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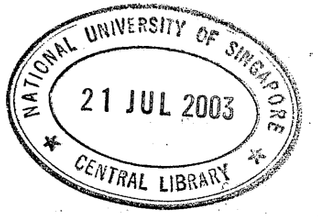
The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work

The Unexpected Community

ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD

THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF INTIMATE LIFE

Notes from Home and Work



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15 EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHY AND THE FLIGHT PLAN OF CAPITALISM

Over the last two decades, American workers have increasingly divided into a majority who work too many hours and a minority with no work at all. This split hurts families at both extremes, but I focus here on the growing scarcity of time among the long-hours majority. For many of them, a speed-up at the office and factory has marginalized life at home, so that the very term "work-family balance" seems to many a bland slogan with little bearing on real life. Drawing on my research at Amerco, a Fortune 500 company, I argue that a company's "family-friendly" policy goes only as deep as the emotional geography of the workplace and home, the drawn and redrawn boundaries between the sacred and the profane.

For about a fifth of the employees I talked to at Amerco in the early and mid 1990s, family life had become like "work" and work had become more like "home." The latest advances in corporate engineering had, for them, increased the magnetic draw of work, while strain and fracture had reduced the draw of family. I also found exceptions to this cultural reversal, variations within it, and countertendencies against it. But new "company towns" are now growing up in America modeled on this cultural reversal—towns that offer a curious form of socialism for the professionals and managers of multinational corporations and capitalism for everyone else. As they show, it is not simply individual priorities we need to balance but *whole social worlds*.

Three factors are creating the current speed-up in work and family life in the United States. (By the term "family," I refer to adults who raise children—committed unmarried couples, same-sex couples, single mothers, two-job couples, and wage-earner-housewife couples.) First of all, increasing numbers of mothers now work outside the home. As I noted in the introduction, in 1900 less than a fifth of American women worked for pay and less than 10 percent of married women did. By 2000 two-thirds of women worked for pay, and mothers outnumbered nonmothers. Indeed, over half of mothers of children one year old and younger now work for pay. Second, according to a 1999 International Labor Organization report, workers are putting in longer hours than did their counterparts a decade ago, and longer than their counterparts in Japan today (see chapter 10).[1] Third,

Americans work in jobs that generally lack flexibility, and in many, if not most, workplaces the very model of "a job" and "career" is based on the image of a traditional man whose wife cares for the children at home. Many women now work on jobs that fit this mold. Compared to the 1970s, mothers now take less time off for the birth of a child and are more likely to work through the summer. They are more likely to work continuously until they retire at age sixty-five. So they increasingly fit the profile of year-round, lifelong paid workers, a profile that has long characterized traditional men. Meanwhile, working fathers have not reduced their hours but, if anything, expanded them. So more parents are in a time bind.

Not all working parents with more free time will spend it at home being nice to children or elderly relatives, starting street theater and poetry readings, or growing organic vegetables in community gardens. But without a chance for more time at home, the issue of how to use it well or enjoy it does not arise at all.

So how are we to think about this time bind? If we explore recent writing, we can discern three stances toward it.

One is a *cool modern* stance, according to which the speed-up has become "normal," even fashionable. Decline in time at home does not "marginalize" family life, proponents say, it makes it different—maybe even better. Like many other popular self-help books addressed to the busy working mother, *The Superwoman Syndrome* (1984) by Marjorie Schaevitz offers tips on how to fend off appeals for help from neighbors, relatives, friends, and how to stop feeling guilty about one's mothering. It instructs the mother how to measure out "quality time" frugally and abandons as hopeless the project of getting men more involved at home. Such books call for no changes in the workplace, no changes in the culture, and no change in men. For the cool modern, *the solution to rationalization at work is rationalization at home.* Tacitly such books accept what others of us consider the corrosive effects of global capitalism on family life and on the very notion of what people need to be happy.

A second stance toward the work-family speed-up is *traditional* in that it calls for women's permanent return to the home, or *quasi-traditional* in that it acquiesces to a secondary role and lower-rank mommy track for women at work.[2] Those who take this stance believe that the work-family speed-up is a problem, but they deny the fact that most women now have to work, want to work, and embrace the concept of gender equity. They think of men and women as different in essential ways and add to this idea essential notions of time: "industrial" time for men and "family" time for women.[3]

Those who take a third, *warm modern* stance see the speed-up as a problem but also hold to an egalitarian ideal (at home and work). They advocate a shorter working week, such as workers enjoy in Norway and France, and company-based family-friendly policies. What are these family-friendly reforms?

