Relational Identities

Middle Class Indian Women Negotiate the Consequences of Globalization and Late Modernity

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For my grandparents
with all my love and gratitude...

Abstract

Economic liberalization in India is said to have commenced with the economic reforms of 1991 following which a number of transnational companies became well established in the country. The mid and late 1990s saw several economic and cultural changes in urban India. Culturally, there was an increase in consumerism with the entry of several global brands in comestibles, cars, white goods and apparel and increased availability of credit, while satellite television and privatization of the media brought contemporary Western lifestyles and values directly into Indian homes. At an economic level there was a visible increase in the job opportunities in the private sector, particularly in the transnational Information Technology (IT) industry. Since the mid-nineties an increasing number of middle class women have joined the IT workforce, gaining access to incomes and lifestyles that their mothers had rarely imagined. This thesis investigates how contemporary Indian women employed in the transnational IT industry understand their experiences of these changes, concentrating on two sites of change: urban middle class families and transnational workplaces. It examines what women's understandings of these changes may indicate about their sense of self. Through qualitative research conducted amongst women aged between 24 and 37 years in Bangalore, the birthplace of India's IT industry, the research explores how women attempt to negotiate the notions of individualism and collectivism that create contradictory expectations in the home and the workplace. It raises questions about the contradiction between the notion of work-life balance and the intensification of work in the knowledge economy. In this manner, it attempts to critique the late modernity thesis, interrogating Giddens's (1991) notion of the self as a reflexive project. By foregrounding the experiences and perspectives of middle class women, it aims to add a new dimension to contemporary scholarship on the Indian middle classes.

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[1] Hochschild, 1997:199
[2] Hochschild, 1989

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Author's Declaration

I certify that this thesis is solely my own work and that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted for another degree or professional qualification.

Introduction

A Story that Insists on Being Told?

2002: 'It's easy for us women, we have the choice to work if we want to and give up our careers if we want ...we really can't complain,' observed a friend who works with a multinational information technology company in Bangalore. Her remark reminded me that as middle class, urban, educated women in 'globalized India' we had a wider range of career options, greater financial independence and theoretically more control over our lives than our mothers and grandmothers had experienced or even aspired to. Women of my generation, class and social background had benefited from the tremendous increase in job opportunities and cultural changes that followed economic liberalization in the early 1990s. Yet as women we are not *obliged* to work, or so my friend was arguing. Since our culture does not position us as breadwinners, we can give up our careers if we wish to; we have a choice.

2003: The same friend had recently returned to work after four months' maternity leave. She spoke eloquently of the difficulties she was encountering at the workplace, the way her colleagues viewed her new position as a 'working mother' and her guilt about leaving her child in the care of her mother-in-law and domestic maid. The support of her mother-in-law and her husband's involvement in childcare did not mitigate her guilt about continuing in fulltime employment. 'One evening I returned home frustrated that I hadn't completed all the work that I wanted to because I was rushing back to nurse the baby. Yet when I saw him, I wondered why I was working in the first place; he is the one that needs me, not the company,' she said. Although she was well supported by her family and worked in a company that is known for its flexible policies for young mothers, her choice to continue in fulltime work did not seem as unproblematic as her remark a year earlier had indicated.

These contradictory statements are not isolated. I heard them very often. Nearly all my women friends who had been married for a few years wanted to have children and were expected to do so by their families. However, they agonised over the 'right' time to have a child, arguing that it would impact negatively on their careers. They spoke of the decision as if they were making a choice between various 'injustices': 'injustice to my child', 'injustice to my mother/ mother-in-law (who would have to provide substitute care), 'injustice to myself, after all I've worked hard to develop my skills' and 'injustice to my parents who invested in my education'.

My colleague Neha[3] and I often shared an auto-rickshaw while travelling back home from the school where we worked. In the inevitable traffic jams, Neha would often sit forward, tense and rigid, muttering about being late and incurring the anger of her mother-in-law who looked after her son while she was at work. Another colleague, Sandhya, who worked part-time to fulfil her maternal and domestic responsibilities felt guilty about leaving the breadwinning responsibility to her husband. 'Being a woman doesn't absolve me of financial responsibilities', she argued.[4] It seemed that women faced criticism for their choices irrespective of what those choices were, that this criticism came not only from others but from an internal voice as well.

It was not just married women and mothers who were torn between their professional and personal lives. Kavya who was (then) single disclosed regretfully that she turned down the offer of a year's secondment overseas for fear that it would delay her marriage: 'I'm still not married; I wish I had accepted the offer to go to London two years ago.' Like many other young middle class women of her generation Kavya had been brought up to value academic and

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[3] All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.
[4] In a sense my colleague verbalized my own guilt over choosing a poorly remunerated profession (teaching) for personal reasons and thereby not contributing as much to my family's income as female friends and relatives employed in well paid jobs in information technology companies did for their families. I recalled the self-doubt and guilt I experienced when my brother casually remarked that I was 'over qualified' for my job as a teacher and was wasting my education and talents.

professional success: she had been admonished for poor grades, praised for good ones; her parents had worried over college admissions, been concerned over her finding a job. Now her single status seemed to be taking precedence over all her professional goals and achievements.

Many of my female friends and relatives who were single were under tremendous pressure to marry (as I had been). Through protracted arguments with our parents following each proposal of marriage that we refused, we found that while we were not averse to arranged marriages, our understanding of compatibility in marriage was somewhat different from that of the older generation. Our parents, themselves under pressure from relatives and well-wishers to carry out their duty of *settling their daughters*, seemed shocked that we put up so much resistance.[5] Unlike their own parents they were consulting us, encouraging us to meet potential bridegrooms (sometimes 'unchaperoned'!) and giving us a degree of choice in the matter that would have been unthinkable in their day. Surely it was our duty to respect the freedom that we were granted and give in.

And 'give-in' we did, either from exhaustion or on being introduced to partners suitable to both our parents and ourselves. The tensions in the home disappeared. No longer pressurized by the probing questions of relatives, our parents could enjoy the prospect of shortly accomplishing their highest religious duty: the *kanyādāna* (the 'gift of a virgin'- see Madan, 1993:302). In the weeks before the wedding we were lavished with care and affection; our trousseaus and dowries were lovingly selected before we were handed over with pride and a touch of sadness to suitable grooms.

Those who opted out of arranged marriages and chose their own partners found their choices subjected to the strictest scrutiny by parents and the extended family before approval was granted. And this approval was assiduously courted by the young people concerned. Clearly opting out of arranged marriages (one of

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[5] The terms in italics are in Indian English.

the crucial adhesives of the kinship system in India) does not mean opting out of the kinship network per se. It became increasingly apparent to me that 'the choice to work' and the 'choice to marry' are not always experienced as choices if choice implies freedom from constraint. To varying degrees Indian middle class women seem ambivalent about the choices available to them. To some extent this ambivalence is reflected in the popular press, but its discourse is largely celebratory.

The press seems intent on celebrating the advent of the 'new Indian woman' (Thapan, 2004) on the world stage. An ambitious and competent professional, a loving mother, a discerning consumer and an equal partner to her husband, she is adept at multitasking and knows her own mind – see the following articles from popular English language newspapers and magazines: BusinessWeek (2005) 'India's New Worldly Women'; Alexander (2007) 'Women on Top'; Bhagat (2007) 'The Changing Indian Woman'. However, she carries an innate sense of 'Indianess' and an essential traditionalism (Thapan, 2004).[6] On the basis of an opinion poll carried out amongst 1068 women across ten Indian cities, the popular news magazine Outlook claims that even the most liberated of Indian women 'carries a strong sense of family values', that in her mind 'sexual liberation lives in neighbourly comfort with traditional virtues'(Deb, 2003:3). A few articles in the press do discuss the collision of personal and professional priorities (Dyuti, 1998; Padmanabhan, 2008) or the changing marital aspirations of middle class women (Sengupta, 2007); their message seems to be that women's mindsets have changed but that they are still constrained by the culture that has is changing at a slower pace. But with the exception of Dyuti's (1998) which extensively quotes sociologist Neera Desai to explain how women 'shackle ambition' in favour of family responsibilities, these articles do not reflect the internal conflict that women express in day-to-day conversations.

On the premise that articles in the press can at best offer a limited analysis of a social phenomenon, I turned to more scholarly discussions of globalization in

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[6] Thapan identifies this discourse in the popular Indian women's magazine *Femina.*

India and its impact on the middle class. I found that globalization and modernity are hotly debated topics in India: see Ahmad and Reifeld (2003), Das (2000), Deshpande (2003), Favero (2005), Gupta (2000) Singh (2002), Varma (1998)[7]. All these writers discuss the impact of economic liberalization and globalization on the middle class but with the exception of Gupta (2000) and Poggendorf-Kakar (in Ahmad and Reifeld, eds., 2001) make only a passing reference to middle class women.

Not finding an adequate academic analysis of middle class women's negotiation of globalization and cultural change I decided to undertake primary research on the subject. The aim of my research was two-fold: firstly, I wished to examine how contemporary middle class, urban, educated India women experience and negotiate the consequences of globalization and late modernity; secondly, I wanted to gain an understanding of the self-identities that middle class women create within the continuities and changes that globalization brings with it. I decided to undertake qualitative research so that I could access the lived-reality of women's experiences. At first I naively expected that my research would reveal unambiguous answers to my questions but a reading of feminist research methodology (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Letherby, 2003) began to indicate to me the difficult relationship between knowledge and reality. I began to accept the idea that my in-depth interviews and focus groups would only give me access to an understanding, and not necessarily the only possible understanding, of women's lived realities. In this light my research questions changed to: How do contemporary middle class urban Indian women understand the consequences of globalization and late modernity in their families and in their workplace? How do they negotiate the conditions created by

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[7] Amongst these writers Ahmad and Reifeld (2001): Middle Class Values in India and Western Europe, Deshpande, S. (2003) Contemporary India, Favero, P. (2005) Indian Dreams: Cultural Identity Amongst Young Middle Class Men In New Delhi and Singh (2002) Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalization are more academic while Das, G. (2000) India Unbounded and Varma, P, (1998) The Great Indian Middle Class are more polemical and intended for a wider audience. Gupta (2000) Mistaken Modernity: India between Two Worlds is written by a practicing sociologist for a non-academic audience.

globalization? What might women's understanding of their experiences in contemporary globalized India indicate about their sense of self?

I decided to limit the investigation to women employed in the IT/ITES (Information Technology/ Information Technology Enabled Services)[8] industry. This industry is seen to be responsible for putting India on the global map (see the section on Bangalore's IT industry in Chapter 3). Moreover, it is known for its 'progressive' policies with respect to women and for its commitment to increasing the number of women in its work force. In the three years since I began my PhD research these initiatives seem to have increased. Several large companies have a highly publicised programmes and policies aimed at recruiting and retaining women, preventing harassment and supporting work-life balance. NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies), the industry's trade body holds 'Leadership Summits' for women addressing issues such as the glass ceiling and the importance of networking and best practices with regard to women employees.[9] In the early stages of my research one woman employed in IT suggested that I was unlikely to find much fodder for a feminist thesis in this industry since it was so progressive. I replied that I wanted to find out what women who supposedly had it so good made of their situation. After all, several stories of ambivalence about career/ personal choices that I mentioned earlier came from women employed in the IT industry.

Having chosen to investigate the experiences of women in the information technology industry, I decided to undertake fieldwork in my hometown, Bangalore, the birthplace of India's information technology industry. Previously nicknamed a 'pensioner's paradise' (due to its quiet, slow pace of life) Bangalore is now called 'India's silicon valley'. The city's skyline had changed under my very eyes. How proudly we showed visitors in the 1970s and 80s our one and only skyscraper 'Public Utility Building' with its 25 floors! Today Bangalore's

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[8] For the sake of convenience I refer to the industry as the IT industry although my research encompasses both.
[9] See NASSCOM (2007b)

skyline has several tall glass-fronted buildings dotted with the names such as IBM, Dell, Microsoft, Intel and Hewlett Packard.[10] The prosperity of the information technology workforce is evident in the rising price of real estate, the various brands of Indian and foreign cars that compete for space on the roads and the apartment complexes that have sprung up across the city. The modernist buildings which house the offices of IT companies, the shopping malls and multiplexes, restaurants and pubs are said to indicate the city's development. The traffic jams, the slums and shanty towns that flank the city's numerous technology parks and the unscheduled power cuts speak of a different story. These contradictions, though outside the direct scope of my thesis, form the backdrop against which employed women negotiate their daily lives: the cheap labour provided by the poor, the long, unpredictable commutes to and from the office and the unreliability of public services which interfere with the 'Taylorised' time schedules (Hochschild, 1997) through which they attempt to organise their lives.

When I shared my PhD proposal with academic colleagues in India, I received mixed reactions. While some were encouraging and enthusiastic offering advice and criticism, others questioned the very subject of my research. Why did I wish to study such a privileged category? What could I hope to learn or contribute to scholarship? Surely if globalization and gender were my interests I could undertake research on the effect of globalization on women who were exploited by transnational companies, garment workers who were employed under casual piece rate contracts for instance? I replied that my first attempt at feminist research needed to help me develop my feminist ideas on a subject that had personal significance for me and therefore located in my home, Bangalore. I argued that the topic had chosen me rather than the other way around, that the story I am telling insists on being told, that my experiences and those of the women around me raise questions that demand answers. I do not know if my reasons convinced them but their scepticism raised an important question. I was

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[10] Other manufacturing and service industries such as biotechnology, banking, FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) industries have also developed in the city, but its name is still closely connected with the IT (Information Technology) and more recently the business process outsourcing (IT Enabled Services: ITES) industries.

undertaking an expensive exercise, leaving home and family for three years, fulfilling a dream that a miniscule number of Indian women could aspire to. I felt that it was my duty to use my time in a meaningful research project. Could a study of urban middle class English speaking women be considered a contribution to scholarship? The answer to my question has evolved through my PhD experience although the sense of guilt and ambivalence over focussing on the privileged remains, as perhaps it would for many Indian sociologists, feminist or otherwise.

Looking At the Indian Middle Class

My search for academic discussion around the middle class mentioned earlier had yielded a fairly small number of books and articles. As I reflected on the reasons behind this I began to realise that I could not recall attending a single lecture on the Indian middle class in five years of studying Sociology at the undergraduate and master's levels in India. While this may be attributed to a bad memory (I completed my MA over ten years ago), I had umpteen recollections of stimulating discussions around caste, gender, sanskritization, subjects that are highly relevant to a sociological understanding of contemporary India. In contrast, the middle class, which is frequently discussed in everyday conversation and in the popular press, does not seem to have received much sociological attention. Deshpande attributes the reluctance to study the middle class to the notion that it is seems an '"unworthy" or self-indulgent [subject] for a generation of social scientists drawn from this class, who believed that their mandate was to act on behalf of "the people" who constituted the nation (2000: 128).' [11]

However, the academic scene in the new millennium is different from the mid-nineteen-nineties when I completed my MA. Scholarship on the Indian middle classes has grown (see Fernandes, 2004; Deshpande 2003; Gupta, 2000;

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[11] Interestingly, I have heard senior academics in Britain also mention that their own undergraduate Sociology education tended to be focussed more on the working class and used the middle class more as a point of comparison, indicating that in both countries the discipline has a history of being engaged with the social underdog.

Favero, 2005). Even in the past three years since I began my thesis academic interest in the information technology work force has increased (see Upadhya and Vasai, 2006; Upadhaya, 2007; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Krishna and Brihmadesam, 2006). This, to my mind, is a positive trend. Academics are beginning to engage meaningfully with the facts and fallacies of the burgeoning popular and corporate discourse on the Indian middle class. It is vital that this trend grows, that we hold a mirror to ourselves by undertaking ethnographic research on this small but growing and highly influential section of India's population (see the next section for statistics on the Indian middle class). The story does need to be told and to be researched, debated and unpacked.

On reading Varma's (1998) 'Great Indian Middle Class' and Gupta's (2000) 'Mistaken Modernity' I found their critiques of the middle class pertinent and useful. Gupta's idea of 'westoxification' (a term he attributes to the Iranian intellectual Jalal-e-Ahmed) expressively describes the preoccupation with electronic gadgetry, foreign brands and other trappings that is visible in metropolitan India today. His argument that the middle class continues to follow many traditional practices and that its privilege is based on several tradition and inegalitarian structures is compelling. Having 'cut my academic teeth' through an M.A in Sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, a campus known for its leftist politics, it is not difficult for me to identify with this position. However, these books also left me with a vague sense of discomfort that I could not quite articulate until I read Favero's (2005:134) argument that 'a lack of self-reflexivity and middle class self-identification unites the authors I have mentioned with their audience'.

By and large those of us (scholars/ academics/ sociologists) who identify with Gupta's and Varma's critique of the middle class do not explicitly identify ourselves as members of a class that Varma (1998:174) describes as 'morally rudderless, obsessively materialistic, and socially insensitive to the point of being unconcerned with anything but its own narrow self-interest'. Could it be that we simply do not recognise this as a representation of ourselves or that we agree with

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Varma but feel a certain moral high ground by virtue of our sociological insight? Or is it that we disagree with such a self-recriminatory picture of the middle classes? If we agree with Varma we accept one type of middle class discourse rather its opposite: the more self-congratulatory discourse common in the popular press and vividly argued in Das's (2000) India Unbounded (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007). In answering this question I am inspired on the one hand by feminist standpoint theory (Stanley and Wise, 1993) which calls on us to make our positions as members of a certain class/community explicit, while engaging in sociological research and on the other by Béteille's (2001) call for a sociological rather than a moral examination of the middle class which distances itself from both self-recrimination and self-congratulation.

Gupta's (2000) argument that Indian middle class privilege is based on the availability and exploitation of cheap labour provided by the nation's poor is undeniable, as is his assertion that several traditional practices endure in contemporary India. I also share Varma's concern about the lack of civic engagement and pursuit of consumerism by the middle class. However, my thesis is not intended as a moral indictment of the Indian middle classes or even as an academic examination of middle class values. It is a feminist sociological study of the manner in which contemporary middle class Indian women employed in transnational companies negotiate the consequences of globalization and what their understanding of their experiences in a late modern globalizing culture indicates of their sense of self. In stressing that the thesis is about the understanding(s) of my participants I take on board the feminist standpoint (Stanley and Wise 1993) that all individuals interpret and theorise their experiences and that researchers' interpretations are not necessarily superior to those of their participants (although they might be more privileged by virtue of access to academic scholarship and a boarder range of accounts – see Letherby, 2004 discussed further in chapter 3). I also acknowledge that any form of research gives us access to only a single slice of life which is valid at a specific moment in a specific context and not a universal, generalizable 'truth'. I hope that

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my thesis contributes to the small (though growing) scholarship on the Indian middle class. I also hope to engage a level of self-reflexivity that Favero points out is missing from much of the (middle class) scholarship on middle class India. With this in mind I undertake the challenge of defining the Indian middle class.

Looking for the Indian Middle Class

On reading yet another draft of my work with middle class spelt as 'middleclass' my supervisor asked me if middleclass was an Indian way of spelling the term. I replied that I vaguely recalled having picked up this spelling somewhere but couldn't be certain. Later on re-reading the term '*schedulecastes*'[12] in Deshpande's discussion of caste in contemporary India that I began to realize the reason for my unconscious 'misspelling'. Deshpande argues that the commonly used Indian English term *schedulecastes* a 'phrase used as a single word in Indian English, a common noun without capital letters' indicates a specific position and identity in contemporary urban Indian along with its associated privileges and disabilities (2003:99). All English speaking Indians share a common understanding of the term *schedulecaste*. Similarly all English speaking Indians know what we are talking about when we use the term *middleclass*. And in spoken Indian English it is often a single word, not only a common noun indicating a position and identity, but an abstract noun indicating a set of values and an adjective describing an individual, a family or a group of people. The term is used unselfconsciously, without a perception that the position is associated with any form of privilege; in fact it may often be used to indicate the reverse.

Identifying the Indian middle class is a tricky exercise, not least because the euphoria around liberalization and the bid to attract foreign investments in the early 1990s led to an over estimation of its size and spending capacity (Deshpande, 2003; Gupta, 2000). More recent statistical exercises such as that of

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[12] Depressed castes and tribes were listed in a schedule by the colonial government in 1935 as requiring affirmative action. The term schedule caste is now commonly used in Indian English to refer to depressed castes and groups.

McKinsey Global Institute (2007) and the NCAER (2005) indicate that the middle class much smaller than 33% of the population or 300 million as claimed in the early 1990s: see Deshpande's (2003) critique of these statistics. While recent attempts at statistically mapping the middle class are more conservative in their estimates, their message is still that the middle class as a fast growing consuming class. For instance McKinsey Global Institute (2007) claims that the middle class which currently consists of about 50 million people or 5% of the population will grow to 128 million households (or 583 million people) or 41 % of the population by 2025 i.e. India will become a middle class country in 15 years. Most attempts at identifying the middle class quantitatively tend to come from private research institutes that provide statistics for marketing purposes. In contrast the website of the Indian Census does not categorize data by class.[13]

Economic classifications are not the only way in which the Indian middle class can be identified, as Deshpande (2003) argues. Political power, social networks and cultural capital[14] are also important factors. When both economic and non-economic factors are taken into account it becomes evident that the middle class is internally highly differentiated. Historically the middle class has largely consisted of the upper castes:[15] those who were able to access an English language education and secure jobs in the British administration. In independent India knowledge of English, familiarity with British/ European culture and a liberal education were the currency that the middle class used in securing its privilege and accessing jobs in the public sector and in private companies.

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[13] http://www.censusindia.net

[14] The concept of cultural capital which was originally proposed by Bourdieu (1984 - see Raey, 2000) is commonly used to indicate the cultural 'goods' such as education, taste, mannerisms, aesthetic sense, values and attitudes that are passed from one generation to the next within classes (see Béteille,1993; Raey, 2000). In this thesis I used the term is this sense although I do not engage in a Bourdieusian analysis.

[15] While caste identities remain important in India influencing both personal and public life, openly acknowledging the importance of caste within professional settings or in public spaces (except electoral platforms) would be considered highly inappropriate. This selective blindness to caste makes it at once visible yet difficult to pin down, especially as middle class participants in research are not always willing to discuss it.

Members of this class also emigrated to the UK and USA on the strength of this cultural capital. The larger proportion of the middle class was based in urban areas. Das calls this the old middle class and argues that a new middle class that is 'less than a generation away from the village well, dust raising cattle, and the green revolution' is growing in urban India (2000: 280). This class is in the process of deploying its economic capital to gain cultural capital. There is also an upwardly mobile lower middle class that is attempting to make maximum use of the benefits of globalization. Lastly, the middle class is becoming more differentiated in caste terms and is no longer exclusively upper caste. The internally diversity of the middle class leads to tensions between the old and the new middle classes, between the lower and the upper middle class and between different caste groups within the middle class. This diversity will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

A Summary of the Chapters

In Chapter 1 I discuss the history of the Indian middle class focusing specifically on the position of middle class women within this history. I investigate previous scholarship on how the notion of ideal Indian womanhood was constructed by the middle class during the movement for independence in the nationalist period and how this construction has evolved in independent India. My task is to locate contemporary middle class Indian women in the social, cultural and historical context in which they encounter globalization. While Chapter 1 provides a lens for examining Indian middle class women's experiences of globalization in class, cultural and historical terms, Chapter 2 attempts to provide a theoretical lens with which to analyse their experiences. In this chapter I examine the thesis of late modernity and related theories of globalization. The late modernity thesis has attempted to explain globalization and its consequences as well as the consequences of post-industrialism, of individualization and of the transformation of communication technologies. Therefore it seems highly appropriate to begin with this theoretical perspective. However, I also consider some of the critiques of the late modernity thesis, particularly those that examine

its value in understanding non-mainstream groups and cultures. I examine theories of self and self-identity which create a context in which to answer the second of my two research questions regarding women's sense of self. Having located my research participants in historical and socio-cultural terms, and located my thesis in its theoretical setting, I then turn to the geographical setting for the fieldwork. In Chapter 3 I attempt to walk the reader through the field and the fieldwork and examine my shifting position during fieldwork. I discuss the methodological decisions I made regarding how to gain access to, analyse and present participants accounts.

Chapters 4 to 7 analyse the findings of the research. In Chapter 4 I ask the question: how do Indian middle class women negotiate their positions within the changes and continuities experienced in the contemporary Indian family. I analyse the emerging ethos of individualism in globalizing India and how this interacts with the collectivist nature of the family and kinship network. This chapter introduces many ideas that are taken up again in Chapter 6 when the relationship between the workplace and the home is examined. Chapter 5 examines women's relationship to paid work. It investigates how they understand their experiences in transnational workplaces and how they negotiate their positions within the individualistic values that inform the culture of transnational corporations. In Chapter 6 I study the continuities and contradictions between the transnational workplace and contemporary Indian families. I attempt to understand the relationship between paid and unpaid work, not only domestic labour but also various forms of expressive work which helps women to perform adequately in both spheres: the workplace (paid employment) and the family. I examine the notion of work-life balance, a popular buzzword in human resource management and in the information technology industry. Since the work-life balance challenges of mothers are particularly strong, the chapter pays special attention to their experiences.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I examine what women's accounts of their experiences in paid employment and in the family indicate about their sense of
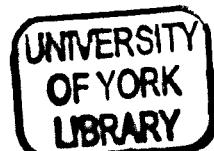
self. I examine women's understandings of their self-identities with regard to the neo-nationalist discourse. I also introduce a less strongly articulated but clearly identifiable discourse that emerges from women's accounts of their experiences in the family and workplace called the individualist discourse. I end this chapter by examining the occurrence of these two discourses within the self-identities of four women in my sample and how they create their selves within a context of continuity and change. My thesis concludes with an examination of its implications in several contexts: for a critique of the late modernity thesis; for scholarship on the Indian middle classes and for future research in this area. I discuss the implications of poor work-life balance for individual women, for the information technology industry and for society in general. I end by reflecting on my own position as a migrant researcher studying her home culture.

Chapter 1

Locating Contemporary Indian
Middle Class Women

This chapter is devoted to understanding what it means to be middle class in India. Being middle class is not just a question of belonging to a specific income bracket but having access to certain forms of cultural capital that are redeployed to consolidate one's middle class position. It means having a shared history and having a sense of one's position within the nation. Within the middle class different sub-classes have unequal access to certain forms of cultural capital which are key in determining the solidity of one's middle class position in India. In later chapters the internal diversity within the middle class is discussed with a view to investigating how women's positions within the middle class can determine their access to the benefits of globalization. Finally, it is important to understand how the key ideals of the Indian middle class developed in the nationalist period and what this says for current middle class identities. Understanding these ideals is crucial to understanding the position of contemporary Indian middle class women, and the manner in which they engage with the consequences of globalization.

1.1 Identifying the Indian Middle Class: Economic Indicators

Estimating the size of the Indian middle class is tricky exercise. Current estimates indicate that it consists of 13 million households or 50 million people in the income range of Rs. 200,000 to Rs.1, 000,000 or $4,376 to $21,882 annually (McKinsey Global Institute, 2007). Economic definitions of the Indian middle class have alternated between income and expenditure (consumption). Proponents of the latter such as Bijapurkar (2006) argue that consumption is a more reliable indicator

of economic status because and families tend to be wary of revealing their actual income. While Deshpande (2003) also acknowledges the usefulness of expenditure, he argues that it could lead to an overestimation of the incomes of the poor and underestimation of those of the rich as the latter tend to accumulate wealth faster than they can spend it and vice versa. The popularity of consumption as an economic indicator may also be attributed to the need to attract foreign investment and to plan sales and marketing. More recent studies such as the two classifications I reproduce below use income to differentiate classes.

