies" (Praful Bidwai, cited in Mirchandani 2004), these well-educated South Asians cater to the basic requirements of their Western customer. To manage this reality, their work is cast as professional requiring a high level of skills and assertiveness, marketing acumen, and is linked to perks such as transport to and from work, air-conditioned offices, and attractive salaries. This impression management of work is done by both employers and workers.

Call centers and international customer service centers also insist on location masking in both India and Pakistan, in order to assure the customer that the service provider is based in North America and is not a beneficiary of jobs that should not have been shipped overseas.

The call center employees learn how to put aside the cultural norms that they are proud of: respect to elders, due deference to age and position – because "if we do the same with US customers, you know, be extra careful, give a lot of respect while talking to them over the phone, they feel that this guy is not an American." In other words the customer can see through their call center pseudonym (Joe Ryder) and accent, and a potential sale is lost if the customer is irritated by it and believes that jobs have been taken away from Americans and outsourced to others. In such cases the hard work by management to "build a bridge between the two cultures," training their employees "about the American culture, how things work, what are the norms, what are the good things, what are the bad things, and what are the critical aspects of the American culture they have to be careful about," is jeopardized (Manager, Callco).

Yet, masculinities are practiced within the norms set by family and society. For example, Bill Ryan (call center pseudonym) was accompanied by his father for his first interview at TechSol and was allowed to work "because he trusts me," despite the belief that "a person can do anything at night." The parents of another young man would call him up the moment his shift ended and remind him to come straight home, as he was not allowed to go out with friends after work. Often the men noted how having women in the workplace meant that they had to be careful not to use rough language and to be careful about what they say.

Being high earners at a young age (true for call center workers as well as those doing higher-end technical work) brings a pride and confidence that is reflected also in their demand as eligible suitors. Marrying colleagues is not unknown, but by all accounts, arranged or approved marriages still predominate. Poster (2007b) notes that the coming together of recruits from different class and caste backgrounds in the IT sector, and the weakened parental control, has led to an increase in marriages across these otherwise rigid social boundaries.

In an insightful piece, Michiel Baas (2007) terms this phenomenon in the IT industry as "arranged love marriage." Despite getting acquainted through the workplace, most couples strive to get parental approval before committing to the marriage. For those at higher-end work, it is also a considered bargain as both partners work in the same industry and are likely to have higher combined incomes.

> It is not a question of following your heart, but following your path: a path that leads to promotion within the IT industry and, of course, more money which both families and their respective communities will profit from as well. And for that reason, a new caste is born, one with its own set of rules and rituals. (Baas 2007, 9)

The new masculinities, then, do not necessarily defer entirely to parents and social customs, but rather the "good son" role is adapted to include personal and parental preferences. The social compatibility has shifted from a class/caste emphasis to one of belonging to the same world of work (Baas (2007).

While the co-ed environment at the call center is friendly, a number of male respondents in Pakistan did not greet their female coworkers if they bumped into them outside of the call center, for example, shopping with their family. Women appreciated the nod to gender norms implicit in this action, recognizing it as respecting the segregation mandated by society; otherwise, the consequences could be disastrous, including having to quit work.

For some men, working with women allowed them to put aside the negative stereotyping of women working at night and to see them as hardworking individuals who were supporting families. Men also accepted that women should have the option to work just not during the night. Most of the men interviewed insisted that they had no objection to their wives working, but since they were providing enough, there was no need for her to work and besides, "she is working at home." There is a struggle to reconcile the provider role with the new imperatives where a good, high consumption lifestyle requires two earners, and the argument of "only if I cannot provide" is wearing thin.

For those young men who are more conservative, the idea that women should be able to work as a matter of choice is becoming acceptable, albeit very slowly. This realization is subject to "need," that is, women's work outside the home is regarded as an extension of her filial responsibility of taking care of her family in times of economic stress. Her primary work is inside the home, and taking on the double burden of work outside of it is tolerated as long as it does not disturb the putative harmony within the household. Waqar in Pakistan sums it up; thus:

> Callco is very healthy place to work for girls and boys. You can see here the environment is quite open – girls are coming and going freely – but if you ask me Pakistan is not America – the culture here is changing. I belong to a very conservative family. There are limited work opportunities for us, much less so for women. Apart from that, I think need is the biggest factor [for women] to leave the house in search of work.