- flextime: a workday with flexible starting and quitting times, but usually 40 hours of work and the opportunity to "bank" hours at one time and reclaim them later
- flexplace: home-based work, such as telecommuting
- regular or permanent part-time: less than full-time work with full or pro-rated benefits and promotional opportunities in proportion to one's skill and contribution
- job sharing: two people voluntarily sharing one job with benefits and salary pro-rated
- compressed working week: four 10-hour days with three days off, or three 12-hour days with four days off
- paid parental leave
- family obligations as a consideration in the allocation of shift work and required overtime

Potentially, a movement for shorter hours and this range of family-friendly reforms could spread work, increase worker control over hours, and create a "warm modern" world for women to be equal within. But as political goals in America over the last fifty years, work sharing and a shorter working week have "died and gone to heaven," where they live on as hopeless utopian ideals.

But are some companies offering these reforms? And if so, are they for real? And are working parents pressing for them? The good news is that more and more American companies are offering their workers family-friendly alternative work schedules. According to one 1991 study, 88 percent of 188 companies surveyed offer part-time work, 77 percent offer flextime of some sort, 48 percent offer job sharing, 35 percent offer some form of flexplace, and 20 percent offer a compressed working week.[4] The bad news is that in most companies the interested worker must seek and receive the approval of a supervisor or department head. More important still, most policies do not apply to lower-level workers whose conditions of work are covered by union contracts. So a new Faustian bargain—I'll give you family-friendly policies if you accept job insecurity—has begun to cast a pall on the whole project.

In this context, even if offered them, few workers are actually taking advantage of such policies. One study of 384 companies notes that only 9 companies reported even one father who took an official unpaid leave at the birth of his child.[5] Few are on temporary or permanent part-time. Still fewer share a job. Of workers with children ages twelve and under, only 4 percent of men and 13 percent of women worked less than 40 hours a week.[6] Among the 26,000 employees at Amerco, the average working week ranged from 45 to 55 hours. Managers and factory workers often worked 50 or 60

hours a week while clerical workers tended to work a more normal, 40-hour week. Everyone agreed the company was a "pretty workaholic place."

Why weren't workers trying to get more time off? Perhaps they shied away from applying for leaves or shortening their hours because they couldn't afford to earn less. This certainly explains why many young parents continue to work long hours. But it doesn't explain why the wealthiest workers, the managers and professionals, are among the least interested in additional time off. Even among the company's factory workers, who in 1993 averaged between $11 and $12 an hour, and who routinely competed for optional overtime, two 40-hour-a-week paychecks with no overtime work were enough, they said, to support the family. Still, that overtime looked pretty good.

Perhaps employees shied away from shorter-hour schedules because they were afraid of having their names higher on the list of workers who might be laid off in a period of economic downturn. This was not an idle fear. Through the 1980s a third of America's largest companies experienced some layoffs, though this did not happen to managers or clerical workers at Amerco. By union contract, production workers were assured that layoffs, should they occur, would be made according to seniority and not according to any other criteria—such as how many hours an employee had worked. Yet the workaholism went on. Also, employees in the most profitable sectors of the company showed no greater tendency to ask for shorter or more flexible hours for family reasons than employees in the least profitable sectors.

Is it, then, that workers who could afford shorter hours didn't *know* about the company's family-friendly policies? No. All of the 130 working parents I spoke with had heard about alternative schedules and knew where they could find out more.

Perhaps, then, managers responsible for implementing family-friendly polices were actually sabotaging them. Even though company policy allowed flexibility, a worker had to get his boss's okay. And the head of the engineering division of the company told me flatly, "My policy on flextime is that there is no flextime." Other apparently permissive division heads oversaw supervisors who were also tough on this issue. But even managers known to be cooperative had few employees asking for alternative schedules.

Workers could also ask for time off, but get it "off the books." To some extent, this indeed happened. New fathers would take a few days to a week of sick leave for the birth of a baby instead of filing for "parental leave," which they feared would mark them as unserious workers. Yet even counting informal leaves, most women managers returned to full-time 40- to 55-hour work schedules fairly soon after their six weeks of paid maternity leave. Most women secretaries returned after six months, and most women production workers returned after six weeks. Most new fathers took a few days off at most. Even "off the books," working parents were having a hard time spending much time at home.

More important than all these factors seemed to be a company speed-up in response to global competition. In the early 1990s workers each year spoke of working longer hours than they had the year before. When asked why, they explained that the company was trying to "reduce costs," in part by asking employees to do more than whatever they were doing before.