Table 1: Income Categories in India: The NCAER Classification[16]

Categories[17]	Annual Income in Rupees	Number of Households in 2005-06
A	10,000,001	52,000
B	5,000,001-10,000,000	103,000
C	2,000,001-5,000,000	454,000
D	1,000,001- 2,000,000	1,122,000
E	500,001- 1,000,000	3,212,000
F	200,001-500,000	13,183,000
G	91,000- 200,000	53,276,000
H	Less than 90,000	132,249,000

Source: NCAER (2005) The Great Indian Market

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[16] The National Council for Applied Research (NCAER) India is a highly reputed economic research institution in India. Surveys and reports produced by the NCAER are extensively used by the government and industry to inform policy decisions.
[17] I have added the category labels A to H to facilitate easier discussion.

Table 2: Income Categories in India: The McKinsey Classification[18]

Categories	Income Levels in India Rupees (and US Dollars) at year 2000 values	Number of Households in millions in 2005	Description
Globals	Rs. 1,000,000 and above ($21,882)	1.2 million	Senior corporate executives, large business owners, politicians, big agricultural-land owners, top-tier professionals More-recently: a new breed of upwardly mobile executives or graduates from India's top colleges who find employment in international companies
Strivers	Rs.500,000-Rs.1,000,000 ($10,941- $21,882)	2.4 million	Successful business people (traders), established professionals, senior government officials medium scale industrialists and rich farmers
Seekers	Rs.200,000- Rs.500,000 ($4,376-$10,941)	10.9 million	Varied in terms of age employment and other factors: include young college graduates, traditional white collar employees, midlevel government employees and medium scale business owners
Aspirers	Rs.90,000-Rs.200,000 ($1,969-$4,376)	91.3 million	Shopkeepers, low skilled industrial workers, small-hold farmers, service workers
Deprived	Less than Rs. 90,000 (less than $1,969)	101.1 million	Many households below official definition of poverty; unemployed or engaged in semi-skilled, unskilled seasonal/intermittent work

Source: McKinsey Global Institute (2007) Bird of Gold

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[18] The McKinsey Global Institute is the economic wing of McKinsey & Company that undertakes research on global economic trends for use by businesses and governments.

Although NCAER's categorisation of Indian classes (Table 1) has been the inspiration for McKinsey's class categories (Table 2), I have found the latter (Table 2) to be more valuable due to the use of descriptive terminology which creates a more detailed picture of individual classes and helps to distinguish between rural and urban members of the middle class. Table 2 is also useful for comparing real incomes in India with those in the West. When the income of the Indian middle classes (Seekers and Strivers from the table above) is converted from Rupees to its dollar equivalent it becomes evident that an income, which in the USA would barely obtain basic necessities, 'purchases a recognizably middle class lifestyle' in India (McKinskey Global Institute, 2007:46). However, by collapsing categories A to D from Table 1 into one class, Globals, it masks the difference between the super rich and the moderately well off.

The McKinsey classification indicates that that the middle class consists of Seekers and Strivers in the household income bracket of Rs 200,000 to 1000,000, (with Aspirers being lower middle class). While this describes the majority of my participants, some of them may fall into income categories that are either below or above this income bracket but self-identify as middle class. There are two reasons for this: First, the identity 'middle class' is very popular for the reasons discussed in the Introduction: its association with a cosmopolitan outlook which is rooted in 'Indianness', integrity and moderation. For instance, Globals may have entered their class position on the strength of education or other forms of cultural capital inherited from or acquired for them by their Striver parents (retired government officials, large-hold farmers or medium scale business people); some Globals' parents may even be Seekers. These individuals may identify with 'middleclasness' in terms of values, attitudes and lifestyles although their actual incomes have risen above than the 'objective' economic category of middle class. Secondly, there is an ambiguity between the incomes of individuals, households (people living under the same roof) and families (individuals connected by kinship not necessarily residing under the same roof). For example the description of Seekers states that the category consists both of 'young college graduates who have just started working'

and 'mid-level government officials' (McKinskey Global Institute, 2007: 43) who are possibly not as young. Young college graduates who are classified as individual households (if living on their own) may have parents in either the Aspirers or Strivers categories.

This indicates the main weakness of economic classifications of individuals or even households: they do not account for the flexible nature of Indian households and the close financial ties between family members living in separate households (see Chapter 4). The income of one generation may affect the class status of another due to moral obligations between parents and children. The categories of Aspirers, Seekers, Strivers and Globals are fluid and interconnected within the same family. Individuals move between them at various points in their lifetime and also often inhabit more than one category without feeling in any sense conflicted about their class position.

One participant in my research, Meenakshi, is a case in point. She may be classified as an Aspirer (i.e. below the middle class according to the McKinsey classification) based solely on her (individual) income of about Rs.140,000 per annum based on which she lives alone in Bangalore. However, her description of her parents' home in Kerala indicates that the latter may be classified as Seekers. She is currently undergoing divorce. While she was married, her joint income with her (former) husband would have made her a Striver. She continues to engage in some of the leisure pursuits and activities that she followed while married and socializes with friends whose incomes are much higher than hers. Thus certain aspects of her lifestyle are compatible with that of Strivers and her level of economic stability (since she knows her parents will bail her out of a financial crisis if need be) indicates that she fits within the category of Seekers. The ambiguities of her class position indicate that while economic classifications are useful as background data to give a broader picture of the socio-economic conditions within which individuals live they are not in themselves adequate to identify the middle class.

1.2 Identifying the Indian Middle Class: Non-Economic Factors

Deshpande (2003) identifies a number of non-economic factors by which we can define the middle class: social, cultural and political. Using a Gramscian framework, he argues that the Indian middle class is an internally differentiated class whose elite faction specializes in the production of ideologies and whose mass faction engages in the exemplary consumption of these ideologies (Deshpande, 2003). This differentiation helps in understanding the relationship between the upper and lower factions of the middle class. The ideologies created by the elite faction, the 'intelligentsia': 'professional politicians, top bureaucrats, media persons, intellectuals and other "specialists in legitimization"' (Bétteille, 1989 in Deshpande, 2003:141) permeate the English language media and mainstream political discourse and are consumed and perpetuated by the mass faction of the middle class.

The most recent middle class ideology that has been successfully disseminated is that of globalization: the notion that India can become a dominant player in the world market through a capitalist free-market economy. Middle class entrepreneurs, business professionals and government servants collaborated in the 1991 economic liberalization process and the information technology 'boom' that followed. The success in attracting foreign investment has increased the middle class's confidence and boosted its self-image as the representative of the nation (Deshpande, 2003; Varma, 1999). The upper middle class's success in reinforcing the globalization ideology comes partly from its pan Indian identity which further legitimates its authority to represent the nation. It may be argued that the upper middle class is increasingly entering into the transnational capitalist class that drives globalization across nation states (Sklair, 2001).

The middle class can be identified as the class whose position is founded on its ability to accumulate and deploy cultural capital. Cultural capital includes education, knowledge of English and access to technical and professional qualifications. These forms of cultural capital combined with a cosmopolitan outlook play an important role in gaining access to the benefits of globalization such

as jobs in the Information Technology (IT) industry. Krishna and Brihmadesam (2006) found that the IT workforce consists largely of employees who have had an English language education and studied in urban based schools or had parents who were educated above high school. This background is partly due to migration of their parents away from their birthplace, a factor that is also evident from my research. This urban, metropolitan and non-parochial upbringing gives the children of the old/ upper middle class the necessary competencies and attitudes to succeed in a global market: ability to mix freely with people outside of one's kin-group or community, exposure to metropolitan lifestyles and familiarity with a broader range of cultures and languages. As Krishna and Brihmadesam (2006) and Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) find, this tends to disadvantage those who have had a more localized or rural upbringing.

There is growing internal diversity in the middle class with different factions enjoying different levels of cultural capital. Historically the caste composition of the middle class has been predominantly upper caste. However, due to recent political changes more castes which have economic power and numerical strength (e.g. landowning or cattle farming castes based in rural areas) and lower ritual status are entering into the urban middle class. In the past fifteen to twenty years several of these rural castes have become upwardly mobile through political influence and are now entering into urban areas and predominantly urban based professions.[19] They form what Das (2000) identifies as the new middle classes. Das (2000:290) describes the new middle class as having recently migrated from rural to urban areas (possibly one generation ago); this class is described as conspicuous in its consumption and professionally ambitious having 'less hypocrisy and more self-confidence'. In contrast the old middle class consists of individuals whose parents worked in the public sector or well established private companies, grew up in urban metropolitan India and studied in well established English medium schools. Das's (2000) old middle class is broadly equivalent to the upper middle class whose privileged status came through positions in the colonial and post-colonial

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[19] It is therefore likely that the caste composition of the middle class will change in the future.

administration or professional qualifications in medicine, law and teaching. Their active participation in the nationalist movement gave the upper or elite faction of the middle class what Deshpande (2003: 130) calls a sense of 'moral legitimacy …to speak on behalf of the nation' and a strong belief that it knows what is good for the nation.

Although Das's descriptions are not substantiated with much evidence, is a good starting point from which to consider how the benefits of globalization are shared between the two factions of the middle class, one of which already enjoys cultural capital and while the other is acquiring it by deploying its newly acquired economic capital. In drawing a contrast between the old and the new middle classes Das (2000) comments that the latter use English words that they do not completely understand. This remark raises interesting questions: does the newness of the cultural capital acquired prevent the new middle class from being able to realise its value in the same way as the old middle class? A similar difference in cultural capital can be observed between the lower and upper middle class. Given that the success of the IT industry depends on its ability to forge strong transnational relationships with customers, what does this mean for the new middle class's ability to enter those occupations/ positions within the industry which require customer interface and which are therefore highly prestigious/ remunerated? These questions will be taken up again in Chapter 5 when I discuss the diversity in women's experiences within the workplace.

1.3 Current Indian Middle Class Identity: Historical Roots

What Das (2000) now describes as the old middle class arose in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century out of a deliberate attempt by the colonial rulers to create a class of administrators, lawyers, teachers, clerks and civil servants who were *'Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'* who would help the British in administering this vast colony (Macaulay, 1835 in Varma, 1998:2 emphasis in original). The upper castes and wealthy landowners were quick to exploit the opportunities for an English language

education, professional qualifications and opportunities in the colonial administration. This class, like the 'intellectual' class of other colonised cultures began to construct for itself an identity that was simultaneously influenced by and opposed to the colonial gaze.

The middle class's understanding of Indian culture reflected Western orientalism – while strongly repulsed by casteism, superstition, poverty and other markers of orthodoxy and underdevelopment, it felt a deep sense of pride in India's ancient traditions and 'spiritualism' (Varma, 1998). It represented India to the British colonial masters and Britain to the Indian masses; yet it also envisioned and led the movement for independence and the simultaneous movement for social and religious reform advocating the ban of practices such as sati, child marriage and untouchability. This gave the middle class a sense of moral authority to speak on behalf of the nation and represent the interests of its less privileged compatriots to the colonial masters (Varma, 1998; Deshpande, 2003). Ironically, while the middle class's access to liberal education created respect for the Enlightenment ideals of rationality, democracy and humanism it also furthered elitism since it distanced them from the rest of the population.

This group continued to dominate administrative and technical functions during the 'Nehruvian' period of nation-building which immediately followed independence, when 'there was a major thrust towards capitalist development under the aegis of the developmental state' (Deshpande, 2003: 142). During this period it expressed the ideology of 'patriotic production' (Deshpande, 2003: 140) indicated by the popular slogan 'Be-Indian, Buy-Indian' which suggests pride in the emerging economic self-reliance of the nation.

Today this class espouses the cause of globalization, its aspirations and interests being linked to economic liberalization. It projects itself as symbolic of a resurgent economy and culture, equating consumerism with progress and further distancing itself from the poor (Favero, 2005; Gupta, 2000; Varma, 1998). It identifies with an image of an India that can equal or even rival the West in

economic and technological progress and is yet able to keep its cultural traditions, however these traditions are defined. It combines a fondness for Western artifacts and popular culture (such as music and films) with pride in traditional attire, local popular culture (reinvented Indian folk music, Bollywood) and India's economic and technological 'boom' (Singh, 2000; Gupta, 2000). However the socio-economic consequences and unevenness of economic progress rarely figure in popular middleclass discourse due to the individualist market orientation of the economic reforms (Varma, 1998).

As the middle class of a post-colonial nation, the identity of the Indian middle class continues to be dominated by admiration for and a desire to distance itself from the West, by the need to define themselves as modern but not too modern (Deshpande, 2003; Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). Although this class advocates modernity and its attendant values of equality and secularism, it continues to cling on to several traditional values and practices (Gupta, 2000). For instance casteism may be shunned in public but is often practiced within the home and family without consciousness of double standards. Similarly, paternalism, religiosity and respect for kinship norms may be espoused alongside values such as democracy, egalitarianism and meritocracy. Gupta is highly critical of this characteristic of the middle classes which he labels as 'mistaken modernity'; he argues that 'sexual harassment, violence in public places and dowry deaths and a host of other forms of uncivilised conduct ...are carry-overs of attitudes from the past' (Gupta, 2000:13). However, as I argue later in this chapter, while the demand for dowry may be based on traditional patriarchal values, it has been given a new lease of life by the liberalization of the economy. To understand the Indian middle class better it is useful to look at tradition and modernity not as polar opposites but as interrelated features of its identity. Deshpande argues that in Indian sociology discussions of the tradition and modernity dualism have tended to see them not as mutually exclusive but as coexisting categories; he argues that the dualism is of little use if we treat tradition and modernity as polar opposites. Rather we need to see that tradition when invoked as a sort of claim-to-difference is itself a product of modernity' (Deshpande, 2003: 42).

Favero's (2005) ethnography amongst young middleclass men supports the thesis that the identity of the middle class is 'hybrid and shifting': the young men of his sample construct and re-construct their identity by repeatedly 'othering' not only 'Westerners' (tourists, non-resident-Indians) but even their own compatriots. Individual members of this class position themselves as cosmopolitan, educated, well-traveled, Westernized or essentially Indian depending on the situation and the group they are locating themselves against. For instance being essentially Indian in spite of extensive experience of the West is highly prestigious in the sub-culture of young middleclass Indians and is used as a way of signifying "moral detachment" from those who are overly Westernized (Favero, 2005:130). Gupta's (2000) use of the term westoxification to describe middle class Indians' fascination with Western artifacts and objects indicates the sense of threat and antaogonism that non-Western cultures feel towards the West while also desiring the prosperity and power that the later symbolizes.[20]

The middle class's construction of itself as both traditional and modern, arose in response to the colonial gaze but has continued to dominate the construction of middle class identity in independent India (Favero, 2005). These historical roots have a specific significance for the women of this class. From the nationalist period to the current period of liberalization and globalization, 'the woman question' has been important in the self construction of the middle class (Chatterjee, 1989). The women of this class are at once symbolic of its modernity and its traditionality. Their status is seen as a yardstick of the middle class's acceptance of the 'modern', western values of rationality and equality. At the same time they are bearers of its traditions and carriers of its 'Indianess'.

1.4 The Nationalist Discourse of Ideal Indian Womanhood

Colonial encounters between two cultures often result in both cultures creating their identity in opposition to the other – an identity that tends to be define itself in some what narrow and culturally essentialist terms (Narayan, 2000). The

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[20] Gupta (2000) borrows the term westoxification from Jalal-e-Ahmad, the Iranian intellectual.

colonised and the coloniser become defined in terms of binaries such as East-West, spiritual-material, traditional-modern, feminine-masculine (Narayan, 2000; Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). The similarities between the two cultures and the diversity within each culture are obliterated. In particular, it is the colonised culture that has a special stake in this cultural essentialism. It tends to respond to the humiliation of colonialism by selectively valorising its own traditions while engaging in a project of modernization (Jayawardena, 2002; Chatterjee, 1989; Pollard, 2005).[21] The manner in which history, tradition and national identity are constructed in colonial and postcolonial cultures needs to be understood in this context. Within this self-construction women become 'the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour' and their position is indicative of its progressiveness, modernity and rationality (Yuval-Davis, 1997:45). 'The woman question' becomes part of the larger debate between modernists or reformers and cultural revivalists (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The debates around the question of veiling/unveiling in Egypt occurred within this context (Pollard, 2005; Ahmed, 1992) as did the debate between reformers and revivalists within the Indian national movement over the position of women.

Revivalists tended to glorify India's ancient past, looking for evidence of the culture's superiority in the Vedic times. This led to a selective reinterpretation of Hindu scriptures and mythology and reconstruction of 'pristine' the Indian tradition that existed before the invasion of Islamic rulers. The reformers were more inspired by the Western ideals of humanitarianism, rationalism and liberalism. They sought to remodel Hinduism on the lines of Christianity and similar monotheistic religions, denouncing idol-worship, superstition and the domination of the priestly castes. Both these strands of thought are important to understanding the construction of ideal Indian womanhood.

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[21] Jayawardena, 2002, with regard to Srilanka; Chatterjee, 1989, with regard to India; Pollard, 2005, with regard to Egypt.

In several cultures that encounter colonialism women become symbolic of the process of selective modernization coupled with the revival of tradition. Nationalist discourses tend to respond to colonialism by positioning women as both biological and cultural reproducers of the nation: 'symbolic "border guards"' who not only transmit and uphold cultural values but also need to be protected as the violation of their honour challenges the (manhood of the) nation (Armstrong, 1982 in Yuval-Davis; 1997:23). For instance, in Uganda nationalist discourses were fused with the question of protecting women's sexuality against exploitation by British colonisers and Indian traders (Obbo, 1989). In Indonesia colonial rule and missionary activity reduced women's economic and sexual autonomy, reforming their position through Western-style education that underlined domesticity (Ramusack, 1999) while retaining certain Javanese values. Women often participate in the construction of their identity as cultural reproducers since it empowers them to control the behaviour of others and earns them power and prestige (Yuval-Davis, 1997).[22]

In India the construction of ideal Indian womanhood was part of the attempt to essentialize Indian culture and conflate it with Hinduism (seen in the speeches and writings of religious revivalists and reformers such as Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati). The nationalists repeatedly evoked the idea of a golden age of Vedic Hinduism wherein women were purportedly revered and accorded a high status (Chakravarti, 1989). In contrast with the superior material culture of the West, India was projected as having superior religious and spiritual traditions. Similar binaries were created between the home and the world, the feminine and the masculine, tradition and modernity, within which women came to represent the home and the inner spiritual self of the culture or "our true self...which is genuinely essential" (Chatterjee 1989:238). In the nationalist discourse of the emerging middleclass, the material conditions of existence which required adjustment with Western norms and practices were deemed superficial, while the individual's true

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[22] See Afshar's (1989b) discussion of how the Iranian state's valorisation of motherhood was supported by women (particularly older women) as the identity secured their positions as 'matriarch(s) within the domestic sphere' (117).

(spiritual) identity was preserved within the inner sanctum of the home. This inner sanctum, which personified 'pristine' national culture had to be protected from the colonizer at all costs and women were charged with safeguarding this inner identity through the preservation and practice of tradition (Chatterjee, 1989).

The home was recast as a pure and idyllic space in the Western bourgeois sense where the educated Indian middle class man could retire from his work of serving or fighting the colonial masters to a wife who understood his Westernized ideals and lifestyle while upholding Indian traditions. Women were to be educated to fulfil their roles as intellectual companions and helpmates to Westernized Indian middle class men whilst maintaining the sanctity of the home by performing religious rituals, following traditions, maintaining kinship relations, for which the men had little time, and passing cultural knowledge to the next generation (Chatterjee, 1989). They were encouraged to adopt markers of modernity in managing their domestic roles 'orderliness, thrift, cleanliness and a personal sense of responsibility, the practical skills of accounting hygiene and the ability to run the household according to the new physical and economic conditions set by the outside world' (Chatterjee, 1989: 247).

The identity of upper caste, middle class Indian women was created by 'otherising' (Favero, 2005) both Western and Westernized women who were criticised as indolent, frivolous, neglectful of the home and bent on competing with men, and lower caste women who were described as crude, vulgar and sexually promiscuous (Chaterjee; 1989)[23]. In contrast to these two categories of women middle class women's essential characteristics were chastity, modesty and the womanly virtues of submissiveness, self sacrifice and patience, qualities that were indispensable to their role as the fulcrum of the home. However, once this 'essential "femininity" was fixed in terms of certain culturally visible "spiritual" qualities'

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[23] This tendency to otherise westernised women and less privileged women continues to influence contemporary Indian middle class women's constructions of themselves (see Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

middle class women could participate in public life, travel, attend school and engage in paid employment (Chatterjee, 1989:247).

The notion of ideal Indian womanhood that emerged in the nationalist period began to take the form of a fairly powerful discourse that became entrenched in India and continues to be influential in contemporary India. Foucault (1981, in Mills, 2003) argues that instead of merely seeing discourse as an interrelated set of statements we need to look at the practices that keep them in circulation and exclude other potential discourses. The discourse of ideal Indian womanhood is a set of interrelated statements about what it means to be a middle class Indian woman, what distinguishes her from other women, what symbolic qualities she represents and her responsibilities within an emerging nation. These statements are reinforced by the practices of education and everyday lived reality of middle class homes in the late 19th and early 20th century. They are reproduced in the utterances of prominent nationalists, social commentators and reformers, of women themselves and in the popular literature of the period.

Foucault saw discourses as both an instrument and an effect of power. They are also a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourses transmit, produce and reinforce relations of power but also undermine and expose them. Although they have the potential to constrain an individual's behaviour and subjective sense of self they may also have emancipatory potential (Mills, 2003). Although subjects are produced through discourses, the subject positions that individuals occupy become the starting point for recreating, modifying or undermining the discourse. In the discussion below I examine how women participated in the creation of the discourse of ideal Indian womanhood, how they attempted to question and subvert it and the constraints they experienced in doing so.

One of the central elements of the discourse of ideal Indian womanhood was the claim that women enjoyed a high status in the golden Vedic age before invasion by the Islamic rulers and the British (Chakravarti, 1989). Scriptural evidence of

women's equality with men was amassed and some lesser known mythical figures such as Maitreyee and Gargi who were said to personify female intellectual achievement and wisdom were revived (Chakravarti, 1989). Sita, Savitri, Sati and Yashoda, mythical archetypes of wifely devotion and selfless motherhood, were upheld for women to emulate. Chatterjee argues that such characters represent 'a specific ideological form [which is visible] in the modern literature and arts of India today' (1989: 248).

While the reformists opposed practices that were discriminatory towards women: child marriage, seclusion of widows, *sati* (widow burning) and *purdah* (seclusion of women), they did not aim completely to overhaul the existing patriarchal culture. They were 'highly selective in their adoption of liberal slogans' (Chatterjee, 1989: 236) and were careful not to directly challenge the Hindu elite. The education of women was planned with a view to develop housekeeping skills, inculcate scientific attitudes to domesticity and childcare and reinforce their roles as transmitters of pristine Indian culture (Chatterjee, 1989). They were encouraged to pursue 'the goal of cultural refinement' through a new body of vernacular literature intended specifically for this purpose (Chatterjee, 1989:246). This attempt at inculcating scientific temper and modernization in the education of women while preventing unchecked Westernization continued to characterize attitudes towards women's education in independent India.

However, the education of women had certain unintended consequences: as women began to participate more actively in the public sphere, they engaged with emerging constructions of womanhood and at times questioned their subordinate status in the home and in the nationalist movement. By the early twentieth century women began to enter into nationalist politics much more actively. A range of women's magazines addressed to the newly literate middleclass woman and edited by women emerged in Bengal, Kerala and in (what is now) Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra (see Awaya, 2003; Talwar, 1989) in the first quarter of the 20th century. These magazines debated the role of women in the newly emerging

nation. The educated women who edited and produced these magazines were active participants in creating the nationalist discourse of Indian womanhood.

For most part, the editorial line of the journals conformed to the Sita/ Sati/ Savitri ideal of devotion to husband, exhorting women to avoid imitating the West and preserve their national identity by upholding their duty of devotion to husband and family.[24] The nation was projected as an extension of the family and women's role in the nationalist movement was described as supportive and inspirational: to raise a healthy breed of children for the motherland, inculcate patriotism and spiritual values in them and support husbands and brothers through compliance and spirituality (Awaya, 2003, Chakravarti, 1989). However, a few oppositional voices emerged. Writing in Malayalam, in *Sarada* (named for the Hindu Goddess of Learning) in the mid 1920s C. Narayanikkutti Amma criticised the traditional maxim of blind devotion to husband, questioning the relevance of ancient role such as Sita and Savitri models for 20th century women (Awaya, 2003). The same sentiment was reiterated by Uma Nehru, in the Hindi magazine *Stree Darpan* (Women's Mirror) in 1918; Nehru went on to demand why a nation that aspires to Western economic and political principles expects its women to conform to indigenous traditions (Talwar, 1989).

Between these two extremes there were more ambivalences within the discourse: women were exhorted to engage actively with the wider struggles of the community and the nation and bring traditionally feminine, maternal values such as peace and pacifism into public life. While there was little suggestion that women dis-identify with domesticity and motherhood, there was active debate on women's place in the emerging concerns of the nation and nationalism. While most women accepted a subordinate role in reform and nationalism, some began questioning their positions in the social sphere and the nationalist movement.

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[24] Awaya, 2003 with reference to Malayalam magazines published in southern India, Talwar 1989 with reference to Bengali magazines published in eastern India and Hindi magazines published in northern India.

As argued earlier, a woman was welcomed into public and political life only after her traditionalism and essential Indianness was made clearly visible through 'her dress, her eating habits, her social demeanour and her religiosity' (Chatterjee, 1989:247-248). In the 1920s around the time that Gandhi's influence increased, women became teachers, social workers and members of political parities. Gandhi began by encouraging women to participate in the movement by spinning cotton at home thereby securing the participation of a sizeable number of people while maintaining the sanctity of the home (Mankekar, 1999 quoting Patel, 1988). However, women began to take a more active role than the one he originally ascribed to them and by the time of the Civil Disobedience Movement of the 1930s, Gandhi has also begun to rethink his earlier stand as he recognised the vital symbolic and practical contribution that they made to the movement (Forbes, 1996). Women were recruited into the movement to carry messages, nurse the wounded and provide organisational help behind the scenes; they also participated in public marches and were arrested (Mankekar, 1999; Liddle and Joshi, 1986). When the male leaders were jailed women often took the responsibility of continuing the movement. The female revolutionaries (who were outside Gandhi's non-violent movement) also played an active part in attempting to destabilise the colonial regime (Forbes, 1996). Though the nationalist discourse of the 19th century attempted to define and restrict the extent of women's participation in the nationalist movement, by the 20th century the leaders were unable to enforce these restrictions or constrain women's agency in defining their own positions in an emerging nation.

The diversity of views within the editorial lines of women's magazines and the tension between the male leadership's view of women's roles in the nationalist movement and the realities of the struggle indicates the potential for emancipation within the discourse. Although the education of women was carefully planned around the agenda of selective modernization and preservation of tradition, once women were educated many of them began to question the central tenets of their education. They began to use opportunities for higher education, for participating in public life and for speaking on behalf of less privileged women. Political life and

the press became arenas for reinforcing as well as questioning, and at times, even subverting the discourse.

By participating in the nationalist struggle women engaged with debates relating to themselves. However, this engagement came at a price: they could not criticise the existing patriarchal order without being seen as supporting the colonial state in its indictment of Indian culture (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). This further increased their ambivalence in their support of the movement and also diluted the intensity with which women's issues were taken up. The cause of women's emancipation was kept subordinate to that of emancipating the nation.

It may be argued that the same discourses continued to inform state policies regarding women in the period immediately following independence. Women had supported the movement for independence in the belief that national independence would ensure their position as equal citizens. However, after independence the question of women's emancipation was again postponed in favour of economic growth and nation building (Forbes, 1996; Liddle and Joshi, 1986). The gains of the social reform movement were mainly legal: the newly adopted constitution secured women's political rights and prohibited discrimination in employment and in public places. In addition, the adoption of the Hindu Code in the 1950s, soon after independence, prohibited polygamy, raised the age of marriage and reformed divorce and inheritance laws in favour of women. These changes mainly benefited middle class, upper caste Hindu women who were aware of their rights or whose families had property to pass on to them.

