

Long Work Hours and Family Life

A Cross-National Study of Employees' Concerns

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Work-family conflict is a pressing research and policy issue. The authors extend previous scholarship on this issue by studying elite employees' worries about the effects of long work hours on those in their personal life. This issue is researched cross-nationally in a sample of managers and professionals based in the United States, London, and Hong Kong, all of whom work for one division of a high-commitment, global, financial services firm. Hong Kong respondents are more likely than those in the United States and in England to worry about work-family conflict when controlling for job and family characteristics. The authors argue that the meaning of family varies by national context, in part because of the emphasis in Hong Kong on the extended family as a robust institution with intense ties and obligations. In all three countries, women experience higher levels of work-family conflict than men do.

Keywords: *work-family conflict; work hours; global economy*

Scholars, business people, and the public throughout the industrialized world are increasingly concerned about workers' struggles to juggle work and family obligations (Gornick, Meyers, & Ross 1998; Haas, Hwang, & Russell, 2000; Lewis, Izraeli, & Hootsmans, 1992). Although balancing work and family is an issue for all kinds of workers, highly educated profes-

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sionals and managers face particular challenges. Managers and professionals have seen increased working hours during the past 25 years (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Employers demand that they demonstrate commitment by making work the central focus of their lives (Blair-Loy, 2003; Fried, 1998). Moreover, increased competition and declining job security linked to globalization may be contributing to long hours for managers and professionals throughout the industrialized world (Frenkel, Korczynski, Shire, & Tam, 1999.) These literatures suggest that the demands of professional and managerial work today may be engendering high levels of work-family conflict in many societies. However, little research has examined the ways in which work-family conflict may vary cross-nationally. This issue has become particularly salient with the rise of multinational corporations in recent years.

Even when limited to a single national context, work-family conflict is complex and multifaceted (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Our cross-national focus introduces additional complications. Under these circumstances, our analytic strategy is to focus systematically on one dimension of work-family conflict: employees' emotional response to long work hours, particularly the effect of their long hours in their personal lives. Previous research, mostly conducted within one country, has consistently documented the effects of particular work demands and family responsibilities on this aspect of work-family conflict. Important predictors of work-family conflict include hours on the job, job demands, gender, and parenthood.

Yet much about how people experience the effects of their work on their family lives is not fully understood, and we know even less about how these experiences vary cross-nationally (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Lewis, 1997). This article addresses the following questions: First, how likely are elite managers and professionals in a high-commitment firm (Osterman, 1995) to worry about the effects of their hours at work on those in their personal life? Second, how do job demands and family responsibilities shape employees' concerns about the effect of their long work hours? And third, how do these concerns vary cross-nationally?

Our research is conducted in the tradition of work-family studies that have moved beyond conceptualizing work-family balance as simply an arithmetic function of work demands, family needs, and hours in the work day (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001). Although these factors are important, we also need to understand how people's experiences of them are molded by the broader meanings they attach to work and family life. The meanings of work and of family are not static but rather are socially constructed and vary by context, and these meanings "hold consequences for individual and family functioning" (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000, p. 990).

Understudied in the literature is how the meanings of the institutions of the family and the workplace are shaped by the surrounding national context (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000). By national context, we are referring broadly to the institutional structures, policies, practices, cultural values, and norms that shape work and family in a particular country. Countries vary in the ways they have addressed work-family issues (Haas et al., 2000), and the national context may affect workers' perceptions and experience of work-family conflict (Ishii-Kuntz, 1994), including worries about the effect of long hours on family members.

We examine this issue among urban managers and professionals in a multinational financial services firm we call "International Finance" (a pseudonym). As this high-commitment firm expects intensive dedication and long hours, issues of work-family conflict are likely to be particularly salient for its employees. This article studies work-family conflict among 277 managers and professionals who work in three cities in the United States, in London, or in Hong Kong for one division of this firm.

In an earlier study (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002) analyzing these data, we showed that employees in the three national contexts differed significantly in their interest in part-time work. Here, we explore the effects of national context on work-family concerns more directly. The article first analyzes how employees' worries about the effect of their long work hours on those in their personal life are shaped by work hours, job demands, gender, and family status. Then it examines whether national context affects workers' level of concern about long hours, controlling for job and family characteristics.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Work-family conflict refers to conflict in which "the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Our article contributes to the study of work-to-family conflict (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999), in which the demands of work interfere with fulfilling family responsibilities (Voydanoff, 1988).