But the sheer existence of a company speed-up doesn't explain why employees weren't trying to resist it, why there wasn't much backtalk. Parents were eager to tell me how their families came first, how they were clear about that. (And national polls, too, show that next to a belief in God, Americans most strongly believe in "the family.") But practices that might express this belief—such as sharing breakfast and dinner—were shifting in the opposite direction. In the minds of many parents of young children, warm modern intentions seemed casually fused with cool modern practices. In some ways, those within the work-family speed-up didn't seem to be trying to slow down. What about their experience might be making this true?

BEHIND THE MISSING CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

In order to catch the full answer, we need to draw on a variety of perspectives in and outside the "work-family" field. The mainstream literature in the work-family field in the United States is both helpful and unhelpful. Rapidly expanding, mildly optimistic, policy-oriented, quantitative, the voluminous research by Ellen Galinsky and Dana Friedman of the Families and Work Institute provides some of the best survey data we have on workers' attitudes toward work and family life and corporate thinking and action on family-friendly reforms.[7] But this line of research doesn't question the construction of the social worlds that shape how people feel about their families, and the researchers don't dig deep into the paradoxes their own data reflect.

A second literature keeps a vigil on the deinstitutionalization of the *family* from either a declinist or an adaptationist viewpoint.[8] But by focusing on the family, this line of inquiry misses the symbiotic—even parasitic—relationship between work and family. That research which does focus on the relation of family to work is based on unquestioned assumptions about what families and workplaces feel like and mean.[9]

A third literature is devoted to "corporate culture."[10] Recent, growing, and relevant, this literature is wide-ranging and theoretically fruitful, but rarely do authors focus on work-family balance, emotional culture, or gender.[11]

Surrounding these literatures are works that help us to see the issue of work-family balance in its larger context. Highlighting as it does the small ways in which big "structures" change, Anthony Giddens's concept of "structuration" elucidates what we might call "familization," and "workization."[12] In this spirit of "liquefying" concepts, turning nouns into verbs, we may speak of ritualizing and de-ritualizing, sacralizing and de-sacralizing,

moments in family and work life. We can see the recent history of work and family life as a history of these underlying processes. At the moment, work is becoming a little more ritualized and sacred, especially for "valued workers," while the family is becoming less so. But, depending on the logic of capitalism, and on the strength of the resistance to it, rituals and a sense of the sacred can also flow the other way.

Instead of thinking of the workplace or the family as unyielding thing-like structures, Giddens suggests that we see structures as fluid and changeable. For structures to change, there must be changes in what people do and, I would add, what they feel. For structures come with—and also "are"—emotional cultures.[13] A change in structure requires a change in emotional culture. What we lack, so far, is a vocabulary for describing this culture, and what follows is a crude attempt to create one. An emotional culture is a set of rituals, beliefs about feelings, and rules governing feeling that induce emotional focus and even a sense of the "sacred." This sense of the sacred selects and favors some social bonds over others. It selects and reselects relationships into a core or periphery of family life.

Thus, families have a more or less *sacred core* of private rituals and shared meanings, which vary enormously across time and space. In some families what is most sacred is sexuality and marital communication (back rubs, pillow talk, sex), and in other families the "sacred" is reserved for parental bonds (bedtime cuddles with children, bathtime, collective meals, parental talk about children). In addition, families have secondary zones of less important daily, weekly, seasonal rituals which back up the core rituals. These rituals stand against a profane outer layer of family life in which members might describe themselves as "doing nothing in particular" (doing chores, watching television, sleeping)—the character and boundaries of the sacred and profane aspects of family life are clearly in the eye of the beholder. But a sense of what is sacred—held apart as central in importance—is strongly linked to the temporal practices that set off one activity from another.

In the context of the work-family speed-up, many people speak of actively managing, investing, and saving time in order to spend it. They also speak of guarding or defending time in order to "be" in it. In an attempt to more actively control their schedules, many working parents turned on the phone machine at dinner time, set aside cell phones, and turned off computers. So one temporal practice turned out to be turning a switch, or resisting the impulse to lift a receiver or go to the computer. And even the very way people talked about time was itself a temporal practice that did or didn't guard a sacred core of family life.

Families had different patterns of sacredness. Some had highly protected, thick cores of coordinated collective time and meager "skirts" of peripheral time in which people hung out in any old way. Other families

had porous cores barely demarcated from casual, individualized, interruptible time hanging out. In either case, when they made sacredness, they made time. In the intermediate and peripheral zones of family life, very occasionally people spoke of "having time on their hands" or "doing nothing." This was time they felt they could give up because it was free. Yet sometimes people set aside periods of "doing nothing," which themselves felt sacred. They often spoke as if they had pulled up the drawbridge to the castle, in order to "do nothing" in it. And pulling up the drawbridge was an act of devotion.