The valorization of motherhood and the position of women as bearers of the nation's cultural heritage continued in independent India. The following quote from the popular women's magazine *Femina* shows the equation of tradition and womanhood:

To be a woman – a wife, a mother, an individual – in India
means many things. It means that you are the store house of
tradition and culture and, in contrast a volcano of seething
energy, of strength and power that can motivate a whole
generation to change its values its aspirations, its very concept,
of civilized life.
Femina 14, no17 August 17, 1973 in Forbes, 1996: 227

The quote indicates women's patriotic duty to transmit cultural values to the next generation. It could also be interpreted as a means of reconciling the apparent contradiction between a woman's identity as a wife and mother with Mrs. Gandhi's public role; in a sense she becomes the mother of the nation.[25] The identification of women in power such as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with the Hindu goddess Durga indicates the persistence of the assertion that Indian women are worshipped as goddesses (and therefore not in need of 'Western style liberation') in independent India. Gupta (2000) argues that women do well in South Asian politics if they do not attempt to carve a clear political niche for themselves but stand as symbols of something larger, usually what absent or dead fathers and husbands stood for. In the above quotation, all Indian women, and not just Mrs. Gandhi, are constructed as receptacles of tradition; however they are also positioned as drivers of change within their roles as wives and mothers.

1.5 Setting the Stage for the Arrival of the 'New Indian Woman'

In the mid to late 1980s, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi began a project of economic liberalization (although not as widespread as the reforms of 1991) and technological progress. This movement was accompanied by the cultural project of 'uplift of women' or the continuing nationalist project of achieving 'modernity' through the nation's women (Mankekar, 1999:106 quoting a director general of the state sponsored television network *Doordarshan*). State controlled television[26] became one means of portraying the uplift of women to themselves and the nation at

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[25] This symbolism is not restriction to Mrs. Gandhi but has also been used for other female politicians such as the erstwhile Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha who was nicknamed Amma (mother) by her constituents.

[26] The privatization of television networks became possible only in the 1990s.

large. Programmes celebrating women achievers and informing women of their legal rights were aired through much of the late 1980s. Soaps, serials and sitcoms with women-oriented narratives began the task of interpellation of women into their identities as symbols of traditional Indian values, as the conscience of the nation and of a 'good' intrinsically Indian modernity (Mankekar, 1999).

Analysing television soaps and serials of the late 1980s Mankekar (1999) argues that while women protagonists were shown as exercising agency and initiative, pursuing careers in traditionally male dominated spheres and asserting themselves as citizens, their agency was directed mainly towards the good of the family, community and nation and contained within the authority of a benign and supportive patriarchal family. In particular Mankekar argues that the series *Udaan* (The Flight) which portrays the metamorphosis of a young woman from a high caste, poverty-stricken family into an assertive and conscientious police officer 'resolves the [Indian] middle class tension between women's agency [in the public sphere] and control of their sexuality ....[by keeping her] (morally) subordinated to the protective control of her father' (Mankekar, 1999:121). In other words, the emancipatory message of the programmes is undermined. While appreciating Mankekar's point I would argue that *Udaan* and other 1980s' television programmes underlined the importance of education and encouraged women to pursue professional goals thus giving young women additional choices for self construction.[27] The extent to which they were able to exercise choice and access opportunities for professional success differed according to personal and family circumstances.

The state's project of raising the status of women in the 1980s was supported by two factors: Firstly this period also saw an emerging trend towards consumerism. The growth in television advertising targeting the middle class's appetite for 'white

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[27] The 1980s television programmes directed to women on state sponsored television were possibly more emancipatory in their thrust than current soaps and serials aired on private television networks which largely conform to a highly traditionalist, economically dependent and subordinate status for women within patriarchal families.

goods': colour televisions, refrigerators, VCRs and hi-fi equipment which resulted in excessive demands for dowry from the families of young brides. Even though the giving of dowry is an ancient custom, it could be argued that the emerging consumerism resulted in demands for dowry being taken to excessive lengths (Mankekar, 1999) and across communities that did not have a history of giving dowry. In addition to consumer durables, the market for fast moving consumer goods also deepened. Unlike the durables market, the market for consumer goods such as cosmetics, processed foods and household products directly addressed women as consumers (Mankekar, 1999), interpellating them as economic decision makers in the family.[28]

Secondly, the women's movement re-emerged, this time independent of the nationalist project. Known as the autonomous women's movement, it sought legal and social sanctions against rape, dowry and domestic violence, (Omvedt, 2004). The 1980s saw the anti-dowry movement become significant in the public eye; it was debated in the print media and addressed in films and on television.[29] Advocacy by the autonomous woman's movement resulted in the strengthening of anti-dowry laws and propaganda against the custom (Bhutali, 1997/199?).

Although the movement was criticised as being excessively focussed on the problems of urban women, it showed a strong commitment to bringing women's issues into the public consciousness through street theatre, publications, films and other forms of advocacy (Patel, 1988).[30] The movement also took up the issue of Muslim personal law (related to divorce and marriage settlements) in response to a prominent and hotly debated divorce settlement case popularly known as the Shah Bano case, that was filed in the nation's Supreme Court (Omvedt, 2004, Patel, 1988). Although the final outcome of the case was not in favour of women, there

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[28] A famous TV commercial that's slogan '*Surf ki kharidari mein hi samajdari hai*' (Surf – a brand of detergent –is the most sensible choice) promoted the urban educated housewife as both thrifty and capable of making sound economic decisions.

[29] The series Udaan mentioned earlier dealt with this subject at some length.

[30] Excessive demands for dowry are arguably a middle class phenomenon and are often blamed on the emerging consumerism in the middle class and their desire for white goods (see Mankekar, 1999; Lancaster, 2005)

was heated public debate around it. Taken together the issues of dowry and Muslim personal laws underscored the economic vulnerability of women in marriage.

These events and trends are important in understanding the historical circumstances under which the women I interviewed were growing up. Middle class families were beginning to realise that arranged marriages were no longer a safe haven where they could deposit their daughters and congratulate themselves on having 'done their duty' of *kanyādāna* (gift of the virgin bride). Their daughters' well being continued to be a cause of concern. They began to seriously envisage a career for their daughters and educate them with a view that they might have something to fall back on if the marriage broke down. Although education and jobs were still seen by middle class parents as 'fall back options' once they received an education, daughters began to view their careers as a bigger priority.

Moreover, there is a difference in the two generations' views on the relationship between marital partners. While mothers believed that women should continue to take primary responsibility for the home, daughters were beginning to question the validity of such an unequal division of labour. This difference in the views of the two generations is indicated in Mankekar's (1999) accounts of her interviews with lower middle class families in New Delhi. Mothers seem concerned that excessive education and employment could lead to tensions within their daughters' marriages and with in-laws while daughters are beginning to question the division of labour between the sexes.

To further complicate the issue, the emerging consumerism of the middle class was beginning to make an additional income more essential to the family's comfort and economic stability. It may be argued that the realities of economic life destabilized the cultural notion of women as anchored within the home. However, women were going outside their homes for the sake of their families' well being, not for their own independence, thus their professional status did not mean that they had opted out of family life or kinship ties. Mankekar (1999) gives an example from amongst her interviewees of the eldest daughter of a lower middle class family

whose income was so important to her family's survival that her marriage was delayed, causing much tension between father and daughter. This example indicates that employment could be both enabling and constraining and also shows women's and their families' ambivalent attitudes towards employment. The tension between the two generations' views on education and employment, the conflict between cultural notions that situate women in the home and the economic realities that require her to enter the workplace, and the emerging debates around women's need for financial independence and security became the foundation on which the constructions of womanhood emerged in the post-liberalization, globalization period: the 1990s and the new millennium.

1.6 The Neo-Nationalist Discourse of Ideal Indian Womanhood

Like colonialism, globalization leads to encounters between diverse cultures and consequent re-evaluation of the indigenous culture. This re-evaluation may simply be an attempt at self-definition in contrast to a visible 'other' or can take on a defensive form in which indigenous traditions are upheld as superior and 'culture is 'frozen' as timeless Khan's found when comparing the practice of *purdah* (veiling) amongst Bangladeshi immigrants in the UK with that of the villages from where they originated (Khan (1979) in Yuval-Davis, 1997): veiling in the UK was much stricter. Thus the emergence of a globalised middle class in India as a result of the economic policies initiated in the early 1990s saw the simultaneous emergence of a discourse about the 'new' Indian woman mainly addressed to the middle class.

The discourse on new Indian womanhood bears resemblance to the nationalist discourse in its emphasis on tradition. Analysing this discourse through the deconstruction of commercial advertising and television in the 1990s, Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan points to the construction of a 'new' Indian woman who is seen as 'intrinsically "modern" and "liberated"' (1993: 131) . Moreover she is no longer located in the domestic world but is seen as active in the professional, social and public domains. This construction of the new Indian woman 'simultaneously portrays her as glamorous, independent, conscious of her embodiment and of the

many forms of adornment and self-presentation available to her, and yet enshrined in the world of tradition through her adherence to family and national values' as Thapan's analysis of the recent message of *Femina* indicates (2004: 415-416). Thapan argues that the 'active management' of women as both bearers of tradition and symbols of 'good' (respectable) modernity' is the marker of the ideal Indian woman (2004:416), a claim that is borne out by my earlier examination of four Bollywood films produced in the new millennium (see Belliappa, 2006).

Thus the post-liberalization construction of Indian womanhood can be seen as a continuation of the nationalist representation of the middle class Indian woman. Education continues to be valued in a 'liberal' sense for the scientific temper and broad ethical understanding that it gives women. As in the nationalist discourse it facilitates her role as a companion and helpmate to her husband. It must not lead to the breakdown of the family which could happen if a woman is educated 'too much' in which case she will get frustrated and antagonise her husband and in-laws (Mankekar, 1999 quoting her interviewees). However, professional employment is additionally incorporated into the construction of the new Indian woman as another marker of her modernity (Belliappa, 2006; Suder Rajan, 1993)

An element of individualism is incorporated into this construction in terms of women's financial independence, their ability to choose products and brands as well as their commitment to professional success, however, it is 'an individualism that functions for the social good' (Sunder Rajan 1993:135). In my analysis of female characters in recent Bollywood films (Belliappa, 2006) I have argued that they personify confidence, poise and self-reliance, strong commitment to career and the ability to negotiate public spaces: qualities that are admired by the male lead. While they are represented as individualistic in their professional ambitions and choice of mates, their individualism does not exclude a strong sense of tradition as well as a commitment to the family, the community and the nation. Indian women's commitment to individual self-actualization and professional success is bound up

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with their commitment to the collectivity, a factor that distinguishes their individualism from that of men or that of the West.

Contemporary middleclass women's identities derive both from their confidence in public spaces such as the workplace and their commitment to family. The collective gaze of family and community influences the construction of their self-identities as Tokita-Tanabe's research in Bhubaneshwar, a small town of eastern India shows: these women create their unique identity by otherising rural women (perceived as too shy and traditional) and metropolitan women (dismissed as too Westernized) claiming that only they are able to project the right degree of modernity and tradition (Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). This self-representation of women parallels the nationalist construction of Indian womanhood by otherising both Western women and less privileged Indian women.

In spite of pan-Indian implications of the term 'new Indian woman', the very manner in which she is represented indicates that the label refers to middle even upper middle class urban women. The brands that are marketed through magazines such as *Femina*, the portrayal of characters embodying this new Indian woman in films and on television and the fashion trends, garments and accessories that are offered to her indicate her economically superior status. However, both in economic terms and in terms of her level of empowerment she represents the aspirations of her less privileged compatriots. The discourse of the 'new Indian woman' has several elements of the earlier nationalist discourse on Indian womanhood. Tradition continues to play a central role in her identity. She is seen to embody 'Indianness' in the face of globalization. Less distanced and 'protected' from the West than the women of the nationalist period, and active in the public arena, she nevertheless carries the visible markers of 'Indianness' while she participates in the global economy/ culture. Her commitment to home, family relationships and especially to children is strongly evident. Moreover she exercises her agency for public good. It would not be invalid to call the discourse of the new Indian woman the neo-nationalist discourse.

1.7 Conclusion

The discussion on what it means to be middle class in India indicates that there are several factors that define 'middleclassness', income, expenditure, knowledge of English and a pan-Indian identity. However, access to middle class attributes is unequally distributed between the upper and lower middle class and between the old and the new middle class. This diversity within the middle classes is reflected amongst the participants in my research. However, a key feature of middleclassness is hybridity of identity. Members of the middle class constantly define themselves as Indian, Westernized, modern, traditional, liberated or conservative depending on the context in which they find themselves (Favero, 2005).

This fluidity in middle class identities can be traced to the emergence of the middle class in the nationalist period. The very manner in which the Indian middle class was created ensured its fluidity, hybridity and what Srinivas calls 'cultural schizophrenia'[31] (Srinivas, 1971 in Deshpande 2003: 37; Favero, 2005; Varma, 1998). Westernization became synonymous with modernization, a highly desirable attribute for anyone claiming middle class status. The nation's aspirations to be accepted as modern and its desire to preserve its unique identity through its traditions became the foundation on which the discourse ideal Indian womanhood was constructed. While acknowledging that women come to symbolize this duality, represented as a distinctive modernity enshrined in tradition, it is important to reiterate that this is not necessarily a self-contradictory position, but one in which tradition and modernity are not seen as oppositional categories. Before turning to the examination of the late modernity thesis in the next chapter, it may be useful to recall Deshpande's (2003) argument that tradition and modernity are not contradictory categories, rather the attempt to create a unique identity based on resurrected traditions, is a result of modernity.

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[31] The term was used by Srinivas to indicate how the first generation of Indian Brahmins who took an English language education lived westernized professional lives and traditional Indian home lives. However he warns against using it in a pathological sense

Chapter 2

Interrogating the Late Modernity Thesis: Globalization, De-traditionalization and Individualization of the Self

> The advent of industrialisation, globalisation and the British
> rule in India induced many people to embrace Western culture.
> Western style, food habits, table manners, hair style and the free
> mingling of men and women in clubs, dance parties etc have
> brought about some changes in the Indian culture and family. If
> the Indian culture and family traditions should be preserved
> intact, the practice of people going for foreign jobs and settling
> there should be discouraged. Inter-religious marriages have also
> contributed to the erosion of Indian culture.
> *Voice Mail*, 2005

This excerpt from a letter to the editor published in a south Indian newspaper indicates the popular interest in globalization. While the writer may not represent all middle class English speaking Indians (especially those who benefit from 'foreign jobs') the themes of individualism, de-segregation of the sexes, popularity of Western culture with erosion of tradition have been commonly aired in India since the colonial period. By conflating the consequences of British rule that ended sixty years earlier with those of contemporary globalization, the writer draws attention to the continued equation of modernity with Westernization and the ambivalence towards both amongst educated Indians. There is an implication that Westernization erodes the spirituality of the Indian family. These concerns mirror those of the cultural revivalists of the nationalist period. They indicate that globalization evokes the same combination of fascination with and fear of the West that middle class Indians felt during the colonialism. The mention of inter-religious marriages as a factor in the 'erosion of Indian culture' indicates the conflation of religious and national identity.

In Chapter 1 I argued that Indian middle class identities had their roots in the colonial period when discussions about national identity began. A related debate occurred amongst nationalists around modernization, Westernization and secularization. Amongst the nationalists Nehru advocated the pursuit of industrialization by a socialist state while Gandhi was more cautious in his approach to technology and large scale industrialization based on the Western model (Varma, 1998). Correspondingly, the Indian constitution while promoting secularism, abolishing caste and casteism and advocating equality between all citizens makes provisions for the protection of religious minorities, promotes affirmative action for depressed castes and recognizes the personal laws of various religious groups. These contradictions represent the complex nature of India's relationship with modernity and the continuance of traditional structures alongside the modernization agenda.

In this chapter I examine the late modernity thesis developed by Giddens (1990; 1991), Beck (2000; 2002), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995; 2001) and Bauman (2000) and its relevance to understanding the experiences of contemporary middleclass Indian women in a globalizing culture. Contemporary modernity has been variously described as high modernity (Giddens, 1991), reflexive modernity (Beck, 2001)[32], liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), implying that the condition of modernity has undergone a fundamental change from the period that followed Enlightenment (modernity). Proponents of the late modernity thesis argue that while it can be recognised as a distinct societal formation, it represents not the end of modernity (as the notion of post-modernity indicates) but an intensification of processes that began during modernity (Jackson, 2008). In contrast to the post-modernists, theorists of late modernity argue that the contemporary period is characterised by universalising tendencies (as a result of globalization and the weakening hold of traditional identity markers such as

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[32] Giddens (1990, 1991) uses the term reflexivity of modernity rather than reflexive modernity, however it may be argued that his understanding of reflexivity is similar to that of Beck (2000, 2002). In this thesis I use the terms reflexive modernity, high modernity and late modernity interchangeably to denote the contemporary period of history.

religion and community) rather than fragmentation and dissociation (Heaphy, 2007 citing Giddens, 1991). The late modernity thesis is a useful starting point from which to consider the experiences and identities of middle class Indian women in a globalizing world as it provides a way of addressing the experiences of the individual in society: 'linking the self back to macro social structures and processes' (Jackson 2008: 54).

Three of the macro processes which I examine here are globalization, de-traditionalization and individualization. Globalization is said be responsible both for India's economic progress and for the cultural changes that have taken place in the country. Giddens argues that 'globalization and self-identity are said to be the two poles of the dialectic of the local and global' (1991:32). Globalization is understood as the means by which de-traditionalization and Western style modernity enter non-Western contexts. Therefore after a brief discussion of the characteristics of the late-modern period I preface my examination of the concept of self-identity by examining globalization. I then critically examine Giddens's notion of a reflexive self-identity paying special attention to individualization. My aim in these sections is to arrive at an understanding of the concept of self-identity which will inform the examination of participants' accounts of self in Chapter 7 and provide a theoretical background within which to examine Indian women's experiences in negotiating the consequences of late modernity.

2.1 The Late Modernity Thesis

> The modes of life brought into being by modernity have
> swept us away from all traditional types of social order, in
> quite unprecedented fashion. In both their extensionality and
> their intensionality the transformations involved in modernity
> are more profound than most sorts of change characteristic of
> prior periods. On the extensional plane they have served to
> establish forms of social interconnection which span the
> globe; in intensional terms they have come to alter some of
> the most intimate and personal features of our day to day
> existence'.
> Giddens, 1990:4

While he acknowledges that it would be misleading to draw a strong contrast between tradition and modernity, Giddens is convinced that the changes of the last two or three centuries have been so sweeping in their pace and scope that knowledge acquired in earlier periods of history is of little use in understanding them (Giddens, 1990:5). The notion that modernity represents de-traditionalization is a central tenet of Giddens's argument (1991, 2002). It also relates to globalization which is both a consequence of modernity and plays a catalytic role in widening its scope. As interactions between people across cultures and communities increase and individuals are faced with others who think differently from themselves they begin to 'stand back from and critically reflect upon' what has been handed down to them in the name of tradition (Heelas 1996:4).

Giddens argues that the discontinuities between modern and pre-modern social life can be understood as a result of three major elements of change: the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social relationships 'from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across infinite expanses of time-space' and institutional reflexivity (Giddens, 1990: 21; 1991). The separation of space and time refers to the forging of social relationships across geographical areas, which are enabled by the standardization of time zones. Improvement in the technology of communication enables 'the precise coordination of the actions of many human beings physically absent from one another: the 'when' of these actions is directly connected to the 'where' but not, as in pre-modern epochs, via the mediation of place' (Giddens, 1991:17).

The disembedding of social relations is a result of two kinds of mechanisms: abstract tokens and expert system. A typical example of an abstract token is money (currency) which due to its standardized value enables transactions between actors who are not in physical contact with one another. Expert systems refer to the technological expertise of professionals such as doctors, lawyers, counsellors, scientists and engineers who create the systems through which we organize our daily lives. Institutional reflexivity relates to the use of knowledge

about social life to inform and construct its organization; for instance policy making in government, administration and business is informed by research and debate in academia just as management within companies is constituted by management research and ideas.

Given the unpredictability of late modern society and the increase in faceless relationships, individuals are called upon to constantly engage with notions of trust and risk (Giddens, 1990, 1991). The calculation of risk is associated with the notion of individualization and the creation of an individualized biography or life plan. It is not that daily life in the late modern period is more risky than in earlier periods, but in a society where fate and destiny have no place, individuals must deal with the future through a rational assessment of risks and attempt to control them (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Beck, 2001). Conversely the number of faceless relationships that they are regularly engaged in and the dependence on experts necessitates a degree of trust in the competence and probity of the other party (Giddens, 1990).

One of the defining features of late modernity is 'institutionalized individualism' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001:xx).[33] Giddens (1991) argues that individualism liberates people from the constraints of both traditional and modern identity markers (class, religion, language, community) leaving them free to create their own identities through a series of choices. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) are more concerned with the constraints and contradictions imposed by institutionalized individualism on members of society. They argue that in a highly individualized market and society people are thrown almost completely on their own resources and expected to take responsibility for their own lives. For the first time in history individualism enjoys high esteem

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[33] Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001: xxi-xxii) distinguish ideology of individualism or *'the neo liberal idea of the free-market individual'* (which positions the individual as self sufficient and undermines collectivist forms of mutual support such as the welfare state and community) from the sociological concept of institutionalized individualism or individualization which denotes the individual as disembedded from collectivist structures (state, church, corporation) and thrown on her/ his own resources. The sociological concept critiques the ideological one.

but individuals must face both personal misfortunes and structural problems on their own. Bauman takes an even more pessimistic view arguing that the individual is cast adrift and left to create her own identity in a sea of possibilities. The creation of identity becomes a never ending project with little satisfaction but 'refusal to participate in the individualizing game is emphatically not on the agenda' (Bauman, 2000:34).

Giddens's optimistic view of individualism extends to the area of intimate relationships. He argues that intimate relationships are increasingly becoming democratized as they are based on what each individual is receiving from the relationship (Giddens (1992), Beck in collaboration with Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argues that individualization in the labour market and society can create difficulties between partners in intimate relationships who are each engaged in the construction of their own biography. These issues will be taken up in greater detail in the section on individualization.

Unlike Bauman (1998) who draws attention to the immobility of labour in contrast to global capitalism (see the next section), Giddens does not address the question of how modernity may have different consequences across the globe. When individuals working across time zones are required to coordinate their efforts what sorts of power equations come into play? Given that the Indian IT industry is sustained by clients and customers in the West and its employees are expected to work to fit Western requirements, timings and work patterns what are the consequences for women employed in transnational companies? Abstract tokens other than money, such as credit cards, loans and hire purchase are becoming increasingly popular in India. Investment patterns are also changing from fixed interest investments such as bank deposits to mutual funds, stocks and share. The interest on loans and mortgages is being calculated on a variable and speculative basis rather than in fixed terms. What does integration into an increasingly abstract and risk-prone economy mean to middle class Indians? In a culture where the individual's life course is influenced by the norms and decisions

of the collectivity, what are the consequences of increasing individualization in the workplace? Institutional reflexivity implies the use of knowledge about social life to construct and inform life. However, knowledge is produced in specific cultural contexts. When management policies produced in the West are used to construct the work of employees in transnational companies in India, how congruous are they with the local surroundings in which they are employed? These questions will be taken up in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.2 The Dimensions of Globalization

Globalization is perceived as one of the defining processes in late modernity. It may be understood as a series of transformatory processes that lead to the compression of the world so that individuals across various cultures are increasingly interacting with each other on a regular basis, engaging in economic transactions, exchanging/ sharing information and facing common problems (Beck 2000; Robertson, 1992 in Cohen and Kennedy, 2007). Globalization is enabled by 'time-space distanciation' i.e. the de-linking of time from place (Giddens, 1990:53). With the advent of the mechanical clock, time became more standardized and the division of the day or the year into specific zones such as work and non-work became important. This was followed by the worldwide standardization of time and the improvement in communication which fostered 'relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face to face interaction' (Giddens, 1990:18).

Beck (2000), Bauman (1998) and Sklair (2001) identify the diminishing importance of nation states as an important feature of late modernity and globalization in contrast to Giddens (1990) who argues that nation states still play an important role in imposing territorial sovereignty through the control of military power and in forging alliances with or against each other. Whether or not nation-states lose their importance, several supranational actors become important: transnational corporations (TNCs); International Governmental Organisations such as the United Nations, International Non-Governmental Organisations such as the

Red Cross, Oxfam and Greenpeace and associated social movements (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007)[34]. In this thesis I am concerned mainly with transnational corporations (TNCs), the transnational capitalist class (TCCs) and labour classes that emerge with the growth of TNCs (Sklair, 2001). I define TNCs as companies that are engaged in the global capitalist economy and have transnational customer/ client relationships whether these are headquartered in India or in other parts of the world.

There is considerable debate regarding the causes of globalization, but for the purpose of this thesis I am more interested in the consequences and manifestations of globalization than in its causes.[35] At the economic level the deepening of global capitalism manifests in the widening influence of TNCs, the increasing popularity of a neo-liberal free-market ideology and the 'roll back' of the state. Related to this is the growing importance of the culture-ideology of consumerism and the increasing dominance of a global capitalist class (Sklair, 2001; Bauman, 2000). The increasing mobility of capital, goods and services has consequences for labour in various parts of the world especially for its capacity to negotiate the conditions on which it will exchange its labour (Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2000). Economic globalization is accompanied by cultural globalization as a result of improvements in communication technology and interactions between people through migration, travel and transnational employment. Cultural globalization has a variety of consequences including cultural hegemony over subaltern cultures by a dominant culture, resurgence of subaltern cultures and mutual influence between

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[34] Sklair (2001) distinguishes between the terms transnational and international as follows: transnational refers to actors or entities that are beyond the influence of the nation state while international refers to entities that have resulted from alliances between nation states.
[35] Some scholars attribute a single cause to or underline a single aspect of the phenomenon: Wallerstein emphasizes the universalization of capitalism across the world along with the growth of movements resisting it; Gilpin attributes economic globalization to the creation of a favourable political climate through the hegemony of a powerful nation; Rosenau argues that changes in communications technology have resulted in closer interactions between people across the world. In contrast Giddens attributes four distinct but interrelated causes to globalization: the logic of capitalism, the universalization of the nation state, globalizing of military power and industrialism leading to global division of labour. Robertson too underlines the importance of distinguishing between economic, cultural and political causes of globalisation and analytically separating them from how globalisation manifests itself. (McGrew, 1990).

the two. Finally, both economic and cultural globalization are influenced by international politics, regional and global alliances and disputes. India's globalization experience needs to be examined in light of this debate.

2.3 Economic Globalization: The Rise of TNCs

With the increasing popularity of free-market ideologies, and the impetus given to international trade, several parts of the globe have become closely integrated in economic relationships. Today half the largest economies in the world are not nation states but Transnational Corporations or TNCs (Kennedy and Cohen, 2007). Given the increasing efficiency of the technologies of travel and communication and the dismantling of protectionist policies by nation states, TNCs can obtain raw materials, labour, goods and services from across the globe thereby exploiting the cheapest possible sources. They are in a position to play off countries and locations against one another moving to a new location if the labour policies in their current location obstruct their pursuit of profit (Bauman, 1998; Beck 2000). 'They are able *to decide for themselves their investment site, tax site and residence site* and to play these off against one another. As a result, top executives can live where it is nicest to live and pay taxes where it is cheapest' (Beck, 2000: 4).

Bauman describes this as liquid capitalism, where capital can travel light 'with cabin baggage only' moving across the world in search of profitable labour sources or markets (Bauman 1998:58). Bauman contrast the 'solid' or 'heavy capitalism' of the Fordist mode of production – large factories, heavy machinery and assembly lines which 'tied-down' management, workers and capitalists to a given locale – with 'light' or 'liquid capitalism' of the post-Fordist era (Bauman 1998:58). Liquid capitalism is characterised by flexibility, mobility and emancipation from 'territorial constraints' (Bauman 1998:18). However, mobility is only for capital; labour remains fixed to the same location 'as immobilized as it was in the past' (Bauman 1998:58). When capital was tied down to one location, it was easier for labour to negotiate better wages or working conditions. However,

the lighter or more mobile capital is, the less labour is able to influence capitalists' decisions.