Much research has focused on three facets of work-family conflict: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In contrast, we address one aspect of the meaning of and emotional response to work-family conflict: employees' worries about the effect of their work hours on those in their personal life. Our focus is related to the concept of depletion, in which "engagement in a role can lead to a negative emotional response to that role" (Rothbard, 2001, p. 658). Depletion can

trigger negative work to family spillover, in which stressful work experiences may evoke negative emotions that are carried home, and negative family to work spillover, in which concerns about family life are carried into the workplace (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Rothbard, 2001).¹

Our study complements research analyzing these procedures. First, we ask how much elite employees in a high-commitment firm anguish about the effects of their hours on those in their personal life. Some research suggests that these concerns are widely felt (e.g., Fried, 1998; Perlow, 2001), but other studies suggest that some of the most successful managers are devoted to work, with few regrets about time lost with family members (Blair-Loy, 2003; Hochschild, 1997).

Second, how are these concerns affected by hours worked, job demands, gender, and family responsibilities? Finally, we explore these issues cross-nationally. The meanings of work-family conflict, including worries that long work hours are harmful to family members, may be shaped by the national context, including institutional structures, policies, and cultural understandings of work and family. This topic is increasing in importance with the growth of multinational corporations (Hochschild, 2002) and the spread of U.S.-based practices, including long work hours, to other countries.

Job Demands and Family Responsibilities

The effects of particular work demands and family responsibilities on work-to-family conflict are well established in the literature. We extend this literature to a cross-national study of managers and professionals in the competitive financial service industry in a high-commitment firm.

Research conducted on U.S. workers has found that the number of hours on the job increases work-family conflict and negative work-to-family spillover (Berg, Kalleberg, & Appelbaum, 2003; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Galinsky, Kim, & Bond, 2001; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Thompson et al., 1999; Voydanoff, 1988, 1995). We anticipate that longer hours are also likely to increase worries about the effects of hours on loved ones. An excessive amount of work to be accomplished can also exacerbate this perception (cf. Fredricksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001; Galinsky, Bond, & Friedman, 1996; Thompson et al., 1999). Intensity and instability in the workplace increase employees' experience of work-family conflict, as does frequently having to work under pressure (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). In contrast, less intense and more stable and predictable work conditions may alleviate worries about the effects of work hours on those in one's personal life (Valcour & Batt, 2003). As Moen's (2000) research shows, although demanding jobs with high workloads can produce feelings of personal fulfill-

ment and achievement, these working conditions are also likely to increase negative spillover from work to home.

Much work-family research has been conducted in the United States with little attention to cross-national similarities and differences. Yet we see no reason why job hours and work demands would not similarly increase worries about work-to-family conflict for our respondents in Hong Kong and London. Managers and professionals have seen work hours increase in the United States in recent years, and work hours are also on the rise in other developed nations (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). U.S.-based workplace practices and policies, including long work hours, have spread to firms in London (McDowell, 1997) and Hong Kong (Ng & Chiu, 1997). U.S.-style work practices may be especially prevalent among workers in different countries employed by firms headquartered in the United States, such as International Finance (cf. Ng & Chiu, 1997).

These observations lead to Hypothesis 1a and 1b.

Hypothesis 1a: Employees who work longer hours will be more likely to worry about the effect of their work hours on those in their personal life.

Hypothesis 1b: Employees who face less intense and more predictable job demands in their work unit, including breaks in job intensity, a more predictable work load, and a more stable work unit, will be less likely to worry about the effect of their work hours on those in their personal life.

Prior research has found that those with more intensive family caregiving responsibilities are more likely to experience work-family conflict than other employees do. Studies of U.S. samples have found higher levels of work-family conflict among parents (Galinsky et al., 1996; Voydanoff, 1988, 1995). Similarly, we expect that parents of young and school-age children will be more likely to worry about the effects of long work hours because those in their personal lives include their dependent children. Previous research has also found that work-family conflict is higher among women than men, controlling for the effects of other characteristics (Fredrickson-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001; Galinsky et al., 1996; Galinsky et al., 2001). Similarly, Rothbard (2001) found that, compared to men, women experienced more work-to-family depletion and less segmentation between work and family concerns.

We anticipate that gender and parenthood will also be salient predictors of worries about the effects of long hours on those in their personal lives for our respondents. In the three countries under study, employed women generally take on more responsibility for domestic work and family caregiving than employed men (Aryee, Fields, & Luk, 1999; Brannen & Moss, 1998; Ngo,

1992; Spain & Bianchi, 1996), and workers have access to minimal state assistance with the problems of balancing work and family (Aryee et al., 1999; Gornick et al., 1998; Ngo, 1992).