But what people devote themselves *to* has changed. As the historian John Gillis notes, it is fairly recently that the family has become a discrete private realm with a ritual life separate from that of the community.[14] But the current time bind *privatizes the family* still further. By forcing families to cut out what is least important, the speed-up thins out ties that bind it to society. So under the press of the speed-up, families may be forced to give up their peripheral ties with neighbors, Brownie troops, distant relatives, bonds that had all along been sustained by "extra" time.

Both the family and workplace are linked to supportive realms. For the family, this includes neighborhood, church, and school. For the workplace, it includes such things as the bars, restaurants, conference halls, hotels, the commuter-van friendship network. A loss of supportive structure around the family may result in a gain for the workplace, and vice versa. The rise of what Jerry Useem calls "the new company town" has brought gyms, singles clubs, breast cancer support groups, and Bible study groups—civic life itself—under the social umbrella of the workplace.[15] At the same time, over the last twenty years the number of families eating evening meals together has dropped by 10 percent.[16] Families are less likely to receive visitors at home and less likely to visit others. Even time spent talking at home has declined. In sum, as family life becomes de-ritualized, in certain sectors of the economy cultural engineers are busy adding ritual to work.

At a certain point, change in enough personal stories can be described as a change in culture, and I believe many families at Amerco were at this turning point when I interviewed them. Pulled toward work by one set of forces and propelled from the family by another set, a growing number may be unwittingly altering the twin cultures of work and family.[17] As the cultural shield surrounding work has grown stronger, the supportive cultural shield surrounding the family has weakened. These twin processes—one going on at home and another at work—apply unevenly across the social-class spectrum. The pull toward work is stronger at the top of the occupational ladder, and the marginalization of family life is more pronounced at the bottom. Indeed, the picture I am drawing is one within a *wide array* of work and family "structurations" resulting from various combinations of social forces.

While this "reversal" of home and work did not simply happen *to* the people I interviewed, it would be a big mistake to see it as something they chose or wished for. Most workers in this and other studies say they *value* family life above everything else. Work is what they do. Family is why they live. So, I believe the logic I am describing proceeds despite and not because of the powerful intentions and deepest wishes of those in its grip.

When I entered the field, I assumed that working parents would want more time at home. I imagined that they experienced home as a place where they could relax, feel emotionally sheltered and appreciated for who they "really are." I imagined home to feel to the weary worker like the place where he or she could take off a uniform, put on a bathrobe, have a beer, exhale—a picture summed up in the image of the worker coming in the door saying, "Hi, honey, I'm home!" To be sure, home life has its emergencies and strains, but I imagined that home was the place people thought about when they thought about rest, safety, and appreciation. Given this, they would want to maximize time at home. I also assumed that these working parents, especially those who were low-paid factory or service workers, would not feel particularly relaxed, safe, or appreciated at work, at least not more so than at home.

When I interviewed workers at the company, however, a picture emerged that partly belied this model of family life. For example, one thirty-year-old factory shift supervisor, a remarried mother of two, described her return home after work in this way:

> I walk in the door and the minute I turn the key in the lock my oldest daughter is there. Granted she needs somebody to talk to about her day. The baby is still up . . . she should have been in bed two hours ago and that upsets me. The oldest comes right up to the door and complains about anything her father said or did during the evening. She talks about her job. My husband is in the other room hollering to my daughter, "Tracy, I don't ever get no time to talk to your mother because you're always monopolizing her time first before I even get a chance!" They all come at me at once.

The unarbitrated quarrels, the dirty dishes, and the urgency of other people's demands she finds at home contrast with her account of going to work:

> I usually come to work early just to get away from the house. I got to be there at a quarter after the hour, and people are there waiting. We sit. We talk. We joke. I let them know what is going on, who has to be where, what changes I have made for the shift that day. We sit there and chit-chat for five or ten minutes. There is laughing. There is joking. There is fun. They aren't putting me down for any reason. Everything is done in humor and fun from beginning to end. It can get stressful, though, when a machine malfunctions and you can't get the production out.