Beck repeatedly points out the consequences of capital's fickleness for employment patterns in Western Europe and indicates how the farming out of jobs leads to unemployment or unstable employment (short-term contracts, part-time jobs) in the West. However, this thesis is focused on the 'beneficiaries' of globalization i.e. those who 'receive' the jobs that are lost in the West. As TNCs move large part of their operations to India and other Asian countries employment for the English speaking middle class has increased. Overtly they seem to be what Lash (1994, in Adkins, 2000) calls reflexivity's winners. However, given the unequal relationship between capital and labour, which is further increased by the fickleness of capital and its ability to move at short notice, how much real bargaining power do the Indian women employed in TNCs have? Are they 'reflexivity's winners' or do they become the losers, as Adkins argues in relation to women in the West (Adkins, 2000, quoting Lash 1994)?[36]

The increasing power of TNCs can be attributed to the sustained efforts of a transnational capitalist class (TCC) whose interests are increasingly becoming global rather than local in nature (Sklair, 2001). Sklair argues that this transnational capitalist class can be divided into four fractions: a dominant fraction that consists of the executives of TNCs and their local affiliates (the corporate fraction), globalizing bureaucrats and politicians (the state fraction), globalising professionals (the technical fraction) and the merchants and media (the consumerist fraction) (2001:17). To further extend this theory, this TCC employs local labour which aspires to be part of the TCC. In the post-Fordist knowledge economy, labour is not always clearly distinguishable from management in terms of technical qualifications, cultural capital and social networks.

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[36] This question will be examined in chapter 7.

Some sections of the labour employed in the knowledge economy may be in a position to aspire to entry into managerial positions through the deployment of economic capital to acquire cultural capital. In India for instance, the number of private institutions and government aided universities offering MBAs and the increase in soft skills and English language training testifies to this aspiration. Through the acquisition of cultural capital, labour may enter into the technical fraction of the TCC. It has been argued that these worker do not identify themselves as 'labour' in the same way as blue collar assembly line workers identify themselves as labour even though their jobs may be regulated in the same manner as those of blue collar workers (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). This thesis is concerned with individuals who are already part of the TCC or view themselves as members of this class as well as those who are aspiring to be part of the TCC.

2. 4 Cultural Globalization and De-Traditionalization

Discussions of cultural globalisation either underline the unidirectional flow of cultural influences from the West to the east or the multidirectional, complex interaction of ideas. The 'unidirectional thesis' is evident in both Giddens's (2002), 'Runaway World' and Berger's (1997) 'Four Faces of Globalisation'. Although both authors acknowledge the existence of both 'homogenizing forces and the resistances to them' (Berger, 1997:24), they are concerned primarily with the how Western ideas and goods enter into non-Western spaces. For Berger the four faces of globalization can be seen in 'Davos culture'[37] which denotes the similarity of cosmopolitan, English speaking business elite across the world who constitute a sort of 'yuppie internationale', 'faculty club culture' which denotes academics and NGO professionals who subscribe to a Western interpretation of human rights, feminism and environmentalism, McWorld[38] or the penetration of American popular culture into the rest of the world and evangelical Protestantism with its attendant values of hard work, frugality and discipline (Berger, 1997).

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[37] a term coined by Samuel Huntington
[38] a term originally coined by Benjamin Barber

This theory may be applied to understand the changing lifestyle and aspirations of the upper middle class in India, aptly described as follows:

> We are, in fact, living the American dream...hit middle-level by 30, and grab the CEO chair by 35... in this new scenario it will be mostly work, and hardly any play. But for those on the laminated wannabe track a lavish lifestyle is the driving force. A car in your 20s and a flat of your own in your 30s is part of the changing dreamscape... Alas, 16-hour days don't allow for much leisure. High pressure work can only be offset by high pressure fun. Hence jazzy cars, partying late into the night, branded clothes and doing Europe.
> Jain, 2001 np

Even though its income in absolute terms is much lower than that of the middle class in the West, the Indian upper middle class (the Strivers and the lower rungs of the Globals) are able to afford many elements of a middle class lifestyle. However, even the lower middle class (Seekers) aspire for Western artefacts such as fast foods, hi-tech goods and branded clothing. They are familiar with symbols of Western culture such as Valentine's Day, New Year's Eve, shopping malls and fast food chains all of which form part of their ambition for upward social mobility.

Giddens (2002) argues that globalization is the convergence of Western forms of modernity across the world: the eroding importance of tradition, the democratization of intimate relationships and the need to create an individual self-identity in the face of de-tradionalization. Although he admits to the strengthening of local identities in the face of globalization and the occurrence of 'reverse colonization' or the influence of non-Western countries on developments in the West (Giddens, 2002:16) the main thrust of his argument lies within the unidirectional thesis which he developed in the early 1990s:

> Is modernity distinctively a Western project in terms of the ways of life fostered by these two great transformative agencies [the nation state and systematic capitalist production]? To this query, the blunt answer must be 'yes'.
> Giddens, 1990: 174-175

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The unidirectional thesis serves to highlight the possibility of cultural hegemony of one part of the globe over the other. It explains the rise of consumerism, the penetration of Western consumer brands and the desirability of Westernized lifestyles amongst the middle classes in India. The influence of the west over other parts of the world is manifested in the competition to acquire fluency in English and other related forms of cultural capital which are exchanged for jobs in TNCs. For instance, one form of cultural capital that is a key requirement for software engineers in India's IT industry is 'communication skills' which includes not only fluency in English but 'the ability to converse and interact across a variety of social and cultural situations' (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:33). However, the unidirectional thesis cannot account for the resurgence of regional and national identities, religious revivalism and the continuing importance of local cultural artefacts, customs, values and lifestyles alongside globalizing trends. This requires a more nuanced understanding of globalization which is evident in the multidirectional approach of Robertson (McGrew, 1992) and in Berger's later (2002) work.

The multidirectional thesis of globalization may be seen in Berger's later arguments presented in the introduction to 'Many Globalizations' (2002). He acknowledges the 'revitalization of indigenous cultural forms' and the acceptance of global culture with 'significant local modifications' citing examples from India Taiwan and Japan (Berger, 2002:10). A related trend is the transmission of Asian culture artefacts and practices to Europe and America as part of new age spiritual movements, alternative medical traditions and indigenous aesthetic trends such (Srinivas, 2002). Unidirectional globalization implies that modernity is a singular cultural form originating in the West and being extended to other parts of the world. However, the multidirectional thesis of globalization implies that modernity occurs in a different form in various cultures. This thesis aids us in understanding different modernities (in the plural) an idea that will be further developed towards the end of this chapter.

It has also been developed by Robertson (1995) who uses the concept of 'glocalization' to indicate the various ways in which the local responds to globalizing forces. Robertson acknowledges Giddens's time-space distanciation argument, but claims that it doesn't fully capture interactions between the global and the local (Robertson, 1995). He argues that *cultural* globalization does not mean that the world is becoming culturally homogenous. Rather it involves a process of 'glocalization', which is highly contradictory both in content and in its multiple consequences'(see Beck, 2000: 31). Glocalization is an aspect of globalization. It implies resurgence of the local, sometimes but not necessarily always in opposition to the global. When we see globalization as a direct consequence of Western forms of modernity we are in danger of seeing the global and the local as always in conflict. However the local and the global may coexist either influencing each other or as distinct elements within the same culture but not conflicting with each other.

Robertson (1995) argues for a theoretical approach that moves away from even the homogeneity/ heterogeneity debate and simply accepts localization as one aspect of globalization. For instance, the resurgence traditionalist versions of Islam which reject the West and what is defined as 'Western culture' may be seen '[not only as] Islam redefining itself against the assaults of the West but also an Islam revitalized and re-imagined as a result of its fertilization by and its appropriation of the languages and ideas given currency by the discourses of the West. ...even the rejection of and often-legitimate anger at the West that they [Islamists] give voice to are formulated in terms of the dominant discourse – Western in origin – of our global society (Ahmed, 1992: 236).' In other words, the very redefining of the local occurs in an idiom that is partly global and partly local.

Commenting on the pluralism that results from globalization Parekh (2008) claims that globalization creates opportunities for people to understand and appreciate other cultures. This inter-cultural dialogue begins with the middle classes but extends across society. However, this dialogue is fragile and threatened by the wariness with which individuals approach other cultures. While both

Western and non-Western societies enjoy the arts, music and cuisine of other cultures, they are less accepting of each other's norms and values. Since women are generally called upon to preserve and transmit cultural values it is useful to investigate the consequences women face in the encounter between the values of transnational workplaces and the cultural values of the Indian subcontinent.

Speaking from an Indian perspective Singh (2000) argues that globalization cannot be understood as unquestioning assimilation of Western culture but must be seen in terms of a selective adoption of elements of Western culture alongside a redefining of indigenous values. For instance globalization gives impetus to a globalized version of popular culture (as seen in music, films and television) but this pop-culture which 'is itself deeply enmeshed with its market, capital and commodity ethos is not able to survive in India without drawing rather heavily from its folk, ethnic and other indigenous cultural traditions (Singh,1997 in Singh, 2000: 102). People make 'pragmatic reconciliations' between Indian and western culture choosing whatever is appropriate to the context (Singh, 2000).

Srinivas (2002) discusses a telling example of how Indian traditions are preserved within an ostensibly globalized setting: on the day of Saraswati Puja when Hindus worship the tools of their trade such as scissors, cars and pens, she visited the offices of several computer companies to find that that the computer terminals in the office were being worshipped with flowers and incense. Although the executives explained that this was being done to please the 'staff' i.e. the lower graded workers, she found that many executives were enthusiastically participating in the ritual. Indian software professionals travel to East Asia, Europe and the United States of America and work with clients/ colleagues across the globe, yet they adhere strongly to many of the beliefs, values and practices of their indigenous cultures. Srinivas uses O'Flaherty's term 'tool box mentality' to describe this phenomenon, in which the appropriate paradigm is used for the appropriate occasion (Srinivas, 2002: 111).

The concept of glocalization and the multidimensional thesis of globalization is a useful starting point from which to observe India's IT industry. For instance I found that many IT companies address the problem of 'talent acquisition' or recruitment by encouraging employee referrals: asking employees to recommend people they know for jobs within the company, a trend that was also observed by Upadhya and Vasavi (2006). Although the individual recommended is judged on merit and recruited through impersonal interviewing processes, the employee who makes the referral is rewarded if the candidate recommended joins the company. Given the enduring significance of kinship and communitarian links in India, employee networks are an excellent resource in the search for a skilled and talented workforce.[39] This trend indicates how the local and the global can interact and reinforce each other.

An opposite tendency where the local conflicts with the global is evident in the clash between the work culture of American companies that set up ODCs (Offshore Development Centres) in India and the employees they hire (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). The paternalism of Indian management-employee relations contradicts the non-hierarchical ethos of employee relations in America. This paternalism is said to create greater job security but it also means that employee behaviour is strictly policed. Employees of large Indian companies argue that though they claim to be 'flat' and informal their organisations are actually hierarchical and conservative. 'I call my boss 'sir', they will feel bad if I call my boss by his first name.... And they don't like people dressing in jeans and fashionable dresses. They don't allow us to bring non-vegetarian food, even eggs!'[40] (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006: 69). Although this response refers to the culture of one company and may therefore not be generalizable to all Indian companies, I have come across similar reports in my research: for instance one company specifically forbade the consumption of alcohol at company parties in

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[39] This trend is comparable encouraging employees to return to their universities on recruitment drives on the assumption that, alumni are credible and inspirational to current students.
[40] The objection to eggs implies a specific form of the local: Brahminical vegetarianism.

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India although it was permitted in entertaining clients overseas. When I asked why this was so I was told that the CEO and some of the top management are Brahmins. These norms indicate the selective assertion of the local within a globalized context. It raises questions regarding the equation of de-traditionalization with modernity in non-Western contexts. Given the continuing importance of tradition in India as evidenced by kinship, religious practices, casteism or communalism and gender relations (Gupta, 2000) what sort of relationship can we draw between tradition and modernity? What specific consequences does this have for women? These question are examined in the substantive chapters of the thesis

2.5 Individualization & the Construction Reflexive Self-Identities

The concept of self-identity has a longer history in the social sciences than the late modernity thesis and can be traced to the Enlightenment period when the human subject was conceived as clearly identifiable, unified, indivisible. This subject which evolved within a Eurocentric and masculinized discourse was challenged by pragmatist and interactionists such as Mead, Cooley, Blumer and Goffman (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000) who argued that the self is inter-subjectively constituted and socially situated. More recently the post-modernists and post-structuralists have argued for a self that is de-centred, fragmented, multi-dimensional, provisional, hybrid and relational (Rattansi and Phoenix, 1997, Hall, 1992). The post-modernists and post-structuralists tended to conceive the self as 'docile and disciplined' under the influence of wider cultural forces or highly diffuse, fragmented and even illusory (Heaphy, 2007:93). In contrast late-modernists conceived of self-identities 'as individualized projects that emerge from a negotiation of risks and choices in everyday life' (Heaphy, 2007:93). They conceive of the self as a creation of the individual in relation to macro social process and structures.

Before proceeding further it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of an individual's self or subjectivity and that of cultural or social

identity. Parekh argues that an individual's identity has three dimensions which for analytic convenience can be distinguished as three identities: the *'personal identity'*, the *'social identity'* and the notion that one is part of the human species (2008:9 emphasis in original). Taken together the three make up the *'individual identity* or the *overall identity* of a human being' (Parekh, 2008:9 emphasis in original). Personal identity consists of an individual's 'sense of selfhood or subjectivity' which is influenced by internalized beliefs and values and personal experiences. 'It articulates their conceptions of themselves or their fundamental orientation, and provides a framework within which they view themselves and the world' (Parekh, 2008:10).

In contrast, social identity is influenced by membership of a group that has a specific significance in society: gender, class, race, ethnicity, occupational category for instance. Individuals 'define and distinguish themselves and are defined and distinguished by others in terms of one or more of these' (Parekh, 2008:9). While they influence individuals' personal identities, their choices, their behaviours and their worldview, they need to be distinguished from the subjectivity of an individual. Finally, the broadest identity is a notion that one is a member of the human species which is distinguishable from other species. Self-consciousness and the ability to create and participate in culture is an identity shared by all human beings (Parekh, 2008). The notion of collective experience and collective responsibility for facing 'universal human problems' such as epidemics, natural disasters and environmental hazards makes this identity increasingly significant in a globalizing world. In this thesis I am concerned mainly with personal identity or the subjective notion of self that individual women articulate. I call this the individual's self or self-identity. However, there exists a dialectical relationship between personal, social and human identities (Parekh, 2008) where in one identity influences the other. This is particularly true of women since they tend to experience their social identities as strongly influential in the construction of their personal identities. Therefore I analyse self-identities by drawing on social identities where appropriate.

Giddens (1991) argues that given the level of de-traditionalization in the late-modern period, and the powerful interplay between the local and the global, familiar injunctions of state, religion, family and community regarding who one is and how one should live are disappearing. Individuals are increasingly being thrown on their own resources and expected to make decisions and choices regarding work, family relationships, education, sexual orientation and lifestyle: choices that are 'not only how to act but who to be' (Giddens, 1991:81). As a result 'the self becomes a *reflexive project*': created and sustained by human action and decision (Giddens, 1991:32 emphasis in original).

The notion of lifestyle he argues is a consequence of late modernity and acquires a special significance in a post-traditional context: it includes 'routinised practices, the routines incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting favoured milieux for encountering others' but these are subject to change as individuals reflexively create their lifestyles (Giddens, 1991:81). A related trend is that of individual responsibility for reflexive life-planning based on the calibration of risk and opportunity. The future is not left to contingency but is subjected to individual influence. Lifestyle choices and life planning 'form the institutional settings which help to shape individual actions' and are a universal feature of individuals' lives in late modernity irrespective of privilege or dis-privilege, economic or social circumstances (1991:85).

The creation of one's self as a reflexive project assumes the construction of a narrative of self-identity which incorporates past and future and provides motivation and justification for choices and actions. As the individual reflects on past actions, decisions and plans for the future s/he creates a coherent biographical narrative which is necessary for psychological well being. 'Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits possessed by the individual. It is the *self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography* (Giddens, 1991:53 emphasis in original).'

Giddens's (1991) self is that of a highly empowered individual liberated from the constraints of traditional structures and making choices from a multiplicity of options. In the pursuit of self-actualization this individual attempts to calibrate opportunities and risks, making choices that increase its sense of self worth and underline its authenticity (the idea of a 'true self' as distinguished from a false one). This is a highly positive view of individualization one in which the tensions, contradictions and dilemmas that the individual faces have little place. To address this gap in Giddens's theorization of the self as an individualized project, it is useful to look at Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) notion of institutionalized individualism

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) argue that institutionalized individualism creates a paradoxical situation wherein individuals are expected to manage their own lives while adapting to external economic, social and political conditions and the changing needs of each life stage. Individuals plan their life-courses, making decisions based on a careful consideration of risks and possibilities, yet they are seldom in a position to influence the conditions in which they creates their biographies. Since traditions have lost their reified status in late-modern society they have to be chosen and defended by individuals who attempt to define themselves through the traditions that they uphold.

> If globalization, detraditionalization and individualization are
> analysed together it becomes clear that the life of own is own
> is an experimental life. Inherited recipes for living and role
> stereotypes fail to function. There are no historical models for
> the conduct of life. Individual and social life — in marriage
> and parenthood as well as in politics, public activity and paid
> work — have to be brought back into harmony with each
> other.
> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001:26

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's analysis makes it possible to consider the challenges of de-traditionalization, individualization and free choice. Individualism is accompanied by decrease in job security, the roll-back of the

welfare state and the growth of a neo-liberal market economy. At the same time a discourse of individual choice and responsibility makes the planning of one's life-course and the construction of one's self-identity a cultural imperative and an individual responsibility. Individualization becomes fate rather than choice (Bauman, 2000:34) as individual members of society to seek 'biographical solutions to systemic contradictions' (Beck, 1992:137 in Bauman 2000:34) rather than work collectively for social change.

The IT workforce in India is a case in point: they tend to engage in individual negotiations with management regarding pay and work conditions, avoiding unionization or other forms of collective action (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). Upadhya and Vasavi attribute this trend to software professionals' aspirations to enter management (2006:49). However I would argue that information technology professionals already perceive themselves as white collar workers (rather an aspiring to be so). Their very pride in their global, hi-tech, well remunerated and highly aspirational occupational identity prevents them from forming trade-unions which are associated with comparatively poorly remunerated, lower skilled and low status blue collar work. In addition, as Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) have implied, employees are encouraged to think of themselves as individual entrepreneurs negotiating salaries and terms of work, finding projects (within the company) or building their portfolio of skills and competencies on an individual basis rather than through cooperative or collective action. Emphasizing individual responsibility for career success masks the lack of consistency in management's treatment of individual employees and the structural constraints that prevent them from succeeding.

2.6 The Consequences of Individualization for Women

It is argued that individualization and de-traditionalization have had a negative impact on the patriarchal family (Giddens, 1992; Castells, 2004). Kinship relations can no longer be taken for granted but need to be created through negotiation, commitment and devotion. The freeing of sexuality from traditional norms and controls has resulted in a society where individuals are free

to create their identities independent of the family. Giddens claims that the trend towards forging 'pure relationships' i.e. relationships sought with a view to what they 'can bring to the partners involved' can potentially free women from oppressive and exploitative relationships (1991:90). Although Giddens (1992) acknowledges that men often have contradictory expectations of women: wanting a partner who is intellectually and economically equal yet expecting traditionalism in devotion to family and children, he argues that the democratization of family life and marital relationships is directly related to improvement in the status of women.

A similar point is made by Castells (2004) on the basis of statistics of marriage dissolution, single parent households and decreasing fertility rates. He argues that by entering the job market in large numbers women have increased their power within the marital relationship and are in a position to opt out of patriarchal families. He also argues that the flexiblization of labour and the availability of a range of temporary and part-time jobs has benefited women who need to balance their professional and domestic responsibilities. However Castells also acknowledges that women are burdened by what he calls the 'quadruple shift (paid work, homemaking, child rearing and night shift for the husband)'(2004:193). He argues as women see the unfairness of their positions feminist ideas and movements gain ground further destabilizing patriarchy.

Taking a less optimistic view Beck and Beck- Gernsheim discuss how individualization creates a stress on family life due to the 'contradictions between family demands and personal freedom' (Beck and Beck- Gernsheim 1995:2). Two individuals who are both engaged in creating their biographies through personal and professional achievements may find their that life-plans often contradict each other, yet due to the ideal of individualism, neither is willing to sacrifice his/her plan for the other.

The contradiction is exacerbated by the conflicting demands of the workplace and family life: the workplace requires flexibility, mobility and

aggressive competitiveness while family life is dependent on stability, rootedness and concern for others (Beck-Gernsheim 2002). In the labour market, the worker is seen as a 'flexible work unit, competitive and ambitious, prepared to disregard the social commitments linked to his/her existence and identity...prepared to move whenever necessary' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim: 1995:6). This was possible when one member in the relationship devoted herself to the home but in a situation where both partners are equally devoted to their professional commitments, a high degree of stress enters the relationship. In trying to negotiate the multiple contradictions of their social realities (individualized workplace ethos vs. collectivist family ethos) and their own expectations from each other partners carry out complex negotiations before and during the marriage trying to match their individual aims and plans with that of the other person. An inability to match individual biographies can cause of marital or relationship breakdown (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's arguments indicate that experiences of modernity are gendered. Their conclusions are based on the experiences of women in Europe but a similar view is advanced by Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe (2003) in relation to Asian and Pacific women (see the last section of this chapter). Individualization and de-traditionalization neither have similar consequences for men and women nor do they automatically lead to freedom and equality for women. While dismantling some power structures, modernity creates new challenges for women and undermines their ability to make the most of financial independence that comes from entering paid employment.

2.7 Alternatives to Giddens's Notion of the Reflexive Self

In his optimism about late modernity Giddens not only tends to overstate the agency of this self and overlooks the contradictions inherent in the individualization, he also fails to account for differential access to resources for self-construction (Heaphy, 2007; Jackson, 2008, Adkins, 2002). Individuals have differential access to resources for self-construction based on gender, class, race

and ethnicity for instance. While some are able to create more mobile and flexible self-identities through lifestyle choices and life-plans others, women in particular, find themselves constrained within identities that are more fixed and immutable. They are 'reflexivity's losers' due to their lack of access to power and privilege (Adkins, 1998, quoting Lash, 1994).

Heaphy (2007) contends that Giddens does not recognise the significance of power in the creation of a self-identity, a factor that is addressed in Foucault's notion of the self as discursive constituted. Foucault has been criticised for inadequately theorising agency and failing to account for the difference between masculine and feminine experiences of being subjected to regulation through disciplinary discourses (see Heaphy, 2007). However, his ideas give an insight into the operation of power in the creation of self-identity.

Further Heaphy quotes Lash, 1993 to argue that Giddens's theory of self-identity fails to account for 'the complexity of selfhood' and 'ignores the potential messiness of self-identity, the differences between and within subjectivities, and undermines the content of subjectivity'(2007:102). In Giddens's theory, the individual rarely engages in self-criticism or self doubt and never seems to feel torn apart between identities. In contrast, fellow late modernity theorist Bauman creates a picture of the self as fragmented, fragile and highly vulnerable (Heaphy, 2007), a self that is condemned to making choices and taking responsibility for its life-course in a world that is increasingly unpredictable (Bauman, 2001).

Giddens has been criticised for failing to take into account the social nature of reflexivity (Heaphy, 2007; Adams, 2003; Jackson, 2008). Giddens's self is a creation of the individual acting independent of social and cultural norms. However, individuals do not create their self-identities in a vacuum. Society, culture and language give individuals the resources and ingredients with which to construct their self-identities (Adams, 2003). Both Jackson (2008) and Adams (2003) use Mead's notion of the self as social to argue that reflexivity is

inherently social. They argue that the late-modernist notion of individual reflexivity suggests a degree of ethnocentrism and fails to account for the more social forms of reflexivity that occur not only in non-Western but also to some extent in Western societies.

According to Mead the self 'is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience' i.e. it is constituted when individuals begin to see themselves as an object through the eyes of others; this objective attitude, the or 'self-consciousness' (as opposed to consciousness which is simply an experience) then leads to socially appropriate conduct (1934: 140). Mead's self is thus socially grounded through shared attitudes. Shared attitudes of the 'generalized other' are communicated through language, a system of symbols with commonly understood meanings (1934: 154). As a full-fledged or 'organic' member of society, the individual reflects the attitudes and institutions of the social group; the mind of the individual, very act of thinking is socially constituted. It is impossible for individuals to reflexively construct themselves except by engaging the norms, values and ideas that are available to them within their culture.

Mead (1934) argues that individuals are engaged in continuous reflection on themselves as objects in the eyes of others while engaged in social interactions. This implies a reflexive understanding of self (me) in the previous moment (or day) which the individual subject (I) produces in the present moment. The creation of an individual's self-identity is an ongoing reflexive process of looking at the past and the future from the standpoint of the present (Jackson, 2008). The 'me' of an individual represents the internalized set of shared attitudes which enables individuals to engage in an internal conversation about their appearance in the eyes of others. This reflexiveness enables participation in social life and engagement in dialogue with society.

Mead recognises the existence of individuality in spite of social control: the I is that aspect of the self that is reacting to social conditions and has potential

to create change. Although he does not use the term 'agency', Mead recognises the capacity of individuals to bring about social change. He also recognises individuals' need to be themselves i.e. to express socially inappropriate attitudes and behaviours in certain contexts (e.g. with close friends) and suggests that with greater levels of complexity in social organisation, the scope of individuality increases, however, the maintenance of complex social relations depends on the existence and interaction of individual selves.

The choices open to individuals for the reflexive construction of a self-identity are culturally mediated. For instance the decision to practise an environmentally-friendly lifestyle, pursue professional success, remain single or adopt children could be seen as exercising choices that are offered by the culture and connected with a self-identity as a socially conscientious, interesting, professionally-committed, successful, non-conformist, intelligent or emotionally balanced person (to name a few of the possible identities that people might construct). In other words even while individuals are engaged in reflexively constructing their self-identities they are conforming to one or the other of the choices made available to them by society and that these choices though varied are nevertheless determined and de-limited by the predominant culture of the time (and geographical location). 'In fact the construction of the self as an empowered, liberated agent is itself the unreflexive product of a particular cultural tradition; namely Western modernity' (Adams, 2003:234). Jackson (2008) argues that when applied to non-Western context and to women the concept of individualized reflexivity is not of much value. Instead reflexivity needs be understood in a social sense. The reflexivity of the Indian women researched by Tokita-Tanabe (2003) in a small town in Orissa indicates this socially- rooted reflexivity: 'They are not individuals whose own thinking and desires matter most, but see themselves always in relation to their social surroundings and have internalized the gaze of others as their own' (2003:188).

The gap between the individual and the social in Giddens's notion of self-identity is addressed by Parekh's three dimensional conception of identity discussed earlier. Parekh's (2008) argument that personal identity is an individual achievement in non-traditional contexts where society ceases to provide clearly scripted social positions is akin to Giddens. However, he moves beyond the extremes of identity as created in a vacuum versus identity as ascribed by society. Like Giddens, Parekh (2008) claims that personal identity is a result of self-reflection and self-understanding but emphasises the 'intellectual and moral compass' that identity provides for individuals to plan and their actions and choices. In contrast to Giddens (1991) who discusses the issues of self-worth, self-actualization and authenticity in terms of reflexivity, Parekh (2008) considers self-worth and authenticity in terms of how one's personal identity provides a coherent guide for one's behaviour. While Giddens argues that a coherent self-identity emerges when the individual makes a decision from a multiplicity of choices, Parekh claims that individuals have the capacity to be many selves on which we try to impose a coherence 'by committing ourselves to being certain kinds of people'. He allows for the analysis of normativity and power in the construction of social identity. The notion of social identities also acknowledges the existence of racial, ethnic and cultural resources for identity construction.