This research leads us to Hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 2: Women, parents, and employees without a homemaking spouse will be more likely to worry about the effect of their work hours on those in their personal life than men, nonparents, and employees with a homemaking spouse.

National Context

The United States, England, and Hong Kong share many national traditions and policies. These include a common political heritage, a *laissez-faire* ideology, weak state support for employed mothers, and similar norms about individual responsibility for handling work and family obligations (Aryee et al., 1999; Brannen & Moss, 1998; Chan & Lee, 1995; Gornick et al., 1998; Joplin, Francesco, Shaffer, & Lau, 2003). Urban professional employees in all three countries have been exposed to Western, and particularly American, business practices and ideologies (McDowell, 1997; Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung, & Terpstra, 1993).

Notwithstanding these similarities, we expect to find an effect of national context on work-family conflict after controlling for the impact of work and family demands. Nations are composed of different historical constellations of institutions, policies, and cultural assumptions, which could produce distinct understandings of and responses to work, family, and work-family conflict (cf. Perlow, 2001). Specifically, we expect that Hong Kong-based respondents will express greater concerns about the effects of their long work hours than their colleagues in the United States and England.

In spite of Hong Kong's history as a former British colony, Hong Kong has remained a Chinese society (Aryee et al., 1999). Hong Kong citizens (98% of whom are Chinese) are immersed in traditional Chinese cultural patterns, including Confucianism (Chan & Lee, 1995). The literature on Chinese societies argues that in contrast to Western individualism, the Confucian worldview sees individuals as existing through and defined by their hierarchical relationships with others (Chan & Lee, 1995; Redding, Norman, & Schlender, 1994).

For example, individuals are defined by their relationship to family members. In Chinese societies, the extended family is a robust institution buttressed by ties of regular visits and transfers of care and financial support (Joplin et al., 2003; Lan, 2002; Zhan & Montgomery, 2003). Research on

various Chinese societies has emphasized the cultural importance of filial piety and its embodiment in close extended family ties that sometimes include coresidence. Nuclear families are more prevalent in Hong Kong than in some Chinese societies, but these households are closely linked with the households of parents and adult siblings through ties of affection, regular visits, mutual assistance, and ritual gatherings (Chan & Lee, 1995).

The strong ties of family support in Chinese societies are also intense ties of family obligation to adult siblings and, especially, parents. For example, when the elderly require special care, daughters-in-law and daughters, as well as adult sons, are expected to be their caregivers (Lan, 2002; Zhan & Montgomery, 2003). Moreover, because "the family constitutes the moral foundation of Confucian societies, the interference of work with family responsibilities may be seen as threatening the family identity of Hong Kong Chinese employees" (Aryee et al., 1999, p. 508). In addition, in Chinese culture, intergenerational interdependence among kin coexists with the pressure to maintain interpersonal harmony. As a result, research suggests that Chinese workers may be more sensitive to interpersonal conflicts with family than U. S. workers are (Lai, 1995; Ling & Powell, 2001). In sum, the institution of the family in Chinese societies comes with higher expectations for involvement and responsibility, especially for extended kin, which would increase the sense of concern about long hours negatively affecting those in one's family and personal life.

Indirect support for this view also comes from our previous research, which showed that Hong Kong employees were significantly more likely than British or U.S.-based respondents to express interest in part-time work (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002). Although an interest in working part-time could stem from many factors, employees' desires to spend more time with family members could motivate this response.

In contrast to the research on Chinese workers, studies of U.S. professionals and managers suggest that extended kin ties are relatively weak and that children's activities and parents' jobs take precedence over contact with relatives (Lareau, 2003). For example, in her study of high-level executive women in the United States, Blair-Loy (2003) found that many embraced a "work devotion schema" that provided a compelling justification for privileging work over family life. Townsend (2002) shows how dominant cultural values in the United States emphasize the identification of fatherhood with employment; many of the men he interviewed regarded intensive employment as a demonstration of caring for their family.

These arguments suggest important differences between Hong Kong employees' views of family and employees in Western countries, especially the ones in the United States. These differences could be expressed in multiple

ways. For example, they could operate as a main effect, with Hong Kong employees more worried than those elsewhere about the impact of their jobs on loved ones, controlling for other factors. Hong Kong (or another national context) could also operate as a moderator, conditioning the effects of other variables, such as job or family responsibilities, on work-family conflict. The hypotheses presented below treat national context as a direct effect. This formulation seems prudent, given the relative lack of previous research on these questions and especially the lack of research specifying the precise nature of conditional relationships between national context and job and family responsibilities (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Lewis, 1997). Data considerations also motivate this decision, as the small size of the London and Hong Kong samples limits our ability to adequately test interaction effects.