Another thirty-eight-year-old working mother of two, also a factory worker, had this to say:

> My husband is a great help [with caring for their son]. But as far as doing housework, or even taking the baby when I'm at home, no. When I'm home, our son becomes my job. He figures he works five days a week, he's not going to come home and clean. But he doesn't stop to think that I work seven days a week. . . . Why should I have to come home and do the housework without help from anybody else? My husband and I have been through this over and over again. Even if he would pack up the kitchen table and stack the dishes for me when I'm at work, that would make a big difference. He does nothing. On his weekends off, I have to provide a sitter for the baby so he can go fishing. When I have my day off, I have the baby all day long. He'll help out if I'm not here . . . the minute I'm here he lets me do the work.

To this working mother, her family was not a haven, a zone of relief and relaxation. It was a workplace. More than that, she could get relief from this domestic workplace only by going to the factory. As she continued: "I take a lot of overtime. The more I get out of the house, the better I am. It's a terrible thing to say, but that's the way I feel!"

I assumed that work would feel to workers like a place in which one could be fired at the whim of a profit-hungry employer, while in the family, for all its hassles, one was safe. Based as it is on the impersonal mechanism of supply and demand, profit and loss, work would feel insecure, like being in a jungle. In fact, a good number of workers I interviewed had worked for the company for twenty years or more, whereas they were on their second or third marriages. To these employed, *work* was their rock, their major source of security. They were getting their pink slips at home.

To be sure, almost all the workers I spoke to *wanted* to base their sense of stability at home, and many did. But I was also struck by the loyalty many felt toward the company and a loyalty *they felt* coming *from* it despite what might seem like evidence to the contrary—the speed-up, the restructuring, the layoffs at other companies. Even at Amerco in the early 1990s, if one division of the company was doing poorly, the company might "de-hire" workers within that division and rehire them in a more prosperous division. This happened to one female engineer, very much upsetting her, but her response to it was telling:

> I have done very well in the company for twelve years, and I thought my boss thought very highly of me. He'd said as much. So when our division went down and several of us were de-hired, we were told to look for another position within the company *or* outside. I thought, "Oh my God, *outside!*" I was stunned! Later, in the new division it was like a remarriage . . . I wondered if I could love again.

Work was not always "there for you," but increasingly home, as they had known it, wasn't either. As one woman recounted, "One day my husband came home and told me, 'I've fallen in love with a woman at work . . . I want a divorce.'"

Finally, the model of family-as-haven led me to assume that the individual would feel most known and appreciated at home and least so at work. Work might be where they felt unappreciated, "a cog in the machine"—an image brought to mind by the classic Charlie Chaplin film on factory life, *Modern Times*. But the factory is no longer the archetypical workplace and, sadly, many workers felt more appreciated for what they were doing at work than for what they were doing at home. For example, when I asked one forty-year-old technician whether he felt more appreciated at home or at work, he put it this way:

> I love my family. I put my family first . . . but I'm not sure I feel more appreciated by them [laughs]. My fourteen-year-old son doesn't talk too much to anyone when he gets home from school. He's a brooder. I don't know how good I've been as a father . . . we fix cars together on Saturday. My wife works opposite shifts to what I work, so we don't see each other except on weekends. We need more time together—need to get out to the lake more. I don't know . . .

This worker seemed to feel better about his skill repairing machines in the factory than his way of relating to his son. This is not as unusual as it might seem. In a large-scale study, Arthur Emlen found that 59 percent of employees rated their family performance "good or unusually good" while 86 percent gave a similar rating to their performance on the job.[18]

This overall cultural shift may be part of the reason many workers are going along with the work-family speed-up and not resisting it. A nationally representative study of 3,400 workers conducted in 1993 by the Families and Work Institute reflects two quite contradictory findings. On one hand, the study reports that 80 percent of workers felt their jobs required "working very hard" and 42 percent "often [felt] used up by the end of the work day." On the other hand, when workers were asked to compare how much time and energy they *actually* devoted to their family, their job or career, and themselves, with how much time they would have *liked* to devote to each, there was little difference. Workers estimated that they actually spent 43 percent of their time and energy on family and friends, 37 percent on job or career, and 20 percent on themselves. But they *wanted* to spend just about what they *were* spending—47 percent on family and friends, 30 percent on the job, and 23 percent on themselves.[19] Of the workers I talked to, about a fifth fit the pattern of reversed worlds, while for a substantial number of the rest it was a mild theme, and it may be a theme in the lives of other workers as well.

Three sets of factors seem to exacerbate this reversal of family and work cultures: trends in the family, trends at work, and a growing consumerism that reinforces trends in both. First, half of marriages in America end in divorce—the highest rate in the world. The high divorce rate may be due, in part, to the absence of policies that could buffer marriage against the

rough edges of capitalism (job retraining in the face of an erratic demand for labor, for example). Partly it may be due to cultural shifts that lessen people's need for marriage and reduce restraints against divorce.