Parekh's (2008) notion of plural identities addresses the issue of messiness in identities that Heaphy (2007) points to. He (Parekh) claims that while we have a plurality of social identities to choose from, in a given social context one identity emerges as primary and the others must be subordinate to it (the appropriateness of which identity to mobilise is viewed as an ethical decision). Parekh also accounts for the diversity in individual constructions of identity. While people may share the same social identity the degree to which they value it or the investment they make in it may differ. Thus while one individual revels in her identity as a mother, a teacher or a homemaker, another may simply view motherhood and teaching as roles that she performs and not as distinctive features that define who she is. Moreover, the dialectical relationship between social and

personal identities, he claims, allows individuals to bring a 'distinct personal flavour' to their social identities: individuals are mothers, teachers, Indians or Hindus in different ways. Although he does not make an explicitly feminist argument, Parekh argues that both the experience of and the nature of social identity gendered. Women 'have a narrower range of identities than have men' and 'their identities tend to be more heavily scripted' due to their role as 'transmitters of society's culture (2008:16).

Taking this argument further it may be said that because of their responsibilities in caring for others their identities are more relational: they are created in relationship with others and well as in relation to context. This relationality combined with their relative lack of power leads to an identity construction that is more influenced by others. Jackson (2008) argues that women's reflexivity is qualitatively different from men's since it is associated with caring for and anticipating the needs of others. Men, having had their needs taken care of, may be in a better position to engage in more individualistic forms of reflexivity (perhaps akin to what Giddens describes) while women are skilled in forms of *relational reflexivity* which 'feeds into men's reflexive self-making' (Jackson, 2008:6)

2.8 The Late Modernity Thesis and Non-Western Cultures

The critics of the late modernity thesis argue that societies cannot be defined as completely traditional or completely individualized, but that both 'tradition-informed' and 'autonomous' ways of life can be found to co-exist within the same society (Heelas 1996:9). Traditions are constructed and re-constructed across time. They continue to persist in late modernity although with increasing rationalization they 'lose their status as unquestionable truths' (Thompson 1996:9). They may no longer act as a normative guide but continue to influence the formation of identity. Traditions are becoming de-ritualized and de-localized but are transported across geographical locations where they continue to play an important role in defining the identities of individuals and

groups (Thompson 1996; Appadurai, 1996). One example of this 'de-territorialization' can be seen in religious revivalism that becomes popular amongst Sikh, Hindu and Muslim diasporic populations. For instance, the increased emigration of Indians to the West has created a 'complicated network of finances and religious identifications, by which the problem of cultural reproduction for Hindus abroad has become tied to the politics of Hindu fundamentalism at home' (Appadurai, 1996:36).

Theories of individuation tend to marginalize cultural difference within Western societies as they do not account for the experiences of those groups that have strong commitments to tradition because of their experiences of transnationalism. Smart and Shipman's study of migrant Hindu, Muslim and Catholic families in Britain shows a strong commitment to traditional practices and identities. However, they also argue that individuals who conform to tradition in some areas of their lives also commit to change in others; this phenomenon has to be understood as a 'continual process of negotiation and realignment' (Smart and Shipman, 2004: 507). People's commitment to tradition is influenced not just by their experiences of migration and transnationalism and the expectations of family and community but also by personal and social circumstances. Smart and Shipman's (2004) argue with regard to migrant communities that conformity to tradition can be both a rational and emotive decision. I would argue that tradition continues to play a significant role in the lives of all social groups and not just those of migrants: Christmas, Thanksgiving or Remembrance Day are occasions for people to re-enact tradition, reinforce collective memories and create a sense of shared identity irrespective of whether they have migrated to distant places or remained at home.

Another critique of the modernity-de-traditionalization thesis is that it supports the Enlightenment view of the West as the epitome of a rational and modern social order. It tends to otherize non-Western cultures as feminine and projects the attainment of modernity as a struggle against the feminine (Scott,

1995 in Hayami, Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). Adams argues that 'there may be a degree of ethnocentrism in recent accounts of reflexivity' i.e. they presuppose societies to be moving along a continuum from traditional to reflexive where post-traditional Western societies are posited as personifying the reflexive end of the continuum (2003:225).

A similar view may be taken of Gupta's (2000) argument with regard to the Indian middleclass. Gupta argues that the Indian middle class's modernity is only superficial as it depends on pre-modern structures to perpetuate its dominant status: patronage, parochialism, the invocation of real or fictitious kinship ties and to by-pass principles of meritocracy. The popularity of religious cults, icons and symbols and importance of caste in marriage alliances are also evidence of the continuity of tradition. Gupta's (2000:12) view is based on a very specific definition of modernity in terms of four characteristics: 'dignity of the individual', 'adherence to universalistic norms', 'elevation of individual achievement over privileges or disprivileges of birth' and 'accountability in public life'. On this basis not many societies can be defined as modern since a closer look at several Western societies that claim modernity uncovers many inegalitarian practices. While these characteristics in themselves are worth aspiring towards, a broader definition of modernity that includes not only normative standards but specific institutional dimensions (such as those described by Giddens, 1990:59): 'capitalism', 'industrialism' and the existence of a nation state with territorial boundaries which engages in 'surveillance' or 'control of information and social supervision' and has 'control of the means of violence' allows us to consider the Indian middle class's modernity as one wherein many traditions continue, some of which are inegalitarian and undemocratic.

The basis of the late modernity thesis can be traced to the post-Enlightenment period when European modernity began to define itself in relation to non-European cultures (Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). Colonialism further strengthened this tendency as both Western and non-Western cultures attempted

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to define themselves against the other. The West came to epitomise a masculinized form of rationality and social order as opposed to the non-West which characterised as feminine, spiritual and emotional (Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003); these dichotomies inform contemporary thinking on late modernity. Since the colonial period non-Western cultures have attempted to create a unique identity based on indigenous tradition whilst pursing modernity inspired by the West. The concern that blind imitation of the West will lead to erosion of indigenous culture and identity has been a subtext in several colonial and post-colonial attempts at identity creation and is epitomised by the letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

2.9 Conclusion

In the previous chapter I discussed the Indian nationalists' attempt to reinvent tradition in a modernizing nation where the West was a role model for public and political life. The dichotomies mentioned above are relevant to understanding this position (Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). As I described in Chapter 1, Indian women became significant players in this attempt at preserving tradition within modernity. They became hallmarks of the distinctive modernity that the culture is trying to create for itself. Their experience mirrors that of other countries that experienced colonization: Egypt (Pollard, 2005), Sri Lanka (Jayawardena, 2002) and Indonesia (Nakatani, 2003). However, to assume that they are passive recipients of the identity choices given to them would undermine their agency in constructing these identities. Their engagement in editing the women's magazines and journals that debated these identities (see Awaya, 2003, Talwar, 1989) and their active participation in nationalist politics where they demanded greater representation indicates that they were engaged in reflexive construction of their own identities (Liddle and Joshi, 1986).

The experiences of non-Western societies such as India in pursuing modernity cannot be grasped by the thesis of late modernity without significant modifications. They indicate the occurrence of 'other modernities' which may be

qualitatively different from Western modernity and 'not merely local enactments nor simple examples of a universal model'(Rofel, 1999: xii). Due to local cultural specificities, different modernities develop in different parts of the globe. In addition the experiences of women in these cultures point to the need to take a gendered view of modernity. The concepts of individualism and reflexivity need to incorporate the notion of 'social gaze' when applied to India. The social nature of reflexivity needs to taken into account both when discussing the Indian context as well as with regard to women. However, it is important that the research does not adopt a simplistic 'West- individualist, East collectivist' dichotomous model but recognises that there are levels of individualism and collectivism in both cultures. The discourse of de-traditionalization is unlikely to be helpful in understanding India due to the resilience and robustness of traditions within contemporary Indian society. As Deshpande argues, labels such as tradition and modernity should be used with care treating them 'as invitations, not as descriptions'(2003: 47). Instead of a dichotomy of 'tradition-modernity' a conceptual framework that speaks of continuity and change, and one that takes into account the selective re-invention of tradition would be more useful in understanding modernity in the Indian context.

Chapter 3

Studying the Lives of Women in Globalized India: Setting, Research Methods and Tactics

In this chapter I describe the process of fieldwork and this story in the light of current debates in feminist methodology. In order to situate the research participants in their social and occupational setting, I begin with a detailed description of the setting in which the research occurred: the city of Bangalore and the IT industry. The length of this description may make it seem like a digression, but the examination of the 'where' of fieldwork helps understand the 'how' and 'why': what methods were used, why certain strategies were employed what decisions needed to be taken and what constraints were faced. I introduce the 'who' of the research: the twenty six participants aged 24 to 37 years whom I contacted through a snowballing process.[41] I then describe the 'when' and 'how': the three stages of fieldwork characterised by different methods.

I examine my own shifting position in the field and the various identities I adopted and was assigned. I discuss the potential of feminist research methods in gaining access to experiences and knowledge that are less visible to mainstream sociologists but also examine the complexities and ethical issues that the feminist researcher faces, some of which became evident during my fieldwork. Finally, I reflect on the methods that I used in analysis, the excavation of themes and the writing process. In violation of the conventions of a chapter on methods I use

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[41] It has been argued that the term participant (falsely) implies equality of ownership over the research and masks the researcher's control over the collection and interpretation of accounts (Letherby, 2003). However, while I acknowledge my privileged position as a researcher, I prefer to use the term 'participants' to 'respondents' or 'interviewees'. 'Participants' conveys the idea that the women who formed my research sample chose to be interviewed and acknowledges their contribution to my research.

quotes from participants to explicate my ideas, decisions that I took in the field and methods of analysis. There are two reasons for this: it indicates the participants' reflexive understanding of their experiences (Stanley and Wise, 1993) of globalization and its repercussions, and grounds the research in their understanding of their experiences and the realities in which they live their daily lives (Smith, 2002; 1987).

3.1 The Setting of the Research

3.1.1 A Very Specific Bangalore (Bengaluru)[42]

Table 3: Bangalore: Profile of a Globalizing City

Population	• 7.2 million
Location	• Karnataka, Southern India
Languages spoken	• Kannada, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu,
Literacy rate	• 85.74%
'Facts' about Bangalore: (While the authenticity of 'facts' sourced from a tourism website are debatable, they serve as an indicator of the city's cosmopolitan self-image.)	• Hosts the highest number of public sector government organisations in India (including Indian Telephone Industries; Hindustan Aeronautical Limited and Indian Space Research Organisation which have contributed to increasing the city's technological capacity)
	• Has contributed the largest percentage of professionals to the Indian Diaspora in USA (over 60%)
	• Has produced the highest number of Indian scientists considered for the Nobel Prize
	• Has the highest traffic density and the highest number of two-wheeler vehicles in the world
	• Has the highest number of pubs in India

Source: Karnataka.com

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[42] Following the recent trend of reverting to pre-colonial names of major Indian cities, Bangalore was officially renamed Bengaluru in 2006, however I have chosen to use the more established name of the city, Bangalore, in this thesis. It is the name that all my research participants used when speaking of their city.

Figure 1: India: Political Map[43]

The fieldwork took place in my hometown Bangalore, located in southern India (see Figure 1) but a very specific Bangalore, the Bangalore of the globalizing middle class. It is not the quiet postcolonial 'pensioner's paradise' of the 1960s or the 'garden city' of 1970s and 80s with its sprawling bungalows and clean lakes. This is 'the pub capital' of the 1990s, the 'IT city' of the new millennium, or

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[43] Due to a border dispute with Pakistan other maps may show a slightly different north western boundary; however the boundaries in the above map are accepted in India. Accessed from Maps of India via http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/india-political-map.htm

India's 'fashion capital' as one of my participants eagerly proclaimed. This is a Bangalore of speciality restaurants, shopping malls, multiplexes, high rise apartments and information technology parks; a Bangalore where the internet cafes of the 1990s have already become redundant because their clientele access the Internet at home, at the office and in the car. It is a Bangalore that the poor can only glimpse, a Bangalore that bewilders and dismays the city's older residents.

> Young men and women with cell phones, laptops, and new cars
> are conspicuous. More than three hundred pubs in the central
> business district are packed on evenings and weekends with
> loud and noisy discussions of the latest change in management
> in Sunnyvale, Chicago or Bangalore.
> Srinivas, 2000:10

Srinivas's description of Bangalore's young 'IT elite', who form the new middle class contrast sharply with the remarks of an auto-rickshaw driver who was driving me through a traffic jam on Mahatma Gandhi Road (one of the busiest areas in Bangalore) during my fieldwork:

> Look at the cars! They all get loans from their companies and
> they want to buy the biggest car possible. When the Tatas
> manufacture the one lakh car all these other people [pointing
> to the scooters and motorcycles] will want cars as well and
> there will be no space at all on the roads.[44] Garden City my
> foot! It's a gaadi [vehicle] city.
> An auto-rickshaw driver in Bangalore speaking in Hindi (2006)

These comments encapsulates the city's transformation into a globalized city and what that means it terms of quality of life, infrastructure and the polarization of classes. As the birthplace of the country's IT industry, Bangalore can be said to be a microcosm of the globalization in India mirroring the changes that are taking place in other metropolitan cities such as Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai. Like these cities it is becoming polarized on two levels: between the old and the

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[44] The Tata group of companies has recently launched the 'Nano' a car that costs only one lakh i.e. one hundred thousand rupees (at the time of this conversation it was under construction). (See The Economist, 2008)

new middle classes who are to some extent represented by the older and newer residents of the city and between the information technology professionals who form the Seekers and the Strivers mentioned in Chapter 1 on the one hand and the Aspirers and the Deprived on the other. Incidents of mugging of IT professionals, of looting and of arson are often attributed to this polarization.

There is also a polarization between the old and new residents of the city. Some IT professionals have migrated into the city while others have grown up in Bangalore, therefore a clear distinction between 'the IT crowd' and the older residents is not always possible. Their unprecedented salaries and integration into the global economy, frequent business travel and overseas assignments gives IT workers access to a globalized consumerist lifestyle. This, older residents believe, has 'contaminated' the city's culture, but research indicates that their conservatism is mirrored by IT workers themselves (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). While they have more disposable income than their parents, they tend to invest it similar ways to the latter: for the family's security and in children's education rather than 'on expensive lifestyle products' (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:106). Like Upadhya and Vasavi (2006), I found that they distance themselves from the supposed frivolity and permissiveness of the 'call centre/BPO crowd'. Participation in a global lifestyle sits uneasily with the traditionalism of both old and new middle class IT workers.

To some extent the schism between the old and new middle class is visible in spatial terms, but here too clear distinctions are difficult to draw. The city has been spatially divided since the colonial period: those localities of the city (Maleshwaram, Jayanagar or Baswangoodi) that were considered the stronghold of Brahmin communities were known for a more conservative ethos while areas of the city that formed the cantonment of the colonial administration (Mahatma Gandhi Road, Brigade Road, Residency Road and Infantry Road) were associated with more unorthodox values and behaviour. Bars, pubs restaurants and cinemas were situated in these areas. Of late new residential areas have developed nearer

the software technology parks: Koramangala, Whitefield, Marathahalli, Sarjapur Road, which are populated with high rise blocks of flats owned by IT professionals. However, due to the need for space, the old bungalows of the more traditional localities have also been replaced with multi-storeyed flats indicating that the new middle class of IT professionals have penetrated all areas of the city.

Bangalore has become a city of contrasts: glass-fronted buildings in landscaped gardens are flanked by slums and mud roads. The number of branded supermarkets has increased but the local greengrocer is ubiquitous. Old established and highly respected missionary schools are in competition with expensive private schools that boast Olympic standard sports facilities and international curricula. There are several glaring infrastructural problems: traffic congestion, poorly maintained roads, poor waste disposal, overflowing public dustbins and shortage of electricity. The high traffic density has resulted in an almost permanent traffic jam on several major roads. Taxis hired by call-centres to convey employees to work and back throughout the 24 hour work-day drive so dangerously that companies place stickers on the back of their vehicles asking road users to call a complaint cell if drivers breaks traffic rules.[45] I end this description of Bangalore with a quote from one of the participants in my research. Malini is currently taking a career break to look after her child. Perhaps this has given her a chance to reflect upon the manner in which the new middle class in general and the IT industry in particular can insulate itself from the rest of the city in what she calls *'a beautiful world'* and *' a world with plenty.'*

> *Your friends are in the same circle, your houses will be in the*
> *same circle, your thoughts are there twenty four hours. You live*
> *in that world. It's a beautiful world and it's a world with plenty*
> *but you have to be careful when you come back to reality. You*
> *travel in a lovely car you have a driver or you have a [company]*
> *bus. He picks you, he drops you. Your food is taken care of.*
> *Everything is taken care of. Door to office, office to door. You*
> *go with a set of people you're comfortable with you go and hang*
> *around in places that probably are slightly expensive.*

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[45] This procedure has had little success in reducing the number of traffic accidents.

Most of these guys if you ask them what's happening in the world around, they have no idea because they've been too busy having calls in the night. Twenty four hours they're online. Except their codes and their jobs and their deliveries and their schedules, they don't know much. So their world, it's a very small world. Even when you go out of [the] country you will find a friend of yours hanging around there. But what happens is you're not aware of the world outside other than the world you are comfortable with. There are certain pockets where you have slums, they have problems, they have dacoities [robberies]. We have all kinds of issues. Probably you're not very careful about this because you're secluded and you are comfortable in the world you've generated around you.'
Malini, 33, Currently not in employment (resigned as manager), Mother

3.1.2 The Beautiful World of Information Technology Companies

The IT/ITES (Information Technology/ Information Technology Enabled Services) industry is considered a poster child for the success of India's globalization agenda and the economic reforms initiated in 1991. The industry is perceived to have played a crucial role in making India a major player in the world economy, contributing to 5.2% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product in 2006, providing direct employment to 1.6 million people and indirectly employing an additional 6 million and making revenues of US$39.6 billion in 2006-07 (NASSCOM Newsline, 2007). The industry has registered an annual growth rate of over 25% (Karnik, 2008).

The rapid growth of the industry is often attributed to the economic reforms enacted by the government in 1991 which devalued the rupee, curtailed tariffs on imports, eliminated industrial licensing in all but a few key industries and allowed for direct foreign investment of up to 51% (Das, 2000). However, earlier policy initiatives by the government in the 1980s[47] and the close links

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[47] These include 'tax holidays, duty free import of equipment and provision of free or subsidized infrastructure and land, the establishment of software technology parks, and the like' (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; 10).

between the government and industry leaders meant that the industry has been growing even before the economic liberalization period (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006).[48] Moreover, a well-established network of NRI (Non-Resident Indian) investors and entrepreneurs in the Silicon Valley in USA has encouraged investment in India since the mid 1980s (Upadhya, 2004). In addition the low labour and infrastructural costs in India and the availability of technically qualified English speaking labour power has spurred the industry's growth (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). The growth of the IT industry needs to be understood in relation to the development of the global post-industrial economy and improvements in technologies of tele-communication which are an aspect of time-space distanciation (Giddens,1990). This has specific consequences for relationship between the Indian companies and their overseas clients which need to be understood in terms of the hierarchy between globalized capital and local labour (Bauman, 1998 and Beck, 2000).[49]

The globally networked software industry, with its modernist buildings, unprecedented salaries and claims of an egalitarian ethos is perceived as symbolic of a prosperous India that has shaken off the effects of colonialism and taken its rightful place in the world economy. In keeping with this image, IT companies create infrastructure reminiscent New York, Singapore and Dubai. The offices in which I visited participants have state-of-the-art facilities, concierge desks and swimming pools. They are equipped with superior quality electronic equipment, ergonomically designed furniture and (according to some of my participants) even bean bags and couches. Employees are provided with laptops and cell phones. Cafeterias serve Indian, Chinese and American fast foods at subsidized rates. Many offices are in large self-contained tech parks which also house restaurants, food courts, banks and sports facilities.

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[48] NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies), the premier trade body and the chamber of commerce of the IT/ITES industry is represented in the Ministries of Commerce, Finance and Human Resources Development and Labour (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:10).
[49] See also Chapters 2 and 5.

The remarks of the CEO of one company best exemplifies the image that IT companies attempt to court: 'We like to think of Infosys [a major Indian company with transnational links] as *in India but not run by India...* our clients should not notice that the infrastructure is any different to their own no matter where they come from.' (Ramesh 2000 in Sklair, 2001: 30-31; emphasis mine). It seems that even employees are made to feel that they are in another world far removed from the squalor, poverty and chaos that is also an integral part of Bangalore's landscape.

However, the culture of the companies does reflect that of the city. Many companies have dress codes that include both Western and Indian outfits but are fairly conservative in their strictures and addressed to female employees. Several Indian festivals such as Diwali, Christmas and Indian Independence Day are celebrated in the company. Although English is the language of business communication, it is not uncommon to hear Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and other Indian languages being spoken in the cafeteria or food court. The Indian transnational companies or MICs (major Indian companies) are said to employ an ethos of traditional Indian paternalism and protectionism. In contrast the multinational companies (or rather their ODCs -Offshore Development Centres in India) are believed to have a more impersonal attitude; IT workers claim that there is less job security in these companies (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006).[50]

3.1.3 The IT Workforce

Given their close relationship with transnational clients, the industry requires a workforce that is technically skilled but also possesses certain forms of cultural capital which would enable them to communicate and work with colleagues and clients across the globe. Labelled 'soft skills' these cultural attributes include fluency in English, a cosmopolitan outlook, ability to mix freely with people outside of one's community and exposure to metropolitan lifestyles. As a result the larger proportion of the IT workforce consists of employees who are able to

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[50] This is also reflected in the accounts of some of my participants.

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demonstrate these soft skills i.e. educated in English-medium rather than vernacular schools, upper caste rather than lower caste families and urban rather than rural backgrounds (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006; Krishna and Brihmadesam, 2006; Upadhya, 2007). It contradicts the industry's claims of egalitarianism and meritocracy evident in internal communications and industry leaders' public statements.[51]

The IT workforce is not a monolithic entity. It is internally highly differentiated. Employees' qualifications range from Bachelors degrees in humanities and social sciences and science to Masters degrees in business administration or computer application. The employees who work in the technical section tend to have an engineering degree while those that work in marketing or human resources tend to have an MBA. A few employees have PhDs or Master of Science degrees. The top management frequently consists of individuals who have acquired educational qualifications or work experience abroad. It is unlikely that anyone with no college education will be directly employed by the company. Several unskilled/ semi-skilled jobs such office assistance, typing and low level administration are performed by contract workers who are recruited via agencies that keeps a substantial portion of the workers' salaries. Administrators tend to have an undergraduate degree.

It is useful to think of various employees in terms of the fractions of the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC) discussed in Chapter 2. While the senior management of the companies fall into the corporate fraction of the TCC, the software engineers or the globalizing professionals form the technical fraction. The former may be classified as Globals (including new entrants into this class who may have parents in the strivers category). The latter are usually Strivers or Seekers whose parents are in the same category or one category below). The

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[51] See NASSCOM blog post by Kiran Karnik (2008) regarding the need to expand the industry into and non-urban, non-metropolitan regions and Subroto Baghchi's (2007) speech at the NASSCOM IT Women Leadership Summit regarding the significance of women in the industry's future. While it may be argued that this is part of the industry's attempt to court a socially responsible image and meet shortages in skilled labour, several of the industry's human resource initiatives, especially for women, are unprecedented in India.

administrative workers, junior level sales and recruitment executives, receptionists, accountants and other contract workers form the labour hired by the TCCs. They may be classified as Seekers. As argued in the previous chapter there is some ambiguity in the definition of labour and management. The software professionals whose work is closely monitored, routinized and often alienating are sometimes defined as labour though they do not identify themselves as such (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). Some engineers are keen to take up managerial roles while others prefer to continue coding software.

The women of this workforce are concentrated in the lower rungs of company hierarchy such as administration and secretarial work. Amongst software engineers there are more women in testing and quality assurance than in high profile areas such as architecture, design and consultancy (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). However, the ratio of women to men in the IT workforce in India (estimated by NASSCOM as 30% or above in 2007 see Alexander, 2007) rival those of developed countries such as the USA (26% in 2006 according to National Centre for Women in Information Technology, USA) and are predicted to increase in the near future (see Alexander, 2007).

3.1.4 Industry Policies Regarding Women

The IT industry has consistently built an image of being highly sensitive to the needs of women employees. Women in top positions are widely celebrated and regularly quoted in the media. The press regularly refers to the opportunities for women in the industry, the initiatives aimed at increasing their numbers and the work-life balance policies intended to make it easier to combine career and family life (Alexander, 2007; Nayare Ali, 2006; Ramalingam, 2007). Loosely labelled 'diversity' or inclusivity' initiatives,[52] these include targets for recruiting women, evaluating managers on how many women they retain in their team, encouraging women to work from home by providing Internet connectivity (above a certain

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[52] Unlike Western corporate/ equal opportunities discourse where the term diversity refers to a range of differences in terms of ethnic, racial and religious identities, age groups, ability groups and sexual orientations, diversity policy in the Indian IT industry largely addresses the needs of women employees.

grade), optional extension of maternity leave, company transport for women who work late and day care facilities for children. Some of the bigger companies have diversity and inclusivity initiatives and even a 'diversity' team or manager whose job is to look after the needs of women employees.

The industry's trade body NASSCOM supports a 'Gender Inclusivity Initiative', a forum that's objectives include 'sensitize[ing] senior management and policy makers in the IT and ITES industry on gender inclusivity', 'sharing best practice in this area' and 'highlight[ing] success stories of companies that have brought more women into their corporate leadership (NASSCOM)'. [53] The activities of this forum include skill building workshops and networking opportunities for women. Individual companies have similar initiatives which are highlighted in the press and on the NASSCOM website[54] (Alexander 2007; Nayare Ali, 2006; Ramalingam, 2007). Companies also publish detailed policies against harassment of female employees; several companies promote what they call a zero tolerance approach towards sexual harassment. The participants in my research are drawn from amongst these supposedly highly privileged women.

3.2 The Participants in the Research

3.2.1 Access: Informal Networks and Formal Credibility

At all stages of my research I accessed participants through a snowballing method i.e. through personal networks and the networks of participants themselves. I began by emailing friends and friends of friends. Usually these emails would result in an introduction and the sharing of a phone number or email address of someone who the introducer thought would have something useful to share. I would follow up this reference, contacting potential participants either by phone or via email. The emails helped explain my agenda to participants and tell

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[53] See NASSCOM (2007a)

[54] See NASSCOM Showcase Company. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will examine the effectiveness of these policies and practices in relation to the economic climate in which the IT industry operates and the degree to which individual participants are able to take advantage of these policies.

[56] The three emails, two for the blog, a third regarding the focus group and a fourth about the interview are reproduced in Appendix B

them how much time they would be committing.[56] I also sensed that it tended to create some credibility especially since it contained a link to my profile on the Centre for Women's Studies webpage which further describes my research.[57] A few participants read and commented on this profile. In some cases I met participants briefly to set up the interview. When this initial meeting took place it was 'an opportunity to promote collegiality and engage in mutual self-disclosure' (Minister, 1991:37) but given participants' schedules it was not always possible.

At first I considered 'recruiting' participants via human resource managers and executives at companies, but changed my mind because I sensed that this might affect my ability to win their confidence. This was borne out when a participant, who had earlier declined when her senior colleague (a personal friend of mine) requested her participation, expressed willingness to participate on being introduced by her own friend. As Liu (2005) found during her research amongst women in China, informal networks are best for gaining access and building trust in a relational culture where personal bonds are highly valued. However, in the case of my participants who simultaneously inhabit the relational world of the community and the individualized setting of the global market economy, a combination of relational and impersonal methods such as emailed requests for participation are useful. While conducting research amongst professionals, written requests and assurances about confidentiality raise the researcher's credibility and create a safe environment in the interview.