Hypothesis 3a: Hong Kong-based respondents will be more likely to worry about the effects of work hours on those in their personal life than U.S.- and London-based respondents.

This literature suggesting a difference between Chinese and Western societies in the meaning of family life furthermore leads us to expect that our British respondents will, on average, have similar responses to U.S.-based respondents.

Hypothesis 3b: London-based and U.S.-based respondents will have similar levels of concern about the effects of work hours on those in their personal life.

Data and Variables

In 1999, we administered a survey to a sample of professional and managerial employees in three divisions at International Finance. Our survey includes a wide range of items on respondents' attitudes and behaviors regarding balancing work and their other responsibilities. Most survey items were close-ended, although about one third of our respondents also answered an open-ended question at the end of the survey that asked for any additional comments about the issues raised in the questionnaire. The primary data analyzed in this article are drawn from 277 respondents in one of the divisions surveyed. This is a line division, which provides a core bank service. These respondents are urban, high-level financial professionals in the United States (in three large cities; $N = 163$), Hong Kong ($N = 64$), and England (London) ($N = 50$).² Although International Finance is headquartered in the United States, 2% or fewer of the London- and Hong Kong-based respondents were born in the United States.

Although the sample size is small, we carefully designed it to limit variation in the work environment. Because all respondents in this division do similar work for one division of one company, the sample allows us to focus on cross-national differences in respondents' understandings and experiences of work-family conflict.

Our dependent variable measures one dimension of work-to-family conflict: employees' concerns about negative effects of their long work hours on those in their personal life. We measure this as a dichotomous variable, drawn from a single survey item.³ Respondents were asked to check if the following statement described themselves (1 = *item was checked*; 0 = *item was not checked*): "I worry how my long hours affect those in my personal life."

Our models also include several independent variables, measuring job and workload characteristics, gender and family status, and country location. Hypothesis 1a anticipates the effects of work hours, measured as the respondent's self-reported number of hours worked each week. We measure the job demands and workload characteristics considered in Hypothesis 1b with five single-item measures. For all five measures, respondents select one of four response categories, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. In two cases, items were reverse coded so that higher values correspond to greater predictability and stability of work load. The five items include (a) Breaks in job intensity: "During the year, my workload has bursts of intensity followed by lulls in activity" (reverse coded); (b) Predictable work load monthly: "My workload is fairly predictable from month to month" (reverse coded); (c) Stable work unit: "Things are changing rapidly in my work unit"; (d) Responding to unpredictable events is not part of my job: "Responding to unpredictable events is a large part of my job"; and (e) Work under tight deadlines uncommon: "Working under tight deadlines is common in this job."

To test Hypothesis 2, we include variables for gender and family status. These include the following dichotomous variables: gender (1 = *female*), presence of children under 6 years in the home (1 = *children under 6 years in the home*), the presence of children aged 6 to 15 in the home (1 = *children between 6 and 15 years in the home*),⁴ and the presence of a homemaking spouse (1 = *homemaking spouse*).

For Hypotheses 3a and 3b, country-level effects were measured as two dummy variables for Hong Kong and England, with the United States, the largest category, as the reference category. This variable indicates the country each respondent was working in at the time of the survey. Although we do not know whether the respondent was born in England or Hong Kong, we do have measures of racial or ethnic identity and whether the respondent was born in the United States. The Hong Kong sample is almost exclusively

(95%) Asian, and only one Hong Kong resident was born in the United States. The U.S.-based and London-based samples are more racially and ethnically diverse. Among managers living in the United States, 69% are White; 7% identify as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; 12% are African American or Black; 7% are Latino/a; and 4% identify with another racial or ethnic group. Eighty-two percent of these respondents were born in the United States. Among those based in London, 72% are White; 14% identify as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; and 14% identify with another racial or ethnic group. Only one London-based manager was born in the United States (We do not control for race and ethnicity in our regression models because of high correlation with the country-level variables.)

Finally, consistent with previous studies of work-family conflict (Berg et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 1999), our models control for tenure. We measure organizational tenure as the natural log of the number of years the respondent has been employed by International Finance.

Results

Before turning to our logistic regression models, we present descriptive results.⁵ Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for all the variables in the analysis by the entire sample and by country. Work-family issues should be highly salient to these respondents. The sample is 58% female. One out of five respondents has children less than 6 years of age, with a similar percentage having children between ages 6 and 15. Those in England are more likely to be male, to have children, and to have a homemaking spouse than their colleagues do in Hong Kong or in the United States.