New in scope, too, are the numbers of working wives who work "two shifts," one at home and one at work, and face their husband's resistance to helping fully with the load at home—a strain that often leaves both spouses feeling unappreciated.[20] This, too, is a strain behind many divorces. Those in strained marriages often find a large pool of divorced people eligible for remarriage—itself a result of a high divorce rate. And after remarriage, associations with ex-spouses and new stepchildren raise special challenges for which not all parents are prepared, a likely factor behind the high divorce rate among those who remarry.

Meanwhile, another set of factors is affecting life at work. Many corporations have engineered, for top and upper-middle managers, and to a lesser extent staff, a world of friendly ritual and positive reinforcement. The company I studied, Amerco, had adopted a program called Total Quality. At the cost of several million dollars, it put all its employees, top to bottom, through a two-day Total Quality training program. In various divisions, workers were divided into teams that met regularly to discuss ways of improving productivity and creating strong team spirit. Indeed, the regular meetings of high-production teams became a widespread company rite, creating a Durkheimian solidarity at work that was sometimes missing at home. Meanwhile, the CEO issued a series of edicts such as "Amerco Values the Internal Customer," which, in everyday parlance, means that all employees should treat other employees as nicely as they try to treat customers. These edicts were designed to improve social relations in the company and were bandied about and discussed with public solemnity. Human relations employees gave seminars on human problems at work. High-production teams, based on cooperation between relative equals who manage themselves, tended to foster intense relations at work. The company frequently held ceremonies to give out awards for outstanding work. Halls were hung with new plaques praising one or another worker on recent accomplishments. Recognition luncheons, department gatherings, and informal birthday remembrances were common. Career planning sessions with one's supervisor and team meetings to talk over "modeling, work relations, and mentoring" with co-workers verged on, even as they borrowed from, psychotherapy. Sometimes Amerco workers attended more employee-of-the-month gatherings at work than birthday or other parties at home. Some married workers who eschewed wearing a wedding ring proudly sported a company pin on their lapels. For all its aggravation and tensions, the workplace was where quite a few workers felt appreciated and honored, and where they had real friends. By contrast, at home there were fewer "award ceremonies" and often a dearth of helpful feedback about mistakes.

In addition, courtship and mate selection, earlier more or less confined to the home-based community, may be moving into the sphere of work. The later age for marriage, the higher proportion of unmarried people, and the high divorce rate all create an ever-replenishing courtship pool at work. The gender desegregation of the workplace and the lengthened working day also provide opportunity for people to meet and develop romantic or quasi-romantic ties. At the factory, romance may develop in the lunchroom, pub, or parking lot; and for upper-management levels, at conferences, in "fantasy settings" in upscale hotels and dimly lit restaurants.[21]

So what felt like home and what felt like work? When I asked Amerco employees where they felt they were the most competent, at work or at home, they frequently answered, "At work." When I asked them where they felt the most relaxed, at work or at home, they often replied, "At work." When I asked them where they felt they could express who they really were, answers were mixed, but a good number said, "At work." When I asked them where they felt secure, most replied, "Home," although for some their multiple marriages told a different story. All in all, about a fifth of the Amerco employees described work as the "haven" and home as—if not a heartless world—a lesser haven.

Capitalism is the most important economic force in the world today, and it affects whatever it touches. But in all its social engineering, modern American capitalism is revealing itself to be not simply an economic but a *cultural* system as well. In almost all its incarnations, capitalism presents a challenge to local cultures, including the local culture of families. Like tribal cultures trampled by globalization, family cultures within the First World can find it hard to compete with the centrifugal force of the work cultures capitalism sets up. What Wal-Mart does to mom-and-pop stores, companies like Amerco do to the family lives of workers.

There is a gender pattern here: in a previous era, an undetermined number of men escaped the house for the pub, the fishing hole, and often the office. One might see—to quote from the title of an article by Jean Duncombe and Dennis Marsden—"workaholic men" and "whining women."[22] Now that women compose nearly half of the American labor force, some families are composed of workaholic parents and whining children.