3.2.2 The Participants: Self-Selected and Eager to Contribute

> ...for qualitative research, the objective is not to select a
> representative sample from which one can draw general
> conclusions but to allow the field to define itself by searching
> for linkages and relationships and then following them... One
> has to begin somewhere and then see where that somewhere
> leads.
> Upadhya, 2008:66

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[57] http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/cws/gsp/resstud.htm#Jyothsna

The participants were a self-selected group. Some women who I contacted politely refused to contribute, while others who were interested could not make the time. Towards the end of my fieldwork some of my initial intermediaries contacted me to say that interviewees had shared their experiences with friends who had then volunteered to meet me. Interviewing a self-selected group of women who were willing to contribute rather than a supposedly representative sample who felt obliged to do so was not only personally satisfying but met the feminist agenda of giving voice to muted subjects (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

Twenty-six women from 24 to 37 years of age participated in face-to-face interviews and focus groups while an additional 5 were invited to participate in an online discussion via a blog before I went to Bangalore. Within this group, one woman was single, twenty-three were married (of which 17 had children); two were going through marital separation and divorce. Given the mean age for marriage in India –19.5 years in 1997 – the larger number of married women and mothers is not surprising (Source: National Resource Centre for Women, 200-)

The participants were engaged in various functions across the hierarchy in the IT industry: software engineering, human resource management, sales and marketing, operations, administration and finance. Managers included senior management such as regional or country level managers and directors with over 10 years' experience, junior managers such as 'project leads' with 3-5 years experience and team leaders with about 7- 10 years' experience. There were executives who were on a management track; these were usually younger women with less than 5 years' work experience. The administrative and staff had an average of about 8 years' experience. Having spent less time in higher education, they had acquired more years of work experience than women of the same age who were in managerial or executive positions starting in small family run businesses and working their way up into transnational companies. However, this

longer work experience did not give them easy entry into the managerial cadre as they lacked the qualifications and cultural capital required in managerial roles.

There were linguistic and regional differences between participants: 21 belonged to southern India, 3 identified as north Indians, 2 were from the eastern states and 1 from the West of India. In terms of religious affiliation 3 women identified as practising Christians, 1 identified as Hindu/Muslim (she followed both religions having been born in a Muslim household but attended a Hindu religious school in the area) and 2 explicitly mentioned their Hindu identity. The remaining women did not explicitly claim a Hindu identity but indicated their affiliation with Hinduism by mentioning their participation in religious rituals. Given the normalization of majority identities it is possible that the Hindu women did not feel the need to identify themselves explicitly. Caste and religion are delicate issues in urban India therefore I avoided asking participants directly about their caste or religious identities but waited for them to voluntarily mention affiliations. In most cases it was unnecessary to do so since individuals' regional, caste and religious identities are usually explicit in their last names. The Hindus in the sample all belonged to the upper castes or dominant castes (Srinivas, 1959).[58] Even though the workforce has a small percentage of depressed castes, the dual disadvantage that women of these groups suffer would have made their entry into the industry more difficult. All the women could be identified either as new or as old middle class. Given the composition of the IT workforce it is unsurprising that I found more women from the upper castes than depressed castes and a larger percentage of the women were South Indians (see Krishna and Brihamadesam, 2006; Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006).. The table on the following page describes the participants in the focus groups and interviews. I have not included the participants in the blog as their views informed the construction of research questions but have not been analysed in substantive chapters of the thesis.

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[58] Srinivas (1959) argues that dominant castes may have a low ritual status but hold considerable secular power due to factors such as landownership or numerical strength within a specific region. I use the term here as distinguished from upper castes whose superior position may derive from ritual status but may not have comparable wealth or political power.

Table 4: Profile of the Participants[59]

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Designation	Marital Position	Number of children
1	Anjana	33	manager	married	1
2	Anjali	30	manager	married	1
3	Anita	32	manager	married	2
4	Beena	30	manager	married	0
5	Cristina	29	administrator	married	2
6	Deepika	27	executive	married	0
7	Geetika	32	manager	married	2
8	Hema	26	administrator	married	0
9	Jaya	33	manager	married	1
10	Jyothi	29	executive	married	1
11	Kanti	35	administrator	married	1
12	Lathika	33	manager	single	0
13	Malini	33	manager	married	1
14	Maya	37	manager	married	1
15	Meenakshi	24	executive	separated	0
16	Nalini	37	manager	married	1
17	Nitya	27	executive	married	0
18	Punita	37	executive	married	2
19	Rupa	28	manager	married	0
20	Sarah	36	manager	married	0
21	Savita	32	manager	married	1
22	Shreela	29	manager	married	1
23	Sumaiya	28	executive	married	1
24	Swarna	31	manager	married	1
25	Swati	34	manager	married	1
26	Upasana	28	executive	married	0

[59] For more details on each participant see Appendix A.

3.3 Fieldwork

My fieldwork began in February 2006 when I created a (short-lived) blog on my research whilst still in York and invited 5 women in Bangalore (who I recruited by sending emails to friends and friends of friends) to comment on the tentative research questions that I raised. This experiment with 'remote fieldwork' had only limited success. Localized fieldwork occurred in two stages: a pilot study which consisted of two focus groups that I organised in April 2006 and a longer period of fieldwork during which I undertook interviews with 20 women between October 2006 and February 2007. Between interviews I spent my time trying to find interviewees, transcribing tapes or reading and writing about my experiences but my limited funds also meant that for much of the time I was in the field I was working to earn a living.[60]

3.3.1 Stage 1: February 2006: Remote Fieldwork via a Research Blog: An Experiment in Participant Collaboration

In the early stages of my research I became familiar with feminist standpoint epistemology which argues for the grounding of research in women's everyday experiences and for a strong commitment to dismantling the power hierarchies between researchers and participants in the research (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Smith, 1987; DeVault, 1999a). At the same time, through conversations with colleagues who were working on online communities, I began to appreciate the power of online communication in democratizing access to knowledge and enabling marginalized groups to speak out. I was inspired by Mortensen and Walker's (2002) article on using blogging to network with potential research participants and inform their doctoral theses. I initiated a blog on my research under the somewhat banal name of 'The Coffee Circle' and invited a group of 5 participants to comment on my ideas.[61]

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[60] This is probably a reality that several research students face in the course of doctoral work (DeVault, 1999), especially those of us who work in the less conventional disciplines within the social sciences and humanities that enjoy limited funding.
[61] http://thecoffeecircle.blogspot.com/

I hoped to gain access to an informal advisory committee of participants whose views would help me formulate my research questions and, if the interest was sustained, respond to my interpretations and analysis in the latter stages of writing up my thesis. I saw this as a way of continually relocating the research within their experience and frame of reference, thereby not privileging the researcher's (my) theoretical knowledge over the everyday theory of people who live out their experiences of oppression or oppressing (Stanley and Wise 1993). In the hope that the blog would help frame research questions and processes that guide the fieldwork, I regularly posted questions and ideas related to research on the blog and emailed participants asking for their comment on these. This blog which began in February did not last very long, and had only limited success in the goal of raising interesting issues. The one issue about which participants had a lot to say was motherhood. They wrote eloquently about their concern for their children's wellbeing while they were out at work. They argued that work-life balance had never been a problem until they had children. I concluded that the issues facing women with and without children were very different and decided to have two separate focus groups addressed to women with children and women without children in the next stage of research.

However, it was difficult to sustain the enthusiasm of participants to regularly comment on the blog or check for new posts. While some posts led to intense discussion, others received hardly any comments suggesting that these were non-issues. These non-issues were followed by lengthy periods of silence. In a face-to-face discussion these silences can be interpreted and followed by other questions which is not possible in asynchronous online dialogue. Participants were reluctant to bring up new issues on their own, suggesting that they saw this as my responsibility.

The blog was aimed at sharing power over the research with participants but it only marginally fulfilled this agenda. I was aware of participants' busy schedules and reluctant to pressurise them into active participation. DeVault

(1990a: 216-217) advises restraint in asking participant's involvement: 'offering opportunities for collaboration without insisting on formal equality of effort that imposes unmanageable burdens' on them. Another issue was how strongly I should urge their participation given that was to lead to professional accreditation for 'my' efforts. These issues affected my own enthusiasm to continue and I allowed the blog to dwindle with the participants' interest.

In retrospect I believe that the manner in which I ran the blog went against the spontaneous spirit of blogging. To protect my participants' identities I did not share the url (uniform resource locator) of the blog with anyone other than the five of them. I encouraged them to use a pseudonym and avoid mentioning identifiable details such as the names of the companies they worked for. Instead of using the blog as a research tool and therefore making confidentiality a central issue, I may have had more success in accessing diverse views if I had used the blog to record ideas and sought a larger audience of academic colleagues, friends, potential participants and expert informants as Mortensen and Walker (2002) did. Due to my concerns with confidentiality I over-controlled the blog instead of allowing it to develop a life of its own. My experiences with blogging showed me the ethical complexities involved in collaboration and sharing power.

3.3.2 Stage 2: April 2006: Localized Fieldwork: Focus Groups

In April 2006 I conducted a pilot study, wherein I ran two focus groups one with mothers (consisting of four participants) and one of women without children (consisting of three participants). The purpose of the groups was to identify some issues that were significant to the participants which could inform the interview guide to be used later in the fieldwork. However, I found that the discussions yielded much more information that I expected: they proved to be useful not only in identifying issues but also in exploring and examining them. Women tended to respond to each other's stories with stories of their own or by offering each other opinions/advice which proved valuable for my analysis.

I began the focus groups with the question 'was there a moment or a period in you life when you started to feel that we are living in a globalized world?' This somewhat direct use of my broadest research questions contradicts the advice in qualitative research manuals that research questions need to be broken down into more pointed mini-questions (Mason, 2002). However, since globalization is frequently discussed in the media and in daily conversation in India and that my participants work in a transnational environment, I decided to begin in this manner. The question elicited valuable information about women's views on the changes globalization has created, brought out their perceptions about globalization including issues like consumerism, closer interactions between cultures and the compression of the world and generated debate about what it meant to be global:

Swarna   *Globalization is a very pro-West term right? So if you're going to think about it as globalization is thinking Western or thinking modern then we always thought modern, we always thought Western. I pretty much feel that in our country globalization was always there because we have been ruled by many more foreigners than any other country in this world.*

Jyothi   *Pretty interesting your interpretation of globalization because to me globalization is the sheer reduction of geography in any, any form. For instance you just tell [others that] I travel abroad, so what everybody else does [yeah, yeah...murmur of agreement from others]. When earlier someone said, 'I travel,' it's taken seriously. You've [had to have] really made it to travel abroad whereas now practically everyone travels. ...I remember the kind of products that were available for us. We were three sisters and there was one shampoo bottle which we used to get which was a Tata shampoo [an Indian brand] which everybody used to buy. So yes, you had relatives abroad who brought you [foreign brands] when they came once a year or whatever ... it was a luxury status really, it was a sign of arriving in life which is not true today. Today for my daughter, she just needs to name her brand and I'll bring it because it's so easily available – that's globalization for you.*

Swarna, 31, Manager, Jyothi, 29, Manager

In addition to macro-issues such as globalization, lively discussions occurred around the micro-politics of the family and its caste-identity:

Punita   *If I may ask you why do you say your parents have not accepted? Is it your father or your mother [who hasn't accepted your marriage]?*

Swarna   *Mother*

Punita   *Mother! See! That is the thing. Women don't accept.*

Anjali   *Mothers are more traditional*
Punita, 37, Manager, Swarna, 31, Manager, Anjali, 31, Manager

In response to Swarna's story of her parents' refusal to accept her marriage by choice outside of her community, Jyothi responded with a similar incident from her own family:

Jyothi   *[My parents have] accepted [my sister's marriage to a non-Brahmin man] but I think if my mom [had a choice] still she would say go back and marry a Brahmin. And he's a son-in-law who by definition of a Brahmin doesn't eat meat, doesn't drink, doesn't smoke and both the other sons-in-law are Brahmins. They eat meat, they drink and they...*

Swarna *[interrupting] And that's so accepted! [Laughter]*
Jyothi, 29, Manager, Swarna, 31, Manager

The first level of analysis thus began in the focus group itself from participants' reflexive accounts and their generalizations about their shared experiences. Participants' energetic discussions indicated that there is no right way to do research and no single questioning technique is correct. Questions need to be tailored to the context of the research and the nature of the sample. When I asked about globalization, work-life balance and the place of women in the workplace the focus group took on the nature of a panel discussion amongst experts. In contrast when we discussed family relationships it took on the warm, spontaneous and supportive nature of a conversation between friends.

The discussions and spontaneous collaboration in the focus groups when compared with the more stilted communication on the blog demonstrated the unpredictable nature of fieldwork. Comparing these two stages of fieldwork also indicates that though participants are collaborators in the process of the research, they can rarely be equal collaborators. Their collaboration gives greater depth as well as breadth to the research as they share insights or point out areas which the researcher might have overlooked, but the ultimate responsibility for and power over the research rests with the researcher (me).

3.3.3 Stage 3: October 2006- March 2007: Localized Fieldwork: Semi-Structured Interviews

The main 'fieldwork phase' was from October 2006 to February 2007 during which I conducted semi-structured interviews with women aged between 24 and 37 and employed in Multinational ICT companies. While many women were eager to contribute, scheduling the interviews was not always easy. Appointments were often cancelled or rescheduled, inevitably as a result of a personal/ familial emergency or rather than a work-related priority. Women cited reasons such as, 'my niece's wedding has been fixed and I have to visit her home', 'a cousin has had an accident and I am his closest relative in this city', 'my child is unwell' or 'my maid has failed to turn up and I need to catch up on housework' as some of the reasons for cancelling their meetings with me. This indicated their priorities (home and family over work) and the time pressures that they faced and further diminished my enthusiasm for collaborative research.

Participants with young children usually suggested meeting at the office where they would have the time and privacy to talk and usually booked a private meeting room in their office for the purpose. They would either take an extended lunch break or choose to meet on a day when their schedules were less busy than usual. Those with older children or without children suggested meeting at home. Two interviewees suggested meeting in a café. This location was comparatively unsatisfactory due the background noise and distractions of waiters and other

customers. One participant who lives in a large extended household took me to the site of her partially constructed new house which she said would be the only place where she would have the privacy to speak with me; after nearly six weeks of trying to find a time slot to fit our meeting into, she finally met me when she was 'between jobs', having just given up her old job and taken a four-day break before her new assignment.

Upadhya (2008) reports that interview in the workplace are subject to a certain formality and do not allow for more informal interactions home was a much better location to build rapport and help respondents (sic) shed inhibitions. In contrast my participants were equally willing to discuss personal issues in a private meeting room at their workplace as in their home. It is not possible to identify all the factors that differentiated *my* interviews with IT workers from Upadhya's although it worth noting that, unlike mine, her research addressed both men and women. However, like her I too was expected to keep strictly to the time allocated for the interview when interviewing in the workplace and had to leave immediately afterwards instead of 'hanging around' 'to strike up casual conversation and observe workplace interactions' (Upadhya, 2008:67). I would agree with her that ethnography within corporate settings imposes constraints in terms of time and access which is absent in traditional ethnographic research.

All the interviews were conducted in Indian English with occasional use of Hindi or Kannada (a common practice in India). From time to time participants used business jargon which I didn't always understand and needed to clarify. Each interview took between one and half to two hours and was informed by the themes listed in the interview guide that I carried with me. Before or after the interview I was offered lunch or a cup of coffee which gave further scope for discussion and also allowed the participant to ask me questions about myself or the research. Some of the most valuable information was obtained in these periods.

I usually began by briefly reiterating what the research was about, assuring participants of confidentiality, explaining that responses would be non-attributable and presenting the participants with the consent form which I requested them to read and sign. I offered to sign it as well and to give them a copy if they wished. In no case did participants keep a copy. Two participants mentioned at the beginning of the interview that they would like to but laughingly dismissed the idea at the end. I concluded that consent forms are more useful to the researcher in eliciting information than in protecting participants as it seems to grant 'respectability' to the research process as well as increasing confidence in the researcher. This was revealed in responses such as, 'Since it is confidential I can tell you,' followed by a criticism of a family member, co-worker or spouse.

As the interviews progressed I began to understand the difficulty of 'shedding agendas' in qualitative interviewing in spite of an intention to do so (Anderson and Jack, 1991:12). I invariably began the interviews by asking women to tell me a little about themselves. In most cases the response would take between 10 to 20 minutes. I would then pick up on whatever themes were most dominant in their response and ask for elaboration or clarification. I also carried a list of themes and related open ended-questions that I wanted to discuss. By and large, I found that women's opening answers led to the themes I had listed, but at times I would be frustrated when a participant seemed to go on at length about what seemed to me an irrelevant issue. I was torn between courtesy as a listener and my research goals (embedded in the list of topics)- problem identified by other feminist interviewers (see Minster, 1991). However, I proceeded with the belief that since individuals' identities are embedded in their emotions and day-to-day concerns and experiences, whatever was uppermost in participants' minds would lead me to their sense of identity.[62]

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[62] While analysing participants' accounts I often found that responses that I had considered irrelevant during the interview yielded vital and interesting information.

Semi-structured interviews are believed to empower participants to actively influence the direction of the interview and make decisions about what to highlight and what to leave out, decisions that need to be respected by interviewers (Anderson and Jack, 1991). This is not to deny my ability to choose which themes to pursue from all that the participant had revealed or to change tack when I deemed necessary. In retrospect I would conclude that the course of the interviews were largely coloured by the participants' opening responses, which has, in turn influenced the course of the analysis and my final conclusion. However, I too, directed the course of the interview through my responses, probing questions and choice of topics.

The interaction moved from being a 'formal' interview to an 'informal' conversation and back again. This was both spontaneous and deliberate, from my need to create a sense of familiarity particularly when I sensed that my position as a research scholar was perceived as 'superior'/distant. I often made impromptu decisions about how much of my identity I would invest into the interaction but it was impossible to leave my 'self' behind during the interview (Stanley and Wise, 1993:161). I responded to various anecdotes in the same manner as I would have done in my personal life although I attempted to be moderate in my display of feeling. To suppress my feelings of empathy when participants shared stories of abuse or my amusement when they made fun of a family member or colleague would have been unnatural and inhuman. When my approval or endorsement of a viewpoint was sought, I gave it frankly but cautiously, for fear of 'leading' the interview. Both my participants and I have internalized a 'sense' of the expected behaviours of women of my age and social position (university student/ Indian/ urban/ English speaking) which I carried with me to the interviews.

Similarly the input from my participants was both informative and emotive. It was difficult for women not to break down when describing domestic violence or emotional abuse but they also engaged in lively intellectual discussion about the IT industry and women's positions in the workplace, home and community. They

would sometimes contradict or 'correct' a tentative opinion that I offered or interrupt themselves to ask if what they were telling me was 'useful'. Their enthusiasm and openness often left me feeling both grateful and humbled since I could not return their generosity, but I was not always able to express my gratitude without sounding trite.

The value of recreating interviews in the manner of everyday interaction between women both from the point of view of allowing 'muted' voices to emerge and facilitating deeper understanding has been underlined in discussions of feminist methodologies (Oakley, 1981 in Letherby, 2003; DeVault,1999a, Smith and Griffith, 1987 in DeVault, 1999a). Oakley argues that researchers need to 'invest their own personal identity in the research relationship' to facilitate a non-hierarchical/ non-manipulative interaction (Oakley, 1981 in Letherby 2003:84). According to DeVault (1999a) women's subordinate position leads them to translate their experiences into more acceptable everyday speech. She claims that listening as a woman for this translation helps the researcher to understand things that are incompletely said and facilitate the articulation of women's experiences and ideas by filling in from her own experience. While semi-structured interviews do meet this need, the researcher's authority to guide the interaction cannot be denied (Letherby, 2003 quoting Collins,1998).

3.3.4 Shifting Positions and Varying Relationships
When I went into the field I was confident that as an insider I would be able to establish familiarity and dismantle some of the power hierarchies associated with the research but I was also concerned about over-identification, the blurring of boundaries between friendship and research and being unable to pick up on emerging patterns due to over-familiarity with the culture. I was unsure if a year spent abroad and contextualizing the problem in theoretical terms was enough to provide the 'frame-breaking experience' which is said to help insiders approach familiar situations with a fresh perspective (Scott 1995 in Carpenter 1999:11). I was familiar with the argument that insider-outsider positions are fluid and

interchangeable. They are constantly negotiated/ re-negotiated in everyday social interactions and may sometimes be beyond the researcher's influence (Naples, 1996, Abu-Lughod, 1986, Kondo, 1990; Letherby, 2003). I believed that my lack of experience in the information technology industry and my position as a student in a foreign university implied a certain 'outsiderness' which would mitigate against over-familiarity. However I found that the insider position is more problematic and complex than I had expected, its implied intimacy carrying potential for exploitation, betrayal and deception (Stacey, 1991; Patai, 1991; Finch 1984). I also found myself adopting a variety of identities which I co-constructed with participants and in response to the identities that they adopted.

To participants who were friends of friends I was an acquaintance. They were keen to help me understand the industry and how women were positioned within it, but I sensed reticence when it came to details of personal and family matters: were they concerned about sharing details of their personal lives to someone they might meet again, someone who might judge them or carry away unfavourable impressions about them? On the other hand, participants who positioned me as a stranger/'wanderer' with no links to their social network willingly shared intimate details of their lives without much probing on my part (Simmel in Wolf,1950 quoted in Letherby, 2003:130). This experience suggests that while friendships/ social links can be advantageous in gaining access to participants in a relational culture as Holliday suggests they are not unproblematic (Holliday, 2002, citing Shamim, 1993).

The other identities I assumed were that of hostess/ guest: In cases where I visited the participants in their homes I carried the customary gift of food and would be offered tea or a meal after the interview. The act of preparing, serving and clearing up the meal created a kind of intimacy as women in my culture (and possibly others as well) often share confidences in the kitchen while doing the chores. The addition of spices to the food would lead to a conversation about how

my participant-hostess preferred to grind her own spices (as her mother had taught her), how much time that took and so on to other aspects of family life.

One case wherein I was the hostess vividly demonstrated the potential for exploitation in the interviewing process (Stacey, 1991). One of the participants suggested that she would meet me at my home after work. When she arrived I suspected that she was tired and hungry so I invited her into the kitchen while I prepared some food for her before we began the interview (switched on the tape recorder). Since we were meeting for the first time she was curious about me and asked several questions of a personal nature: what was I studying, was I married, how long had I lived in Bangalore. As I answered her questions it was revealed that both of us were not only going through divorce but were at the same stage in the legal proceedings. This factor, combined with my position as the hostess, could not but affect the manner in which the interview proceeded. Though I attempted to cover the topics in my interview guide, I also responded to the emotions and experiences that she shared with me. There were moments when we sympathised with each other or when I expressed appreciation for her courage. I later wondered if our shared experience and my position of hostess which necessitated care and courtesy had lead me to over-identify with her. However, on transcribing the tape, I concluded that I had addressed the relevant research questions while responding to her with the 'usual human assembly of feelings, failings and moods' (Stanley and Wise, 1993:153). However, she had trusted me, a stranger, with intimate details of her personal life. Had the 'kitchen intimacy' (before rather than after the interview), our shared experiences and my sympathy worked too well? It brings to mind Finch's argument that close identification with a female interviewer and the implied intimacy of the research interview 'makes women especially vulnerable subjects of research' (Finch, 1984:81).

I also assumed the identity of a student-researcher against participants' self-positioning as expert-informants or exemplars of successful Indian women/ traditional Indian womanhood. These participants often had clear agendas about

what they wanted me to know. In some cases these were views about 'Indian womanhood' that they expected me to convey explicitly in my thesis, sometimes asking pointedly, 'do you understand what I am saying?' The message seemed to be that I should present the 'right' image of India and Indian women in my research within a foreign country. However, my impressions and conclusions as a feminist researcher may not mirror their views and what they intended to convey as Patai (1991) and Stacey (1991) argue.

In one such interview with a participant who was in a senior management position, I sensed that I was positioned as a student researcher and the interview as a forum for discussing her accomplishments. While this was very useful in understanding how her career had developed, I got the impression that she was more conflicted about her decisions than she indicated. However, probing further felt rude so I followed her lead asking for her personal views on policies related to women in the workplace. She responded by discussing some of the possible disadvantages of these policies and the alternatives that she was implementing within her own company. She went on to explain why she, a high achiever, felt personally insulted by 'women-friendly' policies. By focussing on what she wanted to discuss I was able to gain some insights into her professional identity. After the interview ended we began talking of schools in Bangalore and her concern for her child's education. Now I became positioned as the expert (having worked as a school teacher earlier) and was able to respond to her anxieties. The conversation drifted back to company policies and I switched on the tape recorder again with her permission. When I left an hour later, we had explored her two most important priorities: work and motherhood to the extent that she was willing.

Finally, my identity as an Indian/ South Indian/ resident of Bangalore often led participants to assume a certain local knowledge and to position me as something of a friend or 'kindred spirit' (Letherby, 2003:124). So for instance, when making a point about the 'modest and simplicity of south Indian women' a participant referred to 'South Indian middle class families like ours' incorporating

me into the identity that she was creating for herself. This identity created a sense of familiarity which encouraged participants to be more open but was not unproblematic. As Letherby argues being positioned as a friend prevents the researcher from asking for clarification or further elaboration as 'the existence of prior knowledge on both sides' is acknowledged (2003:126). For someone who is familiar with the culture, probing on 'commonsensical' matters seems naïve and rude and prevents the researcher from problematizing the familiar and taken for granted aspects of social life (Letherby, 2003).

3.4 Analysing, Writing up and Presenting Participants' Accounts

Analysing participants' accounts brings home both the privilege and the responsibilities associated with being a researcher. From time to time during the analysis I wondered if participants would agree with my representation of their lives and to what extent. In the conclusion I have discussed the dangers of representing Third World women as victims (Bhavnani, 1994) – in this case of global capitalism, or as heroines, who have 'made it' in the global market which would bring my position quite close to the celebratory stance of nationalists and neo-nationalists on Indian womanhood. Whichever position I took (or avoided) my participants had no opportunity of looking over my shoulder and influencing my analysis. My interpretation, not necessarily the only possible interpretation, is presented in this thesis. It is privileged as compared to those of participants through access to a broader range of accounts and academic theories (Letherby, 2004) but is not necessarily superior to theirs.

While some themes of analysis such as women's understanding of the changes globalization had brought about in their lives, their motivations to work and the question of work life balance were embedded in my interview guide others emerged through transcription and analysis. In the interview I explored the themes of work and work-life balance. I also attempted to access the change in women's family lives by asking them to draw a comparison of their personal relationships, housekeeping practices and personal priorities with those of their mothers. I tried

to access childhood memories with two aims: to reveal the effect of globalization on women's lives and to gain an understanding of their upbringing and how this affected their identities and decisions as adults. However, in the course of the interviews I found that family and kinship were a dominant theme across almost all the accounts. Even their experiences in the workplace were closely tied with their family lives. Moreover, they were caught in a network of reciprocal obligations within the kinship system which was connected with paid employment. This led to the development of a new theme which was so over-arching that I decided to devote an entire chapter to it.

I identified additional themes during transcription which had not become apparent to me when I was caught up in the nitty-gritty of fieldwork. For instance as I was transcribing an account of sexual harassment I began to realise that only the single women or women in non-managerial positions mentioned being sexually harassed in the workplace. Others usually denied having had such experiences though they spoke of having observed other women facing harassment. This led me to consider if the 'status' of being married and the professional equality/ superiority implied by managerial positions protected some women from sexual harassment while leaving others vulnerable to it. In addition I noted that while several women had experienced resistance to their marital choices their responses to their parents' opposition had differed. The process of transcription though tedious and time-consuming thus proved helpful in analysis.