At the same time, in response to a question on whether decisions are made in consultation with his wife, he says: "Yes, of course. Even in Islam it is said that you must consult even for the little things." He finds that the new and different environment of the call center lets him practice traditional values but also releases him from certain cultural constraints; it encourages boldness rather than blind deference, but, he insists "values should [remain] with you – one should be both, a little bit conservative and a little bit modern."

And that in a nutshell is why these new masculinities are "fusion" masculinities – retaining aspects of the old while fusing them with new notions acquired through their Americanized, global workplace.

7.3.6 Fusion Masculinities and the Transnational Workplace

Fusion masculinities emerge even as call center workers in both India and Pakistan remain ever conscious of their own geopolitical status. If one is not fluent in English and cannot sustain the conversation beyond a few scripted lines, then there is the

danger of the North American customer discovering that there is a Pakistani on the other end of the line (even if it is an Indian), and the call is immediately disconnected because "terrorism comes to mind," as Pakistani is synonymous with terrorism in the minds of most North American customers. Sometimes one can get away with being an Indian because "American society is multicultural," but not Pakistani. These customer service agents are quite aware of the impact of the "war on terror" has had, notwithstanding Pakistan's status as a US ally with blowback from this status on their own environment. Working in an American company that has no sex segregation, where one can "still see girls clad in jeans" (Jason) can have fearful consequences, as one can become potential target for extremists and ultra-right-wing groups. It is indeed ironical that their American customers might see them as terrorists, while groups within their own country may see them as too American or America friendly and therefore betraying culture and religion. Employees feel caught between the two positions. As Jason in Pakistan notes:

> These call centers and software houses have increased per capita income […], have given an opportunity to those who didn't have it earlier […]. The world is a lot bigger and brighter than Pakistan is, to be very honest. We have achieved a lot but this is nothing, India is the largest exporter of the software in the whole world.

There is recognition of India as a global leader of savvy Indian media and government policies that promote "shining India."

The environment of the global workplace (especially call centers) – with the American-accented English, Western pseudonyms, generous salaries, and hefty bonuses – creates new identities. Working for a multinational company and for American bosses; calling everyone by their first name, no "sirs"; having money to spend; celebrating birthdays, valentines, and Christmas; and working with women and with Christians, Hindus, and diverse social castes in an environment of tolerance and diversity present a kaleidoscope of bewildering experiences to these young people that collides and meshes with their local identities and notions of masculinities – as Indian; Pakistani; Muslim; Hindu; provider/protector; respecter of social norms, for example, obedience and deference for elders; sympathetic to helpless women especially the elderly; etc.

Simultaneously, the call center workers, though not the technology elite, are not seen as very successful since their education and job are unlikely to speed their journey up the social ladder beyond a few rungs.

How do the men resolve it? By fusing both their global and local lived realities. The emergent fusion masculinities can, for example, extend the protector role to elderly and single mothers in the USA. They can use their multinational employee status and salary to display pride and lifestyle in India and Pakistan. They can acknowledge working women, but implicitly see them as a challenge to their own status as providers and the benefits they reap from women's unpaid reproductive labor (e.g., from the unpaid household manager-wife). This is visible in the perspectives of the call center men when they express support for women working and are appreciative of their colleagues, but as they move back into their private space of home, they would not support wives/sisters working as it affects their role as providers.

These new fusion masculinities are transgressive of old gender norms but are not regressive. They are subtly changing the balance in gender relations to a more equitable one and are challenging the dominance of the global North while simultaneously forging partnerships with it. Fusion masculinities embrace the new, discarding portions of the old that hinder their progress in local and/or global spheres.