These employees put in an average of 50 hours a week. They report a high volume of work: The average respondent agrees that he or she often comes in to work early or stays late, responds to unpredictable events, deals with change, and works under tight deadlines. The mean organizational tenure is 11 years, with slightly longer tenures in the United States and somewhat shorter ones in Hong Kong.

Turning to our dependent variable, the proportion of respondents reporting that they worry about the effect of their work hours on those in their personal lives varies from 39% in the United States to 62% in Hong Kong. Thus, before controlling for other factors that likely affect this concern, Hong Kong-based employees are more likely to worry about this issue.

Respondents' comments on an open-ended survey question shed more light on the pressures they face at work (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002).

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables for Full Sample and by Country

Variables	Full Sample (N = 277)	United States (N = 163)	England (N = 50)	Hong Kong (N = 64)
	SD	SD	SD	SD
Work-family conflict	.46*	.39	.48	.62
Hours worked each week	49.98	48.88	51.10	51.93
Predictable workload from month to month	2.48	2.51	2.33	2.52
No rapid changes in work unit	1.66	1.63	1.96	1.52
Breaks in job intensity	2.63	2.44	2.79	3.00
Tight deadlines uncommon	1.59	1.61	1.63	1.53
Responding to unpredictable events not part of job	1.79	1.78	1.54	2.02
Female	.58*	.63	.35	.64
Young kids under 6 years	.20*	.13	.28	.32
School aged kids 6 to 15 years	.22*	.23	.30	.11
Homemaking spouse	.11*	.09	.22	.08
Organizational tenure	11.05	12.43	9.42	8.77
	8.70*	9.84	6.82	5.75

* $p < .05$. Indicates statistically significant differences between countries.

I used to work 10 to 12 hours before my children were born. I am trying to do 9 hours a day now, which is very difficult to get work done in . . . (married woman in the United States, age 38, with two young children)

To achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life is to forego the career path. (single man working in London, age 43, no children)

Given the workload, consistently reduced headcount, and increasing our pressure, working shorter hours is in no way possible. All employees are exhausted. (single woman in Hong Kong, age 41, no children)

Table 2 presents the results from our logistic regression analyses predicting employees' concerns about the impact of their work hours on those in their family and personal lives.⁶ The model in the second column includes the job and family characteristics expected to be important in Hypotheses 1 and 2, whereas the third column's model adds the country-level indicators considered in Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

Some job and workload characteristics increase employees' worries about long hours. Buttressing Hypothesis 1a, respondents working longer hours are more likely to be anxious about the effect of their work hours on their loved ones. For every additional hour worked, the odds that a respondent will express concern about the effect of long hours on his or her family and personal lives increase by 7%. Hypothesis 1b receives only modest support. Respondents who do not work under tight deadlines are significantly less likely to worry about the effects of their work hours. Yet none of the other job demand measures reach statistical significance in the model.

Hypothesis 2 is well supported. Parents of young children and parents of school-aged children are more likely to experience this dimension of work-family conflict. Furthermore, controlling for the effects of parenthood and the presence of a homemaking spouse, female respondents are more likely to experience work-family conflict than their male colleagues do. Being female increases the odds that a respondent will worry about the effect of her long hours by almost 95%.

The last column of Table 2 adds the country-level variables, the indicators of national context considered in Hypothesis 3. The indicator for Hong Kong is statistically significant in the direction predicted by Hypothesis 3a. Hong Kong-based employees are more likely than their colleagues in the United States to worry about the effects of long hours on their family and personal lives, even controlling for other factors. The odds of expressing these concerns are double for Hong Kong employees, relative to those in the United States. As expected in Hypothesis 3b, there is no difference in the experience of work conflicting with family and personal life between England and the

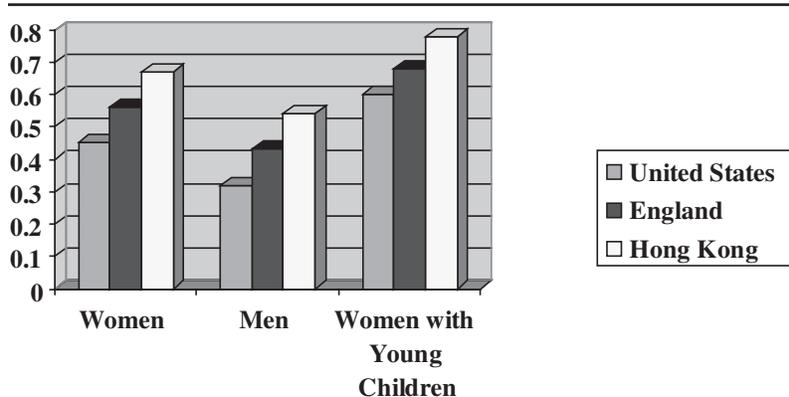
Table 2
Logistic Regression of Work-Family Conflict on Job and Workload Characteristics, Family Status and Gender, and Country Location