Forces pulling workers out of family life and into the workplace are set into perpetual motion by consumerism. Consumerism acts to *maintain* the emotional reversal of work and family. Exposed to a continual bombardment of advertisements through a daily average of three hours of television (half of all their leisure time), workers are persuaded to "need" more things. To buy what they now need, they need money. To earn money, they work longer hours. Being away from home so many hours, they make up for their absence at home with gifts that cost money. They materialize love. And so the cycle continues.[23]

Once work begins to become a more compelling arena of appreciation than home, a self-fulfilling prophecy takes hold. For, if workers flee into work from the tensions at home, tensions at home can grow worse. The worse the tensions at home, the firmer the grip the workplace has on what workers have come to need.

So, for some people work had come to feel like family, and family more like work. But this is one of five models of work and family realized in various parts of the economic landscape. At the top of the class ladder we're likely to find a traditional model in which home and work each exhibit gender-specific pulls—work for men, home for women. This old-style model seems to be giving way increasingly to a modified traditional pattern in which women do part-time work and men full-time work. Lower down, we find the haven model, in which work is a heartless world and the family still a haven—many factory hands and other blue-collar workers fit this model, and the growth of low-wage minimum-security jobs may lead to more families of this type. Among dual-career couples in professional and managerial jobs, we find strong traces of the work-as-home and home-as-work model. At the bottom of the social ladder, we find the "double-negative" model, according to which neither a kin network nor work associates provide emotional anchors for the individual but rather a gang, fellow drinkers on the corner, or other groups of this sort. Throughout—perhaps as much due to luck as to planning and circumstance—we find that miraculous model, the dual-income couple with the yearned-for balance between home and work.

Which model of family and work comes to prevail depends in part on the power of external pressures bearing on both family and economy. One trend in the American economy today is toward cultural consolidation of life around work, to make the workplace into a little town and meet all needs there. Covertly it presses people into the model of reversed worlds.

Corporate cultural engineers have thus elaborated on the Amerco model by adding to their companies many goods and services of the mall and the lively civic culture of small-town America. Such "new company towns," as Jerry Useem calls them, provide a "one-stop" life.[24] A person can get almost everything he or she needs at the workplace. Companies in this way recruit and retain highly skilled workers in a period of low unemployment. They elaborate the pattern of work-as-home but perhaps reduce the feeling that home is work by outsourcing many tasks formerly done at home. By the same token such companies seem both to absorb home life into work and to reduce the extent to which home is a separate sphere of life.

In an article in *Fortune* magazine, Useem describes companies that offer an on-site bank, store, dry cleaner, hairdresser, and nail salon. Forty-six of *Fortune*'s "100 Best Companies to Work For," he notes, offer take-home meals. Twenty-six offer personal concierge services through which workers can hire someone to arrange delivery of that special bouquet, chose birthday gifts, or plan a child's bar mitzvah. A number of companies have dating services, and indeed a 1999 study by Roper Starch Worldwide found that 38 percent of employees surveyed reported having dated a co-worker.[25]

Companies are adding the kind of civic community that Robert Putnam claims in his book *Bowling Alone* has faded from American society.[26] Lands' End, a mail-order clothing company, and Amgen, a biotech firm, have developed employee clubs for "chess, genealogy, gardening, model airplanes, public speaking, tennis, karate, scuba diving and charity"—many activities we normally imagine belong with community or family life. SAS Institute, a software company in Cary, North Carolina, has a breast cancer support group, a single parents group, an international club that monthly prepares foods from its members' native lands, and a singles group called Mingle. In about a thousand companies nationwide, the Fellowship of Companies for Christ International offers on-site Bible study groups.

Such companies are not yet typical of American workplaces, but they point to an important corporate strategy for accomplishing two goals—retaining valued workers when valued workers are hard to get, and keeping them at work for long hours. How do you keep your talented workers happy? Solve one of their biggest problems—work-family balance. The Faustian bargain between company and worker seems to be this: "We'll bring civic life to you at work. You work long hours." As for balance, Useem notes, the chief of human resources at BMC, a software company in Houston, says, "I know this is hard to believe, but you feel like you can get away while you're here. [The office] gives you a balanced life without having to leave."[27] But this idea of balance leaves out Junior and Grandma, not to mention all the civic activities for which Alexis de Tocqueville once praised America. And the basis for BMC "balance" is only as firm as last quarter's profit margin.

The "new company towns" also carry the model of work as home and home as work in the unlikely direction of old-time socialism. In such companies as BMC, Lands' End, or SAS Institute, one authority sets out to meet all the needs of the people under its governance. Such company towns would seem to subtract much of the tough entrepreneurial struggle from daily life. There would even appear to be some gesture in the direction of living a well-balanced and unalienated life as Marx envisioned it under socialism. A person could be a fisher in the morning, a farmer in the afternoon, and a philosopher in the evening. Only, at BMC, the fish and produce would need to benefit the company.