7.4 Discussion

Masculinities are shaped not just by their immersion in the global ICT industry, but they are also influenced by the broader sociopolitical contexts. This includes, on the one hand, historic tensions between Pakistan and India (friendly cricket rivalry notwithstanding!)[5] and, on the other hand, relations with the "West," especially for Pakistan with the decade-long "war on terror." A constant barrage of mostly negative stereotyping of Pakistan and Pakistanis creates an environment different from that of India where India-US relations are ascendant. What is different in the two country contexts is the level of ambivalence felt by workers in Pakistan, as it is dubbed a den of terrorists. As far as US policy goes, young men under the age of 35 are seen as "potential combatants." For a decade now, newspapers and TV newscasts in Pakistan are filled with debates about drones, about the arbitrariness of American foreign policy (and here Soviet occupied Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Palestine figure prominently), about whether this is a "crusade," about whether the Taliban are simply trying to assert social justice via religion, and so on and so forth. This discourse may well influence how the young male call center employees working in an American company interact with North American customers in such an environment. Do they resent their customers? Or do they see them as separate from the foreign policy of their governments, even when they understand that most American customers might see them as "terrorists"; hence, location masking is important. The latter is quite plausible, since even the most patriotic Pakistani can be quite vocal in criticizing their own government and do not always see its policies as manifesting the will of the people. Or they may just separate their work-selves from their life outside of work, segregating the two "cultures" of workplace and public home life.

The notion of "fusion masculinities" presented in this chapter draws on the rich literature on the subject that has underscored the fluid nature of masculinities. Believing that masculinities are "configurations of practice" that can differ across social contexts, we argue, as other international researchers have done (cited in Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), that patterns of masculinity "are crosscut by other social divisions and are constantly renegotiated in everyday life" (Connell and

[5] The seriousness with which this is taken in the two countries is evident from the suspension and expulsion of over a dozen university students in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir, who dared to celebrate the victory of the Pakistan cricket team over the Indian team in a match in Dubai in March 2014.

Messerschmidt 2005, 835). This does not imply the total absence of what is termed as hegemonic masculinity rather that it is not a constant static form. Such forms are found embedded in organizations, in families, and other social institutions.

The concept of fusion masculinities is supported by the notion that men can adopt, change, and take certain positions through their discursive practices and that it is this positioning that is termed as masculinity, rather than a particular type of man (Wetherell and Edley [1999], cited in Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 841).

It is similar to techno-masculinity in part because of some of its discursive practices but does not depend only on technological prowess. Instead, manipulating their work, context, and culture, men adopt and meld discursive positions strategically to achieve the balance that works best for them.

7.4.1 Limitations

Small qualitative studies are not generalizable, but direct attention to how the interactions between young employees and clients and with a nontraditional work environment can change perceptions. More ethnographic, longitudinal, studies would be useful, as would others that focus more on how shifting masculinities impact gender relations. While the backdrop to this chapter is globalization with all its contradictions, the focus is on the shifting masculinities triggered by specific processes of globalization and not on the merits, demerits, or features of globalization per se; nor does the chapter dwell upon the interplay of changing masculinities and femininities and how gender relations are shaped as a result of shifting masculinities, though it does allude to them. Finally the chapter points to the position of India and Pakistan as the two Hindu majority and Muslim majority countries, respectively, that are on two sides of the US foreign policy and is not meant to provide a detailed background of the historical and political differences between the two.

7.5 Conclusion

The preceding sections weave a complex tapestry of gender relations in the context of complex global relations, analyzed through a focus on masculinities. We conclude with our initial questions. What is the shape of the competing masculinities within the industry as workers position themselves against the global North, between those in the industry and outside of it and between those at different levels of industrial hierarchy? How do these masculinities engage with, shape, and are shaped by, the global? Are these regressive, transgressive, or both? While there is no definitive answer, we find that fusion masculinities adopt aspects of hegemonic masculinity, but incorporate alternatives, drawing on the local, historical, and political, and remain fluid as they move between the global and the local and the personal and the professional.

Drawing on the social constructionist approach of "doing gender," this article attempts to shed light on the discursive practices of "doing masculinities" by drawing on research in India and Pakistan with software engineers and workers in the international call centers. Specifically the analysis and discussion focus on the construction of masculinities through interaction with "others" juxtaposed with the local constructions.

Standing at the intersection of technology culture and politics, these men understand the exigencies of their workplace while balancing the competing expectations of their geographical and social location. The deft manipulation of both allows them to fuse those practices of masculinities into configurations that work to their advantage in interactions with the global and in interactions with the local. The resulting fusion masculinities are accepted both in their professional and their personal lives.

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