Transcripts from qualitative interviewing can be read at three levels: literal, interpretative and reflexive (Mason, 2003). Literal reading takes into account what is said, interpretative reading discusses the meaning implicit in what is said and reflexive reading accounts for the researcher's role in constructing what is said. A literal reading of the transcripts revealed differences based on life-stage and position in the company hierarchy and between women of the old and new middle class or the upper and lower middle class. It showed that women's differential access to educational opportunities and parental support played a key role in

helping women access work opportunities and career growth. Identifying such patterns mitigated some of the anxieties I had during fieldwork about the diversity in the accounts I was collecting, and encouraged me to avoid 'hygienic' research and writing up practices which suppressed the varieties of lived experience (Stanley and Wise, 1993:153).

Interpretative reading of the transcripts uncovered 'implicit norms and rules with which the interviewee is operating and the discourses by which they are influenced' (Mason, 2003:149). It brought out additional themes and 'sub-themes'. Some of the broader themes that emerged were that of emotional work, obligation to parents and in-laws for their support of a woman's career and the notion of individual choice and responsibility. Sub-themes included the notion of motherhood as a project, the continuity between work-time and family-time and importance of women's incomes within the household.

Through inductive analysis I concluded that work and family life far from being distinct aspects of my participants' lives, were overlapping priorities; there were both continuities and contradictions between the two. Sometimes women's performance in one sphere supported their performance in the other. At other times they had to prioritise one at the expense of another. This understanding provided the logic for the presentation of my analysis and the structure of substantive chapters. I begin by discussing women's place within the reciprocal obligations of the kinship system in Chapter 4, followed by a discussion of their relationship to work and the workplace in Chapter 5 and a discussion of the continuities and contradictions between the two in Chapter 6. These three chapters answer the first of my two research questions: how do women experience the consequences of late modernity and globalization in the workplace and the family. In Chapter 7, I discuss what their understandings of these changes might indicate about their sense of self. The method of analysis is different for each question.

To use Plummer's (2001) distinction, participants' accounts were a 'topic' to be investigated in its own right as well as a 'resource' for understanding broader social conditions. In Chapters 4 to 6 the women's accounts serve as a resource for understanding their experiences as a result of late modernity and globalization. Their accounts may be analysed by examining several transcripts together, looking for trends and patterns between the responses of individual participants. This form of analysis known as thematic analysis (see Mason, 2003) is done in Chapters 4 to 6. However, their understanding of their sense of self requires that each transcript be treated as a topic of investigation in its own right and analysed individually, looking for the narratives of self that were emerging. Narratives indicate the sequential organisation of events, and 'imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected' (Salmon, in press in Reissman, 2008:4). In this sense my transcripts were both narratives in themselves and embedded with narratives: anecdotes that women offered in an attempt to impress who they were upon me.

Women narrated anecdotes to illustrate who they were; they avowed their observance of certain principles offering evidence by describing how they responded to various situations. They offered moral judgements of themselves and others. They also shared joys, regrets, hopes and concerns. Taken together these different elements offer an insight into the self that they were constructing in the interview. An example is below:

> Cristina   *[He told me that] he started his drinking habit when*
> *he was studying- must be during his graduation*
> *because of the company and he was away from the*
> *family for his education. And he had lot of*
> *girlfriends and wherever he was studying he told me*
> *who were all behind him and who were all having*
> *an affair [before their marriage]. ... He was open to*
> *tell me because if it was another girl in my place she*
> *would have taken any decision at that time she*
> *would have said okay— [laughing]*
>
> Jyothsna *Thank you very much.*

Cristina   Yeah, [she would have said] thank you very much
            [for] ten days' stay - married life. She'd have gone
            back [home].

Jyothsna   What kept you from taking that decision?

Cristina   I felt he's very open that he's saying everything.
            People have their own baggages. ... Okay, people
            might go through any of these silly steps with a girl
            also. Okay, let me forgive. Mainly, I'm very God
            fearing and I follow Christianity completely. Actually
            I'm a --- [name of sect]. My husband also is a --- but
            when he got married to me he was already into a
            believer's church [a description of the differences
            between the two churches] ...I took the baptism in
            their church. When I was all into that, I thought let
            me give up everything. Forgive a person however
            sinful he is and take him as a new person in my life. I
            should ...I said I will change this person gradually.
Cristina, 29, Administrator, Mother

In this account Cristina describes her initial reaction to her husband's behaviour and her subsequent decision to remain in the marriage. Her contention that another woman might have left the marriage indicates her initial shock and distaste. However, it also leads us to an important aspect of her self-identity: that of a devout Christian and a forgiving but determined woman. Her faith and her decision to remain in the marriage are closely interwoven.[63]

Reissman argues that individuals and groups construct identities through story telling (2008:6). These stories are embedded in participants' accounts. She argues that there are two basic types of narrative analysis: thematic narrative analysis (not to be confused with thematic analysis of trends between transcripts) and structural narrative analysis.[64] Thematic narrative analysis concentrates on

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[63] In another part of her account Cristina indicates that her patience and 'nagging' had changed her husband's behaviour and that she is currently happy in the marriage.
[64] Reissman also describes dialogical/ performance narrative analysis which brings the investigator's responses, questions and utterances into the analysis and visual analysis which involves the analysis of pictures, films, photographs but argues that thematic and structural narrative analysis are the two building blocks of all forms of narrative analysis.

the 'what' of participants accounts while the 'how', 'to whom' and 'for what purpose" is the preserve of structural narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008:54).[65] My thematic narrative analysis did not yield straightforward narratives of self-identity but messy, contradictory versions of participants' selves. In Chapter 7 I describe four such narratives of self. These four examples are not 'typical'; they do not indicate a trend. They suggest that diverse accounts of self emerge from the discourses available to participants.

I did not engage in structural narrative analysis which investigates the manner in which the narrative is constructed or dialogical narrative analysis which takes into account the relationship between the teller and the coaxer of the narrative (Plummer, 2001; Reissman, 2008). These forms of analysis would have been interesting but would have required a fair degree of space in the analysis. Given the word limit of 80,000 -100, 000, I was hesitant to devote excessive space to analysing my position as researcher at the expense of participants' accounts. At the same time I did not wish to deny my role in co-constructing the narratives of self presented in Chapter 7 and the accounts of family and workplace that are analysed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The questions I asked, the times at which I interjected or the manner in which I did so influenced participants' accounts. Finally I came to a compromise, while I do not engage in in-depth reflexive reading of transcripts which requires researcher to locate herself 'as part of the data' (Mason, 2003:149). I present my questions and interjections as part of the quotes from the transcripts wherever I believe them to be necessary to understand the interpretation being drawn. In taking this position I am influenced by Adkins's (2002: 333) suggestion that certain forms of reflexivity 'inscribe a hierarchy of speaking positions in social research' and potentially overshadow the voices of the researched.

Another decision regarding presentation was whether to 'clean up' participants' responses. Spoken language rarely has the elegance of written

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[65] I revisit some of Reissman's ideas about narratives in Chapter 7.

language. Sentences may be left half finished, words or phrases may be repeated and the rules of grammar may be ignored. In addition to presenting my questions and interjections reporting participants' verbatim may make the reading of quotes tedious and difficult. However in order to preserve the authenticity of participants' accounts I have reported their responses without changes in grammar and sentence construction except where I believe that this authenticity is undermined by literal presentation. Where additional words/ phrases are required to convey the meaning that was evident to me as the interviewer and listener but may not be obvious to the reader, these are inserted into the quotation within square brackets.

These decisions were part of the writing process and indicated that methodological dilemmas do not end with fieldwork. Analysis, writing and presentation of accounts all require decisions that need to be made in line with the core methodological principles of the research. Moreover, writing has been an essential part of my analytical work i.e. *'a method of inquiry…*and not just a mopping up activity at the end of a research project' (Richardson, 1994: 516). The process of writing has helped sharpen the key arguments in my thesis, brought to light new ideas and shown me new connections within and between participants' accounts. Writing increased my sense of ownership in the thesis since it has meant putting down interpretations and conclusions that I may need to defend later. This requires a belief that what I am saying is defensible but also the knowledge that my ideas are open to criticism. It has also required me to find my own way of saying what I think within current academic conventions and to make decisions about how my individual voice emerges in the thesis. I have found that writing and presenting one's work requires both confidence and humility.

Chapter 4

Individualism and Women's Relationships with Collectivist Kinship Systems

The extent to which women are embedded within the family and kinship system became clearly apparent during the interviews and formed a dominant theme in women's accounts almost across the board. Therefore it seems the most appropriate point from which to begin an examination of the data. While family and kinship relations were repeatedly mentioned women also underlined the importance of their professional lives in reaffirming their sense of self-worth and creating an identity outside of the home and family. Several women repeatedly mentioned the importance of meeting one's own practical and emotional needs and of engaging in activities that did not involve family members, indicating a sense of the individualism that Giddens (1991), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman (2000) attribute to late-modern society. This chapter begins the examination of this apparent contradiction, an investigation which is developed further in the next two chapters.

I begin with a brief discussion of the concept of 'joint family' which is said to characterise Indian/ South Asian kinship. While kinship systems across India are fairly diverse,[66] they all share certain common (patriarchal) principles (see Dube 2001, Kakar 1988) which have similar consequences for women. I focus mainly on these universal principles.[67] I then discuss some traditional discourses regarding women in order to contextualize participants' accounts.

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[66] Karve [1968]/ 1993 identifies four kinship zones: northern, central, eastern and southern each of which has a distinct kinship system.

[67] It must be understood that I am discussing kinship within a middle class urban context and that the arguments that I make cannot all be generalized to rural India.

In Chapter 2 I argued that the late modernity thesis needs to be applied to the Indian context with caution. Contemporary globalizing India needs to be understood as a non-Western post colonial society where the aspiration for modernity coexists with the fear that tradition is eroding. Indian middle class families have aspired to modernity since the nationalist period, but it is a modernity that is 'enshrined in the world of tradition' (Thapan, 2004: 415). In this chapter I examine what this means for women in contemporary middle class families. How do they become icons of modernity enshrined in tradition? From the remarks of Jain (2001) and Srinivas (2000) it is evident that globalization has resulted in consumerism, careerism and the pursuit of individual professional success in contemporary India (see Chapters 2 and 3 respectively). The women I interviewed work within a highly individualized job market where, as Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) have implied, employees are encouraged to think of themselves as individual entrepreneurs negotiating wages and terms of work and building their portfolio of skills. This requires flexibility, mobility and goal orientation. Such individualization is said to put a strain on families and especially on marital relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). Women's accounts indicate that they engage with the ethos individualism both through their professional lives and through Western media and literature. Several women report that they read Western self-help literature on how to manage their time, their emotions and their parenting responsibilities. The accounts of some women, particularly those who are in management positions, carry a strong sense of individualism, the kind of individualism which Bauman (2000) argues leads to an endless need to consume new experiences and the creation of a self-identity that is always incomplete as this exchange from a focus group indicates:

Upasana   *The stability you know, [our] parents [did] not [experience]*
          much of frequent changes in the profession. Same old way of
          working hard and then getting promotions but we look at how
          fast we can move up the ladder and how we can be at a
          comfortable position and earn more – more and more and more.
          And it's like the law of marginal utility where it ends up the

	same you know. But the way they thought about security in life we think of it very fast and all.
Sarah	*For me it is 'I live once I want to do everything that I can today' you know. And with my mom when she was my age she had me, her priorities were different. For me it's okay if I live until forty. I want to able to do all the things that I can do before that. I also want to explore a lot of different things. May be for my mom it was different. She had her job and she had her kids and that was it. For us, we want to do a lot more with our lives. May be at the end of it we realise.*

Jyothsna   What are the things you have to do by the time you are forty?

Sarah   One of the things I have to do is climb the Himalayas. Travel a bit more, explore a bit more and those kind of things you have in your mind. You have to do stuff like that.

Beena   Last week a colleague of mine passed away. He was thirty-five. Coming back from Goa he had a cardiac arrest on the flight and he died and it was such a scary thought. We're all at the same age. Was it a combination of the lifestyle or the kind of work he did or the travel or what? ... For the first time I wondered if I should tell my husband to stop drinking but it was like no, crazy, you can't let things like this affect you. Also it was to think of what if that was to happen to you would you rather live life in such a way if I die today I will do so without any regrets and having done everything that I wanted to.

Upasana, 28, Married, Executive; Sarah, 36, Married, Manager; Beena, 30, Married, Manager

Upasana's analogy of the law of diminishing marginal utility is a good illustration of how increased consumption of new and exciting experiences leads to decreased satisfaction, how the need for gratification, challenge, fulfilment and pleasure in personal and professional life can become insatiable. How do women reconcile a consumption driven attitude to life (Bauman, 2000) – the insatiable need to consume pleasurable experiences whether on the beaches of Goa or the foothills of the Himalayas with their positions within the family?[68] To answer this question it is necessary to examine the nature of family relationships in India.

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[68] It must be noted that Upasana, Sarah and Beena do not have children. Their priorities and constraints would be different from those of mothers.

4.1 Flexible Household Patterns and Joint Family Relations

Early studies on kinship in India tended to follow the indological view of the 'Indian joint family', consisting of a man, his wife, sons, daughters-in-law and unmarried daughters (Shah, 1973 discussing Maine, 1861; O'Malley, 1934). Indian sociologists who published in the early and mid twentieth century argued that this type of family structure, a defining feature of 'traditional' Indian society, was declining in the twentieth century (Karve, 1953; Ghurye, 1955 and Kapadia, 1947 amongst others quoted by Shah, 1973). However, later research shows that large residential unity of patri-kin under the guardianship of the oldest male in the patrilineage is an urban phenomenon and often (though not always) associated with upper-caste/ wealthy families (Shah, 1973). This upper-caste ideal which may be accepted by suppressed castes due to 'sanskritization'[69] but it is not so common in actual practice.

Shah (1973) claims that many earlier studies on family in India implied that the 'traditional' joint family is disintegrating as a result of urbanization and modernization into individual nuclear households. However, these studies failed to take into account the complex social, economic and ritual ties between discrete households related by blood or marriage (Shah, 1973). This oversight, he claims, is related to the failure to distinguish between 'households' which are characterised by common residence and commensality and 'families' which are related through ties of blood or marriage that operate independent of residence patterns (Shah, 1973). However, I would argue that it is also a result of the tendency to overlook women's roles in recreating kinship bonds. The concept of virilocality[70] alluded to in much of the literature on kinship, family and marriage in India (Shah,1973, Karve [1967]/1993, Madan 1993) does not take into account women's continuing relationship with their parents and siblings and the new relationships of solidarity that may be forged between the daughters-in-law of a

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[69] The term is coined by M N Srinivas (1952) to describe the practice of suppressed castes attempting to emulate the lifestyles, customs and practices of the upper castes in an attempt to gain higher status.
[70] movement of women from their fathers' to their husbands' homes

family. When women are viewed as independent actors within the kinship system who create and sustain relationships with other women (and their families) while continuing to be constrained by virilocality and patriliny, a clearer picture emerges of how kinship operates.

In this thesis I use Shah's (1973) concept of household rather than the more common terms, nuclear family or joint family, to describe participants' living arrangements because the latter: a) do not account for the flexible and changing composition of residential units, b) cannot be usefully employed to describe the variety of household types that that exist in India, c) do not capture the ties across households that Shah highlights above. The participants in my research lived in a variety of households: 14 of the 24 married women live in simple households (married couple with or without children); the remaining 10 live in complex households; of the 2 single women 1 lives in the parental home whilst 1 lives in a hostel. However, some of the simple households are complex for a few months or a few years and all are closely implicated in joint family relationships with other households. It is useful to describe the changing composition of these households as 'houseflows' (Trawick in Säävälä, 1998) since older members (parents or grandparents of the spouses) are often transient, visiting for a few months to help with childcare or to stay with the young family.

Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) argue (quoting Lamb, 2000) that traditional joint families are being 'reconstituted' amongst IT professionals for the purpose of childcare and that they 'do not represent an adherence to traditionalism so much as convenient solution to the domestic problems of working couples'(2006: 110). I would argue that (following Shah, 1973) that 'jointness' has been a defining feature of Indian families for much of the twentieth century irrespective of household size. Rather than being recently reconstituted, the joint family is simply becoming more visible in contemporary globalizing India. Earlier research on employed middle class women has highlighted the involvement of grandparents in childcare (see Liddle and Joshi, 1986). However, with more women entering the workplace this is now a noticeable trend.

Of the various households, a few cases are significant: Anjana lives with her parents, her mother-in-law, her husband and her young son in her parents' house; her brother and his family live in a separate house above (this is the largest household amongst all participants). Swati lives with her eight year old daughter; her husband visits her every few months as he has a non-transferable public sector job. They have chosen to live apart since her job pays much higher than his and allows them to create a more secure future. Her parents-in-law visit her for a few weeks several times a year to help with childcare. Hema lives alone while her husband lives in another city where he has found a well-paid job; weekend visits are frequent between the two and they hope that the situation will be temporary. She often stays over at her parents' home which is not far from hers.

Upadhya and Vasavi argue that unlike their parents and the lower middle classes who favoured small bungalows, IT professionals live in self-contained apartment complexes which create a 'class-based lifestyle while fragmenting kinship or caste-based neighbourhoods' (2006:108). Like Upadhya and Vasavi's interviewees many participants in my study bemoan the lack of time to socialise with the extended kin group and the weakening of kinship bonds. However, their description of their daily lives belies this argument. Parents frequently visit for varying lengths of time and if they are based in Bangalore, there are regular visits, calls, exchanges of food, money, gifts, care and emotional labour between the two households. I disagree with Upadhya and Vasavi's claim that the 'emerging residential patterns in cities such as Bangalore reflect and reinforce the process of social fragmentation and disembedding' (2006:108). Family ties cut across class boundaries as upwardly mobile IT professionals living in apartment complexes, whether they Seekers, Strivers or Globals, maintain close ties with their parents (who are often one income category below) living in the ancestral home.

The flexible nature of the household conforms to Karve's claim that a unit consisting of husband, wife and children 'is not a true single family unit because it

has economic and ritual [and I would add social] ties with the larger patri-family unit of whose member is the husband' (Karve, [1967]/1993:62). In contemporary globalizing India the 'single family unit' is closely tied with the natal family of the wife and the husband. Even when married couples live in simple households, they are closely implicated in the duties and privileges derived from joint family relations with the natal families of both spouses indicating that 'separation does not mean annulment of familial obligation' (Säävälä, 1998:71). Many participants organize these reciprocal exchanges sending food to other members of kin or jointly participating in ritual events such as Diwali, Varalakshmi Pooja (the worship of the goddess Lakshmi to ensure the prosperity of husband and home), Gowri Pooja or Durga Pooja (both of which celebrate the return of the Goddess Durga from her husband's house to her natal home). Women not only feel obliged to participate in these occasions but also enjoy the female camaraderie that comes into play in organising them and look forward to the chance to reconnect with distant kin as well as close family.

> *When there is a function, everyone gets together and then*
> *suddenly you know that these are my people. There it feels so*
> *good to know that the network that's there whether you keep in*
> *touch or not.*
> Beena, 30, Married, Manager

Di Leonardo (1987) argues that like housework, women's 'kinship work' remains hidden and that men benefit from it the way they do from housework. By women's accounts, men are often exempt from attending family celebrations while they themselves may be expected even to take time off from work to attend them. If unable to do so, it is women rather than men who must account for their absence. This gendered distinction is not unique to India; studies based in North America (Rosenthal, 1985, di Leonardo, 1987)[71] and Britain (Finch and Mason, 1993) describe women's roles in 'kin-keeping' (Rosenthal, 1985): organizing family celebrations, providing care and maintaining contact through letters, cards and phone calls. My participants maintain ties with kin through all these means as

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[71] Di Leonardo's (1987) study is specific to Italian Americans.

well as e-mail and other forms of online communication; however information is shared selectively: Beena and Hema speak to their parents twice a day but avoid reporting activities or decisions that may evoke anxiety or criticism.

Reciprocity is essential to maintaining kinship relations in India as in the other kinship systems described above. Debts and obligations are carefully calibrated and repayment may be delayed but rarely evaded. Compare the cases of Cristina and Kanti: Cristina was employed before she married and has always financially aided her natal family. Her brother and mother are grateful to her and reciprocate by providing substitute childcare whenever required. In contrast Kanti began working after her marriage to support her in-laws; already in a vulnerable position within the marital home, she did not receive help with childcare from her mother and sisters. However she believes that as family they are morally obliged to support her and strongly resents their refusal of help as it violates the principle of reciprocity on which kinship is organized. In addition to material goods, gestures of respect, deference, emotional support, advice, tolerance and patience may be exchanged; however the degree to which these intangible 'emotional goods' can be expected varies according to the nature of the relationship and the temperaments of the individuals involved.

> *I am the only daughter-in-law who's working, the other ones*
> *aren't for them to realise that [the challenges for a woman who*
> *is employed] ... My husband has made my mother-in-law*
> *realise that what I am because— we are not staying together*
> *but then it's like how he has put it to them, like how these things*
> *[having a career] are very important things for me plus he's*
> *also made me realise that I need to put a line over here [fall in*
> *line with certain expectations of his parents]. That's what I'm*
> *saying. I'm growing in my patience and I'm growing to take*
> *on more responsibilities. I would say like – eh – earlier it was*
> *like 'No this is not my responsibility; they need to take care of*
> *me.' But now it's like there is – I also need to put in more*
> *efforts to make that relation build. I have to actually disguise*
> *my own personality, my real personality of what I am in office*
> *in front of my mother-in-law. Really that happens you know,*
> *and slowly, slowly talking to her, now she's realised. Now*

she'll push me out [encourage me] for doing those things which
I would like to do.
Upasna, 28, Married, Executive

Upasna and her mother-in-law are involved in an exchange of patience, tolerance and mutual willingness to understand each other thanks to her husband's intervention on both their behalves. Similar gestures of deference and respect will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 6 whilst examining kinship work and emotional labour within the family.

4.2 Traditional Discourses on Women's Place in Kinship

First, she is a daughter to her parents.
Second, she is a wife to her husband
(and daughter-in-law to his parents).
Third, she is a mother to her sons (and daughters).
Kakar, 1988:45

In this section I discuss three important discourses that influence a woman's identity: transience in her parental home, the centrality of wifehood and motherhood and the hierarchy between bride-takers and bride-givers. These discourses though older than the nationalist discourse of ideal Indian womanhood are closely related to it; together they define what it means to be an Indian woman. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, discourses have both oppressive and emancipatory potential. While they have the potential to influence the creation of an individual's self-identity they are also subject to modification and resistance through individual agency.

A woman's position in kinship structures is centred on the discourse of transience and transferability. A daughter is considered a 'guest' in her parents' home (Kakar, 1988:49) since she will soon marry and enter another family where her 'real' life begins; she is *paraya dhan:* someone else's wealth: or *amanaat:* a trust to be nurtured and protected before being handed over to her rightful 'owners' (Madan, 1993:291). This *kanyādāna* or 'gift of a virgin' (Madan, 1993:302) to a suitable man is considered one of the highest gifts that can be

bestowed and gains the giver of the gift a high level of *punya:* religious merit (Shah1973). It also assumes the superiority of the bride-takers to the bride-givers (one would never bestow such a precious gift on someone inferior in status) and is associated with hypergamy (marriage to a man of higher social standing).

Many wedding ceremonies indicate the severing of ties between a woman and her natal home: the bride's throwing of rice over her shoulder in Bengal and similar customs from Punjab, Orissa and other parts of India (Dube, 2001). However, parents' concern for their daughters' happiness continues long after the marriage. Her continuing visits to the natal home, particularly during pregnancy and childbirth, and the close ties between her husband and his affines (kin through marriage) and folk idioms describing the camaraderie between brothers-in-law belie the discourse of transience. Das's assertion with regard to urban Punjabi kinship, that it 'operates at two levels - the biological and the social' may be extended to kinship systems across India (Das, 1993:213). Das (1993) argues that while the enduring nature of biological ties such as ties between parents and children is recognised, honour requires individuals to transcend biological ties and wear the mask of social or cultural ties.

While Das's (1993) argument explains the nature of relationships between affines, it is also evident from the accounts of many participants that in practice biological ties continue to play an important role in their lives. Financial independence and the confidence associated with employment and professional qualifications in contemporary India means that women no longer hesitate to demonstrate their affection for and loyalty to their families. In addition the very notion that the daughter is given to a superior family creates a situation wherein her natal family is constantly monitoring her relationship with her in-laws and husband. If her professional life interferes with her family obligations, parents step in and fulfil these obligations themselves rather than expose her to the ire of her in-laws. All this serves to increase the level of interaction and reinforces the

ties between a married woman and her natal family. The discourse of transience is undermined by parental concern for their daughter's happiness and wellbeing.

Mothers play a very essential role in their daughters' lives, before and after marriage, advising and supporting them in their own motherhood and monitoring their behaviour as wives and daughters-in-law. This scrutiny is related to the perception of south Asian women as the repositories of the *izzat:* honour of two families, the one they were born in and the one they have been married into (Afshar, 1989a). They are brought up to recognize the significance of this identity and to preserve and protect their chastity and honour, restraining their sexuality and showing deference and modesty (Dube, 2001, Kakar, 1988).

In training their daughters to fulfill their marital duties mothers underline 'the virtues of self-effacement and sacrifice' in their future roles as wives and mothers (Kakar, 1988:51). Mythological characters, the submissive Sita, the self-sacrificing Sati, the tenacious Savitri, symbols of wifely devotion have become the prototype for heroines in contemporary films, television serials, stories. Thus although these characters emerged in Hindu myths, the qualities they personify permeate the wider culture and have become the ideal across Indian society irrespective of religious persuasion or community. Sita's qualities extolled in devotional songs and folk-drama as well as everyday speech. Similarly, the devotion of the mother Yashoda to her son Krishna is eulogised in stories, folk songs and films. Motherhood is the cornerstone of an Indian woman's identity, her highest achievement (Kakar, 1988, Dube, 2001). It is also seen as a natural outcome of marriage (Dube 2001). Kakar (1988) argues:

> Hindu society is not unique in revering motherhood as moral, religious or even artistic ideal, but the absolute and all-encompassing social importance of motherhood, the ubiquitous variety of motherhood myths, and the function of offspring in ritual and religious (not to mention economic) life all give to motherhood in Indian culture a particularly incontrovertible legitimacy.
> Kakar,1988.

None of my participants saw motherhood as optional; only in one case was a woman delaying motherhood as she was unsure whether her marriage would last. All the women with children remarked that after childbirth their identities had irrevocably changed and every relationship came second to motherhood. While their accounts indicate that relationships between husbands and wives are changing, motherhood is still influenced by traditional discourses and archetypes.

The third discourse, the hierarchical relationship between bride-givers and bride-takers, is an outcome of the *kanyādāna* complex or the gift of the virgin bride (mentioned in the introduction of the thesis). This *kanyādāna* complex influences perceptions of marriage across India despite regional/ caste-based variations in other aspects of marriage relations (Trautmann, 1993). The superiority of the groom's people who receive the virgin bride is underlined in various symbolic gestures during the marriage (for instance by the father of the bride welcoming the groom by washing his feet, a custom that is practised across several communities in both north and south India) and afterwards. The bride's parents (and after their lifetime her brothers) lavish gifts and hospitality on the groom's kin and honour them through symbolic gestures not in the hope of receiving the same themselves but with a view to enhancing her status in her marital home and securing her happiness in it.

The giving of gifts establishes an enduring hierarchical relationship between the two families (Gupta, 2000) While in contemporary upper middle class families these gestures may be less ostentatiously performed and the receiving party, the groom's family, often underplays this inequality through verbal and symbolic gestures, it still asserts itself insidiously; the bride-giving family would be ill-advised to take the bride-takers' magnanimity for granted. The 'sanctioned inequality' between bride-takers and bride-givers conditions the relationship between the genders (Gupta, 2000) and forms the foundation of the marriage.