Variables (N = 244)	Logistic Regression Analyses					
	Job and Family Characteristics			National Context		
	Coefficient	SE	Odds Ratios	Coefficient	SE	Odds Ratios
Job and workload						
Hours worked each week	.067*	.020	1.070	.061*	.020	1.063
Predictable workload from month to month	-.103	.167	.903	-.128	.169	.880
No rapid changes in work unit	.123	.204	1.130	.153	.210	1.166
Breaks in job intensity	-.120	.151	.887	-.191	.157	.826
Tight deadlines uncommon	-.698**	.263	.498	-.669**	.268	.512
Responding to unpredictable events not part of job	.152	.216	1.164	.026	.230	1.026
Family and gender:						
Female	.667*	.336	1.949	.662†	.343	1.862
Young kids under 6 years	1.016**	.408	2.763	.839*	.422	2.314
School-aged kids age 6 to 15	1.181**	.412	3.257	1.317**	.421	3.731
Homemaking spouse	.356	.565	.213	.374	.569	1.454
Control:						
Log organizational tenure	-.020	.022	.980	.031	.161	1.031
England	—	—	—	.186	.423	1.205
Hong Kong	—	—	—	.968**	.413	2.633
Constant	-1.549	1.368	.213	-.621	1.436	.537

Note: $\chi^2 = 52.780$, $df = 13$, $p < .001$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. † $p < .10$ (two-tailed tests).

Figure 1
Predicted Values on Dependent Variable for
Women, Men, and Women With Young Children by Country



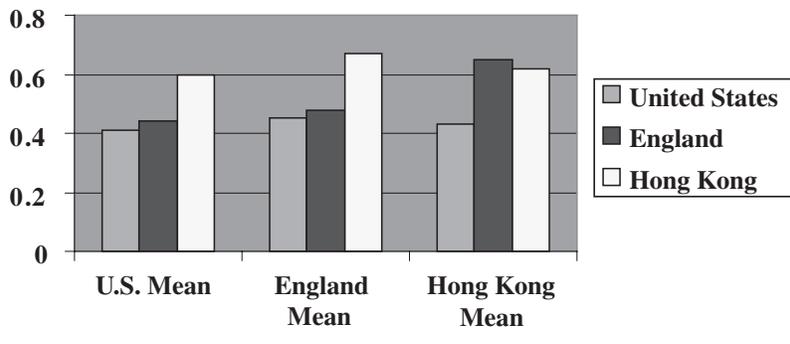
Note: Probabilities for each category calculated with all other independent variables held at their country-level mean.

United States (the reference category). Adding the country indicators does not change the statistical significance of the other factors in the model, except that the female coefficient drops to marginal statistical significance ($p \leq .07$).

To further explore these findings, we calculated the predicted values on the dependent variable for different categories of respondents in each country. In a logistic regression, these predicted values are expressed as probabilities. Figure 1 shows how these probabilities differ by gender and family status across country locations, holding all other independent variables at their mean. The first two sets of columns in Figure 1 show the predicted values of the dependent variable for women and men in the United States, England, and Hong Kong, holding all other variables at their country-level mean. Although women in all three settings are more likely than men to worry about the effects of long hours at work on their personal and family lives, these worries are much greater among women and men in Hong Kong than in the United States. In fact, men in Hong Kong express higher levels of concern on this issue than women in the United States. Men in the United States are least likely of any group to worry about the effects of long hours on their family and personal lives, holding other factors constant.

The third set of columns in Figure 1 reports these probabilities for women with young children in the three countries. Women with young children in Hong Kong worry most about the effects of long hours, whereas women with young children in the United States worry least.

Figure 2
Predicted Values on Dependent Variable for Respondents in
Each Country, With U.S. Mean Values, British Mean Values, and
Hong Kong Mean Values on the Independent Variables



In Figure 2, we show the predicted values on the dependent variable for the average respondent in each country and then depict how these values would change if the respondent had another country's mean values on the independent variables. These results underscore the role that national context plays in shaping people's concerns about the effects of long hours on their personal and family lives. For example, if respondents in each country had the same means on the independent variables as U.S. respondents, their worries about the effects of long hours on their personal and family lives would change only slightly, declining in Hong Kong from .62 to .60 and in England from .48 to .44. As the logistic regression results showed, the effects of national context are not solely because of country-level differences in job and workload characteristics or employee demographics.