Yet if such companies offer the old *socialist utopia* to an *elite* of knowledge workers in the top tier of an increasingly divided labor market, other companies may increasingly be offering the *worst of early capitalism* to *semiskilled* and *unskilled workers*. With the development of the two-tiered economy over the last twenty years, the bottom tier endures lower wages, less job security,

and certainly less in the way of "home" at work. So jobs in garment industries or fast food or retail work would seem to reflect the aspect of capitalism of which Marx was most critical—take the work, ignore the worker.

Perhaps we are seeing signs of a pattern that will gradually become clear in the years ahead—socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor.[28] Only there is a further paradox. The socialism of these new company towns is confined to "gated" workplaces—parallel to the gated communities in which many elite employees live. In the workplaces of the poor, the capitalist ethos of competitive individualism prevails, open to everyone, come one, come all. At the top, the company invests a lot in keeping the worker happy; at the bottom, the company invests very little. At the top, the worker may need to go to work to find entertainment, a sense of civic participation, even affection (those hugging seminars). At the bottom, many workers miss out on all those things. For if, as Robert Putnam argues in *Bowling Alone*, civic life in America has experienced a serious decline, workers without access to new company towns will be lacking civic participation as well.[29]

But for workers at the top and bottom alike, people will increasingly be required to work in order to be citizens. Neither the government (after the 1996 welfare reform) nor the family (with little paid parental leave, few good part-time jobs or job-shares, and most moms at work) will support people who "just" provide care.

In the end, work is a great part of human life. Thorstein Veblen once wrote lyrically about an "instinct" for workmanship, a love of craft that enhances our experience of being alive. Veblen was right. But writing a hundred years ago, it was hard for him to foresee a modern workplace that borrows a cultural sense of family and community from "real" families and communities so as to keep workers at the office. So he didn't explore what can happen when workers themselves come to want to do what companies want them to do—and when that may mean ten hours a day at the office. We need to add to Veblen's celebration of work a notion of work-life balance and to consider the balance not just between this and that part of a person's day, but a balance between this and that social world. Each pattern of work and family life is to be seen somewhere in the flight plan of late capitalism. For capitalist competition is not simply a matter of market expansion around the globe, but of local geographies of emotion at home. The challenge, as I see it, is to understand the close links between economic trends, emotional geographies, and pockets of cultural resistance. For it is in those pockets that we can look for "warm modern" answers.

16 THE CULTURE OF POLITICS

Traditional, Postmodern, Cold Modern, and Warm Modern Ideals of Care

Among the visual images of care in the modern Western world, a classic view portrays a mother holding a child. Frequently, the mother is seated in a chair at home or in a dreamlike setting, such as her garden. Often found on old-fashioned birthday cards and in ads for yarn in women's magazines, the image is a secular, middle-class version of Madonna and Child. The caregiver in these images is a woman, not a man. She is at home, not in a public place. Moreover, the caregiving seems natural, effortless. She is sitting, quiescent, not standing or moving—stances associated with "working." She seems to enjoy caring for the child, and as the child's face often suggests, she is good at caring. Thus, the image of care is linked with things feminine, private, natural, and well functioning, and evokes an ideal of care.

Drawn from nineteenth-century upper-middle-class parlor life, this image has been put to extensive commercial use. Corporate advertisers often juxtapose the mother-and-child image with such products as health insurance, telephone service, Band-Aids, diapers, talcum powder, and a wide variety of foods.[1] Our constant exposure to the commercial image of mother puts us at one remove from it. In a parallel way, the very term "care" in America suffers from commercial overuse, associated as it is with orange juice, milk, frozen pizza, and microwave ovens. Thus, both the image and word for care have come to seem not only feminine, private, and natural but emotionally void, bland, dull, even sappy.

In the small but growing feminist literature on care, scholars have begun to challenge the silence on the issue in much conventional social theory. Such writers as Trudy Knijn, Clare Ungerson, Kari Waerness, and Joan Tronto note that care is more central in the lives of women than men, since it is more often women who care for children, the sick, and the elderly. While early feminist scholarship focused on the exploitative nature of women's traditional roles, recent feminist writers, as Kari Waerness puts it, "have struggled to redefine the possible grounds of feminist theory." The quest for new "cultural grounds" coincides with a dilemma that many modern women face. Waerness notes, "Women . . . are faced both with the task of caring for children, the ill, the disabled, and the elderly in the private