Our logistic regression results failed to reveal a statistically significant difference between British respondents and those based in the United States. Figures 1 and 2 portray a slightly more nuanced picture, worth exploring more systematically in future research. For example, the comparisons in Figure 1 show that British employees—both women and men, and women with young children—represent a middle ground between the views of Hong Kong employees and those based in the United States. Figure 2 shows that if British workers had the same means on the independent variables as those in Hong Kong, including being more likely to be female and to lack a home-making spouse (Table 1), British employees' worries about the effects of long hours on their family and personal lives would increase from .48 to .65.

Discussion

In the competitive financial services industry, long work hours are common, and manifest career dedication is expected (Blair-Loy, 2003). Within this professional environment, it is not only the number of hours per se but also the employee's experience of those hours that matters for work-family conflict (cf. Berg et al., 2003; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000; Voydanoff, 1988). We focus on one dimension of work-family conflict: employees' concerns about the effect of their long work hours on those in their personal lives. We have analyzed a cross-national sample carefully constructed to be homogeneous across many aspects of professional life. By studying urban, elite workers who face the similar demands of one division, we are able to conduct a focused analysis of managers and professions in a high-commitment firm.

Our results are consistent with research that documents how specific work demands and the family caregiving responsibilities particularly upheld by women and parents exacerbate work-family conflict. We extend this research by finding that these factors similarly affect respondents' concerns about long work hours in London and in Hong Kong. Women are more likely than men to accord greater significance to the toll that work demands take on their family and personal lives. This could be because the mothers have greater responsibility for family care and because they take caregiving obligations more seriously.

This result is consistent with Rothbard's (2001) finding that women were more likely than men to feel that negative emotional responses to work demands depleted their attention to family life. These results are also in accord with arguments for the salience of ideologies of intensive motherhood and devotion to family for managerial and professional women in the United States (Blair-Loy, 2003; Hays, 1996) and norms of filial piety placing extra demands on adult daughters and daughters-in-law in Chinese societies (Zhan & Montgomery, 2003). More broadly, this finding supports the argument that notwithstanding differences in laws, policies, and social environments, a "gender contract," or set of beliefs and practices emphasizing women's family caregiving responsibilities, exists in many countries (Haas et al., 2000).

The meaning and experience of work and family are also shaped by national context. Within this urban sample of urban managers and professionals doing similar work for the same division of one company, and controlling for hours worked, job demands, family characteristics, and gender, Hong Kong-based respondents were more likely to express concern about their long work hours than their colleagues elsewhere. Our data do not allow us to determine which features of the national context—Hong Kong's insti-

tutional structures, policies, practices, and cultural values— are most responsible for this finding. But prior research on Chinese societies gives us some clues. In contrast to Western individualism, extended families are culturally valued as the cornerstone of society and identity. Intergenerational family ties are sustained through filial piety, time spent together, and transfers of care and financial support (Chan & Lee, 1995, Lan, 2002; Redding, 1990). The family does not exist in a vacuum, however; hence, we are not claiming that these are the only factors that may account for our findings. We hope future researchers will explore the broader question of how the meaning of family varies cross-nationally and the impact of these variations on work-family conflict.

Despite these qualifications, our results suggest that the family, especially the extended family, may be a greedier institution (Coser, 1974) in Hong Kong with more intense obligations than in the United States. As a high-commitment company in a competitive industry, International Finance is also a greedy institution. Not only are the cultural and institutional supports for family in Hong Kong insufficient to reduce elite respondents' feelings of work-life conflict, but intense family ties may also actually exacerbate these feelings.

At a more general level, this suggests that if families and family life should increase in importance—as a result of changing cultural values, social policies, demographic shifts, or for other reasons—work-family balance may be even harder for people to obtain and work-family conflict even greater. If the value and significance of family ties increase, people should be less content with job responsibilities that take them away from their loved ones. One task for future researchers is to investigate this general hypothesis as it may operate within, as well as across, national contexts.

We expected that British respondents would be more similar to their U.S. counterparts than those in Hong Kong. In certain respects, this expectation was met; average levels of worries about their work hours are substantially lower in England than Hong Kong, whereas British and U.S. respondents report more similar levels. At the same time, this general pattern masks some differences between British workers and those in the other two countries. British respondents would have had higher levels of these worries if their job and family characteristics, and especially their gender, had been more similar to employees in Hong Kong.

U.S.-based employees experienced significantly less concern about the effects of their long work hours on their personal and family lives than their counterparts in England and Hong Kong. In some respects, this finding seems at odds with other research on U.S. workers that has documented high levels of work-family conflict. This contradiction may be more apparent than

real, however: Concerns about the effects of long hours are likely to be increasing among managers and professionals in the United States, and this increase may help explain U.S. workers' and employers' growing preoccupation with work-family concerns. By expanding our focus to include other national contexts, however, we see that these concerns are even greater in other settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the meanings of workplace and family relationships will shape how work-family conflict is understood. There are many sources of people's expectations about what constitutes work-family balance in their lives, including family characteristics, features of the workplace, and national context. Our findings for Hong Kong suggest that the more obligations and expectations for family involvement in a society, the more conflict its members will experience when work demands are high.

As a policy matter, multinational organizations should realize that a constant set of work practices and job demands may engender different levels of work-family conflict in societies with different values and institutional arrangements regarding family. In addition, under some conditions, having organizational policies and mission statements that acknowledge the importance of family life may actually increase employees' levels of work-family conflict. This is not an argument against having such policies or mission statements; rather, it suggests that a "one size fits all" approach to work-family matters may be ill advised. Our argument also warns against organizational ideologies promoting work-family balance that are unaccompanied by changes in work processes so that more balance is possible. We anticipate that if employees' expectations about the importance of family ties increase, they will be less accepting of job demands that interfere with this value.

A limitation of this article is the relatively small sample size, which made it impossible for us to explore how national context may be moderating the effects of different factors on employees' worries about their long hours. Other limitations include our single-item dependent variable and cross-sectional design. We hope that future researchers will collect cross-national data on larger, longitudinal samples and use more complex measures of employees' emotional responses to work-family conflict. In addition, it would be useful to examine workers employed in a wider range of jobs and companies so that we could better distinguish the effects of these characteristics from the effects of national context.

We also lack data on specific features of the national context. In cross-national research on other topics, scholars have examined an array of labor

market, institutional, and cultural factors leading to outcomes such as women's employment (e.g., Brinton, Lee, & Parish, 1995; Charles, Buchman, Halebsky, Powers, & Smith, 2001; van de Lippe & van Dijk, 2002). We hope that scholars will conduct cross-national studies on work-family conflict with more detailed measures of a society's institutional structures, policies, practices, and cultural values to better understand which measures perform best across cultural contexts and which are the most salient for predicting work-family conflict. Ideally, this effort would combine ethnography with survey methods. We also hope that future research will apply these insights to other types of workers and to managerial and professional workers in a larger array of countries.

Notes

1. Although our article studies negative affect concerning the effect of work on family and personal life, we acknowledge the potential for positive spillover (Grywacz & Marks, 2000; Repetti, 1994) and enrichment (Rothbard, 2001) from work to family.

2. For further details on this data, see Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002. This reflects a 55% response rate for the work groups included in this analysis. We did extensive tests for selection bias. Within each country, we compared survey respondents to survey recipients with respect to respondent gender, supervisor gender, work group sex composition, and work group size. By these measures, our respondents look similar to the survey recipients in the division under study. The *N*s and summary statistics reported here (Table 1) vary slightly from those in the earlier article because of different missing data requirements associated with different methods.

3. Our dependent variable taps respondents' feelings about the effects of their work hours on their personal and family lives. We explored several alternative ways to create this measure, including the use of multi-item scales. Unfortunately, it was difficult to create a scale that had high reliability in all three national contexts. Given the choice between a multi-item scale with lower reliability and a single-item measure that directly captures the concept of interest, we chose the latter option.

4. We included two variables indicating the presence of children, rather than just one variable, to capture differences in the responsibilities and demands associated with caring for young children not yet in school versus those who are older and attending school. For example, young children need constant supervision, whereas school-age children require more parental time for organized after-school activities.

5. A correlation matrix is available on request. Multicollinearity is not a problem in our analyses. Most correlations are well under .3. The highest correlation is .48.

6. When observations of individuals are clustered, as they are by country in our data, traditional regression techniques produce inefficient coefficients and negatively biased standard errors (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). To examine the effects of clustering on our results, we used HLM 5.0 to create a two-level multilevel model. At the individual level, this model contained all the independent variables except country location; the country represented the group-level variable. We estimated a fixed effects, random intercept model, which enabled us to assess whether the average log odds of the dependent variable varied across the three country locations. The HLM results for the individual-level independent variables were substantially the same as the logistic regression results. The variance component for the intercept in this model was statis-

tically significant ($\chi = 12.661, p = .002$). This is consistent with the findings from the logistic regression reported in Table 2, as it shows that there remains significant country-level variation in the dependent variable, even after taking into account the effects of the individual-level measures.

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