However, in the day-to-day operation of kinship discourse and individual agency work together in a complex manner: Das (1993) gives an example of how the brothers of a woman who was harassed in her marital home warned her in-laws with dire consequences if they did not alter their behaviour. Here the bride-takers' superior status was ignored in a

period of crisis and biological ties overcame the cultural significance of affinal ones. The cultural mask was removed to reveal the face of blood relationships. I would argue that this can also be viewed as an instance of how the extended family momentarily resisted the established discourse of transience to protect its own.

The 'messy reality' of women's daily lives is full of such contradictions. The discourse as Foucault argues (see Mills, 2003) may be reinforced by practice or undermined by it. For instance the term 'Sati-Savitri' is popularly often used to ridicule uncalled for levels of self-sacrifice in women. It indicates that the qualities of blind devotion to the husband embodied in these mythological archetypes are now considered unwarranted. Yet the degree of minute planning that the participants in my study invested in managing their homes and the effort they spend on servicing affinal relationships indicates that even while they are in paid employment their family responsibilities are of high priority. Although women do not identify themselves with these supposedly regressive archetypes of Sita, Sati and Savitri or the discourses embodied by these mythological figures form the broad framework within which they create their identities.

> *If a girl today asks me is it a good idea to get married I will say yes you must get married and I ... Okay I will not make clichéd statements like a woman is incomplete if she's not married or a woman is incomplete if she's not had children. I will not make those statements but at the same time I will make statements that say that you- it's important to have responsibility in life. You cannot run away from responsibility, you cannot leave, you— You cannot keep living life of being a free bird and no responsibilities and all that. I think it's beautiful to have a marriage and it's beautiful to have children and that's where I'm very traditional in my thinking. If you've got into it you make it work.*
> Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

4.3 The Three Circles of Kinship: Their Influence over Women

The kinship system can be understood as three concentric circles of kin of varying importance: the immediate circle which usually consists of a woman's husband, parents, parents-in-law, siblings and possibly her husband's siblings;

the second circle consists of the extended-kin group, her cousins, aunts, uncles and possibly those of her husband; the final circle consists of the 'community': members of the same caste, sub-caste, regional, linguistic or religious group (church/ sect/ sub-sect) and includes friends, business associates and colleagues. Not all these people are kin in the strict sense of being related through blood or marriage but they act as a (fictive) kin-group since they are implicated in the norms of mutual reciprocity of the kinship system.

Through the research I consistently found that the first circle of family is of paramount importance in determining a woman's behaviour and the choices she makes; their approval has a strong impact on sense of self worth.

Jyothi   *Because I know my-in-laws are happy, my husband's happy, my daughter is happy, I don't care. My sphere ends there.*

Punita   *I think she's right. Even I'm like her. Only the immediate people who touch your life, in-laws, your parents, your brother, sister – may be brother and sister – they have their own lives – mostly your husband, your kids and mostly your in-laws and your parents. I mean that's the people that we care for and that's the generation difference that we have with our mothers. My mother will always say, 'You know when you come to Delhi why your neck is bare? You should – Log kya kahenge [what will people say]?' And that Log Kya Kahenge. We don't care... Log kya kahenge— bull shit!*

[and later in the focus group]
           I think amongst the four of us we have very traditional mums – very strong minded. The more you talk to women it's not mother-in-law.

Swarna   *It's the mother.*

Anjali   *It's the mother.*

Punita   *It's the mom who is very traditional.*

Jyothsna   *Is it because 'my daughter is a reflection of my*
upbringing'?

Punita   *Correct.*
Swarna   *Yes.*

Punita   *Yes. That's my feeling – She thinks how well she*
brought you up.

Anjali   *Sasural ja rahi hoh [you're going to your in-law's*
home]. You'd better fall in line over there.
Punita, 37, Executive, Mother, Anjali, 30, Manager, Mother;
Swarna, 31, Manager, Mother

In spite of their professed disregard for the opinions of the kin group,
women follow cultural norms to protect their parents' reputations and their
mothers' feelings. Mothers have a special stake in policing their daughters'
behaviour as it reflects on their upbringing. Afshar (1989a) found amongst
diasporic Pakistani women in Britain that mothers feel a strong responsibility to
school their daughters in traditional behavioural norms which are 'threatened' by
the host culture. The mothers of my participants seem to feel the same pressure in
the face of globalization sometimes causing tension within the mother-daughter
relationship.

The second circle closely scrutinises a woman's marital choice, her partner,
her children, how she conducts herself and her relationship with the family. Given
the increasing importance of achievement in a globalizing society, a woman may
also gain esteem in this circle through professional achievements, hard work,
financial and practical independence.

I'm the first person to have bought a car in the family as a
girl and it's been really proud.
Hema, 26, Administrator, Married

However, the final determinant of a good reputation is success in
combining professional achievements with domestic obligations, conformity to
parental wishes, respect for in-laws and commitment to maintaining kinship ties.

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With increasing individualization the second circle's ability to determine a woman's conduct may have diminished but strong personal bonds of affection ensure that their opinion is valued.

> *Jyothsna To what extent does the opinion of an aunt or a cousin play a role in your life?*

> *Nitya Very difficult to say that! I am close to my mother's sisters. May be I would say for me their opinion would— I would consider that.*

> *Jyothsna In what situations?*

> *Nitya When I had to get married to him. Not that they would disapprove, I knew they wouldn't disapprove him but I definitely wanted to show him and tell them that I'm getting married so it was like an— so It was like an approval. I was very confident that they would approve. Something like that.*

> *Jyothsna Would their disapproval have mattered?*

> *Nitya No, but I would have tried to convince them, why I have to make that choice. I would like to convince them but if they disapproved then I would still go ahead.*
> Nitya, 27, Executive, Married

In contrast to Nitya, Shreela's relatives refused to accept her choice of partner (outside her caste-group) and boycotted her wedding. They continue to ostracize her, a situation that causes bitterness and a sense of loss:

> *Still I don't have contacts with them though they are my immediate family members. It is really a pity. They are very close to me, they were very close to me but now they are not. They talk to my parents but not to me. Just who is going to break the ice something like that is happening. Recently I had a marriage from my family but I couldn't attend that because I was not invited. But it was very close – the girl was very close to me still you feel you are missing it, it is an occasion and I am sure that sometime they will also regret for that so that's it.*
> Shreela, 29, Manager, Mother

Thus the second circle forms the 'moral community' who pass judgement on a woman's behaviour and act as a conduit for information about her reputation (Bailey, 1971:7). The moral community shows it's disapproval in a variety of ways: gossip, cutting remarks, refusal of invitations, snubbing or in extreme cases ostracism or outright face-to-face criticism. Approval is shown by giving women additional responsibilities in the family, accepting and returning hospitality and by offering help and support. In spite of their professed disregard for the opinions of relatives (see Jyothi and Punita's exchange earlier in this section) women are nostalgic about childhood memories of participating in celebrations with large numbers of cousins and relatives. They believe that their children's growing years have been impoverished through the migration of uncles and aunts and lack of opportunities for such interactions. Hence more effort is made to strengthen relationships with siblings, first cousins and their children.

While some obligations associated with the second circle extend to the third, this group has a somewhat different role in a woman's life. It includes friends, colleagues, old classmates, distant relatives and members of the same caste, community or linguistic group. More choice is exercised in determining how strong or informal the relationship is. Friends prove invaluable for venting frustrations that arise from the conflicting demands of family and work, engaging in leisure activities, providing laughter, fun and enjoyment thereby helping women manage their emotions and maintain their psychological equilibrium:

> *The best part is support systems: you just pick up the phone*
> *and say I'm having a really hard time at work or in the house.*
> *They're [my parents] giving me tough times [for refusing to*
> *marry someone of their choice] so what do you do [crying]...*
> *and I think that's the one of the best things I've always got*
> *good friends I think if I hadn't got that support I wouldn't have*
> *survived. I would have just married some wrong guy [out of*
> *pressure].*
> Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

This group form a support system that encourages a woman's individualism and independence; they are proof of her having an identity and a life outside the home. Women confide family news, share personal and professional problems, seek advice on parenting, pregnancy and childcare and vent feelings with each other safe in the knowledge that they will not be harshly judged or gossiped about as in the kin-group. Married women and those with children find it difficult to keep up contact with friends yet assert that these relationships are very important to their emotional wellbeing. Upadhya and Vasavi's (2006) assertion that urbanization, migration and class-based cultural homogeneity of IT workers has resulted in greater significance of friendships is reinforced by my findings however family relationships continue to be important.

Sarah   *My parents would know everything that's happening in my life ...but in terms of decisions, in terms of the way I'm feeling and what to do, that is something I would discuss with my friends. I don't think my family would get it if, you know, and probably they would know there's something wrong or this is what's happening but what do I do in the situation...and 'why' you know and 'how do I'— that is what I discuss with my friends.*

Beena   *But it really matters what you dad thinks about your decisions.*

Sarah   *Yeah, little strange you know.*

Upasana   *Yeah.*

Jyothsna *Hmm—*

Sarah   *As in I wanted his [her father's] stamp of approval and he just couldn't make it [when I bought a house]—*
Upasana, 28, Married, Executive; Sarah, 36, Married, Manager; Beena, 30, Married, Manager

This apparent contradiction between Sarah's independence on the one hand (as evident from her ability to invest in a house) and her need for her father's approval indicates that an Indian woman's individualism does not prevent her

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from being embedded within the family. The approval of her immediate family, the first circle, is as essential as the support of her friends. Similarly though Nitya and Shreela have made individualized choices in marriage, they seek approval from the second circle: aunts, uncles and cousins. Denied this approval Shreela is hurt and angry. These examples reinforce Tokita-Tanabe's (2003) argument that the self-identities of Indian women draw on the collective gaze of the family and community. These issues are further investigated in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.4 Individualism/Collectivism at Each Stage in a Woman's Life

They brought us up to be very independent, to think for ourselves. We were given a two-wheeler when no one else had one. Girls moving around freely was never heard of in ---- [city where she lived]. We were made broad-minded and when we took a decision which was broad-minded they were upset.
Jyothi, 29, Manager, Mother

Jyothi's remark summarizes the ambivalence that contemporary middle class Indian women face in the family. She was speaking of her parents' reaction to her sister's wish to marry outside the caste-group, however, her observation could apply to several aspects of women's experiences in their families. Families would like their women to be financially and practically independent and are keen that their daughters and daughters-in-law embody the modernity that they aspire to. However daughters and daughters-in-law also personify the family's *izzat* (honour). This dual identity as repositories of honour and embodiments of modernity creates a contradictory reality for women. As Liddle and Joshi (1986) found over twenty years ago middle class families are ambivalent about their daughters' individualism while also wanting to encourage it. The need to perform modernity through supporting a daughter's career cannot be easily reconciled with the traditional need to protect her and, by association, the family *izzat*.

Women remain embedded in the kin-group across their lives; as in other patriarchal cultures they enjoy little overt authority in it however they are able to exercise agency in several subtle ways within normative constraints (Dube, 2001;

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Kandyoti, 1988). They attempt to work the system to their advantage but the power that individual women have within the system depends on a number of factors such as their individual personalities, the strength of their relationships with their natal families, the latter's ability to support them, the attitude of their in-laws towards their professional lives and their husbands' acceptance of their professional goals, willingness to support her or dependence on her income. Collective obligations both enable a woman's individualism and constraint it when she is a girl (which is not determined as much by age as by 'marital status'), a wife/daughter-in-law and finally a mother.

4.4.1 Girl: Lessons in Submission

An unmarried daughter enjoys little autonomy or decision-making authority within the Indian family although she may be loved and cherished (particularly as her departure to her 'real home' is imminent). During girlhood a woman's parents (and sometimes her grandparents) teach her the customs and traditions of her caste/ linguistic/ religious group. They provide direct instruction on gender roles and model gendered behaviour. This includes the fulfilment of maternal obligations, managing relationships with extended kin, household management, attitudes to paid employment, duties, obligations and differential power within the husband-wife relationship. This 'socialization' is on-going and continues even after the daughter reaches adulthood and is married.

> It is the mother's duty to train her daughter up to be an
> absolute docile daughter-in-law. The summum bonum of a
> girl's life is to please her parent-in-law and her husband. If
> she does not 'get on' with her mother-in-law, she will
> certainly be a disgrace to her family and cast a blot on the fair
> name of her mother.
> Srinivas, 1942 cited in Kakar, 1988:51

Srinivas aptly describes the concerns that underlie the socialization of young girls in their parental homes where young women are schooled in the virtues of wifeliness and domesticity. However formal education is also valued.

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As I argued in Chapter 1, in the nationalist period middle class women were educated with a view to enhance their performance as mothers, home-makers and helpmates to men in the nationalist project. With economic liberalization the need for two incomes has increased and education is viewed as an asset to be invested. Matrimonial advertisements in newspapers and on websites are increasingly asking for educated and professionally qualified brides who are good home-makers and have respect for tradition. Thus education and professional qualifications are, as Bijapurkar (2007) argues, the ticket to a good marriage but only because women's incomes are necessary to the family's security in contemporary economic conditions.

A comparison of participants' accounts suggests that parental encouragement in childhood and early adulthood is an important indicator of how much professional success a woman achieves. Most women who are in managerial positions belong to the old middle class. Many of their parents have had higher education; some of their mothers have worked in executive level positions and value financial independence for their daughters. These women enjoy the advantages of cultural capital: fluency in English; a professionally acceptable manner; travel (within India and overseas); adaptability and ability to mingle with men and people of various backgrounds without shyness or coquetry: 'smartness' in the words of the women interviewed by Tokita-Tanabe (2003). The importance of this cultural capital in the IT industry has been underscored by Upadhya and Vasai (2006) and Krishna and Brihmadesam (2006); my research reveals that it plays an important role in women's success:

> *My mother especially was extremely ambitious for me. My father*
> *has always guided me. I was one of the few who at that age got*
> *career counselling. It's commonplace today. It wasn't so*
> *common at that time.*
> Maya, 37, Manager, Mother

Maya, Nitya, Jaya and Shreela are all in managerial positions; all four women's parents not only supported their education and professional lives but

compelled them to achieve. This achievement orientation of the middle classes, the pressure on children to succeed, to defer gratification and to treat education as an asset to be acquired and invested is evident from women's accounts.

> *I was never, never, never interested to go into engineering. I was interested in becoming a doctor from childhood and because my father wanted he has given me that seed he used to say me, 'See [be a] doctor, doctor, doctor' and I was really interested in science— very much. My marks were very good in science but in [the] entrance [examination] I could not get marks — may be three four marks were less and this community came into picture— where you have forward [upper castes] and backward community. For forward community limited seats were available[72] and more over I wanted to continue with my BSc Speech and Hearing in Mysore but somehow I missed out because they [my parents] don't want to send me out from my native [town] and I was in my BSc Chemistry in my native [town] and then they told me engineering is there [available in her native town]. 'Okay [I said] okay let me move onto that— my focus in engineering'.*
> Shreela, 29, Manager, Mother

Shreela's remark indicates how the pressure to succeed drove her educational achievements, however her parents' ambitions for her success were moderated by the traditional need to restrict her mobility, thereby preserving her respectability and their *izzat*; they refused to send her to another city to study thereby restricting her professional options. Thus whilst aspirations to modernity and tradition are reconciled, this reconciliation restricts a woman's choices and constrains her individualism in contradiction with Giddens's (1991) arguments regarding the reflexive planning of one's life course. At first glance her status as an IT worker may indicate that she is pursuing an individualist agenda for professional success but on examination this success is part of her duty to her family. She reciprocates their investment in her education by taking the path they have chosen for her rather than the one she is interested in. It could be argued that their decision turned out in her favour, since it secured her a highly prestigious

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[72] The reservation of seats for depressed castes in professional colleges is a controversial issue and is resented by several members of the upper castes.

and remunerative IT career. One reason why the old middle class supports its daughters' professional success is the need to do and display modernity.[73] A daughter's professional achievements represent the 'respectable modernity' (Thapan, 2004) to which middle class families aspire.

In contrast to old middle class women, the successful Strivers such as Nitya and Maya, women of the new middle class, Seekers, such as Sumaiya, Nalini, Kanti, Hema and Cristina achieve their more limited success without much parental support. They are often the first women in their families to have entered paid employment. If their mothers have worked, they were usually in poorly paid, low status jobs. Many of them have achieved their current positions by overcoming various odds such as: the threat of sexual harassment, poor qualifications or lack of cultural / economic capital in the family. Hema's parents wished to support her in taking an engineering degree but could not afford the fees while Cristina's father refused to support her in obtaining further qualifications arguing that they were unnecessary. His limited means and poor understanding of the job market restricted her opportunities in the globalizing economy.

> *Young girls today have so many opportunities. If my father had allowed me to do some courses I could have been a computer engineer but he thought a college degree was enough.*
> Cristina, 29, Secretary, Mother

Similarly, Kanti, argues that her parents were unable to give her the financial support and the advice required to make optimal use of the opportunities available due to globalization, even though her mother was willing to support her.

> *May be I would studied a little more, may be if I had to get an MBA then my mom told me I'll support you get an MBA [but I didn't]. Today my interests are HR [human resources] was with HR until I moved here so may be you know, when I look at some managers here the calibre is very low. I can't expect somebody like that in an HR manager's position so I thought with my kind of outlook in life with my kind of work*

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[73] I borrow this term from Finch's notion of displaying family (2007)

experiences and the kind of recognition I've got in HR I could
have done a better job, I could have done something by now I
would have been somebody. That support was not there for
education – exposure nil!
Kanti, 35, Administrator, Mother

Her accounts of her parents' financial insecurity, her (late) father's absences and his alcoholism support her claim. Both her parents worked in poorly paid jobs and belong to the Aspirer category. Her account indicates the disadvantages that new middle class families face in the global market due to lack of cultural capital.

The education of daughters in both old and new middle class families is intended to enhance their financial security within marriage and in case of marital breakdown (Mankekar, 1999). It also supplements the education that women receive within the family in domesticity and wifeliness. In old middle class families women were traditionally educated to provide intelligent companionship to their husbands and responsible mothering to their children (Chatterjee, 1989). Contemporary old middle class families covet the prestige associated with having professionally successful daughters and daughters-in-law but admitting to dependence on a woman's income would dishonour the family (even though this income is very useful to the family: see Chapter 5). In contrast new middle class families cannot deny their need for the incomes of their women to preserve their tenuous middle class status. Whatever the motivation to support the women's entry into paid employment is economic or social (related to prestige and modernity) the result is that women are able to pursue their individual ambitions. However, the pursuit of these ambitions is closely scrutinized by the family and when deemed necessary curtailed in the interests of traditional factors such as family honour or filial responsibility.

4.4.2 Bride: The Limits of Marital Choice

Given the importance of *kanyādāna* as a religious duty, parents feel a compulsion to arrange a good match for their daughter. Acquiring a suitable son-

in-law especially one of higher status and wealth is an important indicator of esteem within the kin-group and community. Parents who fail in this duty face criticism and ridicule (Uberoi, 2003). Extended kin networks and ties within the community are mobilized to search for a suitable match and the advice and opinion of kinsfolk is sought on marital proposals. In this period the reputation of a young woman is closely monitored by outsiders and guarded by close kin. A woman who refuses to marry, delays marriage or fails to find a suitable match prevents her parents from and gaining religious merit and is seen to be causing them pain and humiliation in their old age.

> *I go back home like going to a cemetery because it's so quiet at*
> *home. They [her parents] have this swollen face. It's like,*
> *'Okay my daughter's not married, like the sky is falling.*
> Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

From participants' accounts both young women and their parents are pressured by the questions of curious relatives or from seeing other young women marrying. Parents and the extended kin-group admonish her for being 'too choosy', not projecting the right image in public (dressing inappropriately, not grooming herself, drinking, smoking or socialising freely with men) or focusing too much on her career (which could imply to potential grooms that she lacks domestic talents or price her out of the hypergamous marriage market). Participants report that the phase of their lives when they are negotiating marriage choices is one of intense pressure and conflict with their parents. They experience confusion and stress as they deal with the influx of marriage proposals and subsequent meetings with potential grooms. The pressure of justifying or explaining their single status within the three circles of kinship leads some women to avoid family gatherings altogether.

> *It's everybody, it's everybody. I have stopped attending*
> *weddings ...it gets too irritating. They say, 'What's*
> *happening, any news? Why are you not getting married,?'*
> *I'm told, 'You're very picky?', 'Why don't you do something*
> *about your weight?' 'You will never find a perfect guy, just*
> *settle down.' I go to these parties and my friends introduce me*

to their wives. Then I become the crux of the conversation
between husbands and wives in the bedroom that night. – My
wife was asking, 'Why is she not married?' ... When they say,
'Why you not married?' what do I say? Is it supposed to be
some kind of a sickness like, 'Why are you having fever?'
'Because I got drenched in the rain last night.' It's not a
condition, right? It's not a medical condition. [breaking down]
Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

Major considerations in arranging marriages are caste, community and

class (indicated by actual wealth or educational qualifications and professional

success). Given the custom of hypergamy, class may overtake considerations of

caste (Tenhunen, 1999) i.e. families are willing to consider matches from grooms

who have a higher class status belonging to the same religious/ regional

community and a relatively similar caste over a less qualified and successful

person of the same caste/ sub-caste. Inter-caste and inter-sub-caste marriages

made by choice are increasing provided the partner is of a similar linguistic/

regional/ religious background and equivalent socio-economic status. Amongst

my participants 16 of the 24 married women have made marriages of choice[74] but

parental consent played a crucial role in the marriage. Those who had arranged

marriages were given freedom of choice and were encouraged to participate in the

final decision. The maintenance of harmony within the family and acceptance of

the kin-group is important even while making individualistic choices.

When my husband [who was a colleague at the office] asked me
to marry him, I introduced him to my mother and asked her to
talk to him. I felt she would know better than me whether we are
going to happy ten years from now.
Malini, 33, Currently not in employment (resigned as manager), Mother

Women who marry against their parents' wishes pay the price in being

ostracized or suffering from guilt and anxiety. This is especially true in the case

of inter-religious and inter-caste marriages. Swarna's decision to marry outside

her religious community resulted in a breakdown of the relationship between

herself and her parents. Sumiaya faces similar ostracism. However another

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[74] In Upadhya and Vasavi's (2006) study more participants (both male and female) had been through arranged marriages.

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participant, Deepika broke off her relationship with a man from another community and later married by choice within her own religious community to satisfy her parents. Shreela attempted to reconcile her parents to her choice through patience. The following remarks by three of these women indicates the varying degrees of conformity to parental expectations:

My mother spent most of the three years [that she was in her first relationship] crying... I realised that there was no point in hurting my parents so much.
Deepika, 27, Executive, Married

They brought me up to think liberal... they sent me abroad to study, to live in a hostel all by myself... it was too much to expect that I would conform and marry someone they chose.
Swarna, 32, Manager, Mother

I told [my parents], 'See this is my opinion and I am not going to say 'no' for whatever you say. But later I should not feel if I would have told you, you would have made this [allowed me to marry]. I should not have regret that way. I am not going to act against your words. I am just telling you, it is all your decision. I can't assure for my happy life. I will take up my life whatever you are giving me but I can't assure for my happy life whatever you say. I will live, that's all.' I made clear that I am not going to be against them, I'll wait.
Shreela, 29, Manager, Mother

Since Shreela's parents accepted their daughter's choice in defiance of collective opposition by the kin-group, she feels deeply indebted to them for their forbearance and obliged to repay the debt through affection and reverence. Her account was littered with phrases like, *'I need to appreciate my mother for ...'*, *'I must mention the contribution of my father to...'*.

Individualism and collectivism often clash in women's marital choices. Lathika claims that her professional success and progressive lifestyle have narrowed her options since most men of her community are too conservative to accept her yet she is unsure about marrying outside her community.

I want to marry into my own community. [If I marry outside the community] how will I talk to him in my language or share those jokes even relate to him'. ... Tomorrow if I marry a Punju [Punjabi] or a Keralite, I don't think they get what I'm saying or I get what they are saying. Somewhere there will be a disconnect because of our customs or traditions or whatever. So I still feel I want to marry a --- [name of community]. I still want to retain my own traditions.
Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

In contrast Meenakshi who is emerging from an emotionally abusive arranged marriage within her own caste hopes to eventually marry by choice. She seeks a husband who will treat her with consideration and already negotiating for her parents' consent to marry someone outside of her caste and religion (though she is yet to identify the person). Due to her experiences, compatibility of temperaments is more important to her than similarity of social background.

Lathika and Meenakshi are both making marital choices based on notions of mutual compatibility rather than tradition but their choices are influenced by several factors: considerations of collectivist social identities based on caste, language and community that create a sense of comfort and familiarity not only for the parents but also for young women concerned; previous experiences of marriage and relationships; factors such as comparability of incomes of the two partners and the image of the young professional women in the wider community. As Smart and Shipman's study of Hindu, Muslim and Catholic migrants to Britain found, belonging to the same ethnic or religious group is as important an aspect of compatibility in marriage as suitability of tempraments or similarity of interests.

Middle class Indian women often struggle to find partners who suit their own requirements as well as those of their parents. Changing values, the emerging ethos of individualism and the idealization of romantic love compel women to seek more choice in marriage but the need for security obliges them to seek parental approval and remain within the bounds of caste and community. Women in IT are at a disadvantage in seeking partners. Given the hierarchy

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between bride-takers and bride-givers they must ideally marry men who are better placed that them but their high incomes restrict their choices. Moreover as Lathika claims, the long hours, frequent travel and close interactions with men required by IT jobs might not be acceptable to spouses from non-IT backgrounds. Fuller and Narasimham's (2007) study found that even male IT workers look for non-IT professionals as wives. Women are caught in a double bind wherein their professional status, income and self-confidence make them desirable partners but also may intimidate prospective grooms. Parents are aware of these contradictory tendencies and attempt to police their daughters' behaviour to project an optimal (and elusive) blend of autonomy and compliance, modernity and traditionalism.

4.4.3 Wife: Combining Tradition with Equality

> Beena I don't think I could have been married to anybody else and felt so happy.

> Sarah That's amazing because it's an arranged marriage too!

> Beena I don't know. Either you adapt yourselves to suit each other or it must be a God-made match.

> Sarah I think it is really.

> Beena I think today people are enjoying their marriages a lot more. It's no longer a responsibility or a duty you're fulfilling – it's about being married to a friend almost, so the way we approach our marriages and our lives also are so different from what our parents must have.
> Beena, 30, Manager, Married; Sarah, 36, Married

> He doesn't know I'm existing next to him. I'm a newly married bride. I'm his wife. The touch or the feel, the talk, the romance, the sex, nothing was in our life. Then I thought, 'Okay, this is a wrong decision.' I didn't know how to react because I was also not mature to think in that way. I was twenty five, he was thirty-four. I thought, ' I don't know his parents also, how will I tell them?' [Later her husband spoke of his previous relationships and his drinking habit; see chapter 3] ...I pray and that gives me all the courage, strength to what I should be doing. I'm not a patient girl but prayer works. God has yoked me and my

husband so I thought he's keeping us together. Forgive a person
however sinful he is and take him as a new person in my life.
Cristina, 29, Secretary, Mother

Both the women quoted above have had arranged marriages. Both attribute their marriages to workings of a supernatural power. Both accept the ideals associated with companionate marriages: friendship, love, romance. Yet the sense of empowerment and satisfaction felt by each woman is different. One accepts her marriage as a 'yoke from God', the other as a gift. I make this comparison to indicate the differences in participants'experiences of marriage: experiences that are influenced by differences in the temperaments of their spouses, family backgrounds and personal circumstances. These accounts indicate that there is a change in attitudes to marriage within the contemporary middle class India: it is viewed as a relationship to be 'enjoyed' rather than as a responsibility to be undertaken. Equality, romance and companionship are its key ingredients. However, a sense of duty still lies beneath it as Cristina's account indicates. Since the reduced stigma around divorce makes marriages in contemporary India more vulnerable, participants willingly put in high levels of emotional labour to maintain their marriages (Hochschild, 2003).

It is so easy. It is so easy to get out of a marriage. It's just the easiest
thing today - in today's time when you are independent financially.
When you have parents who may welcome you back when something
goes wrong because they've brought you up like a flower and they
wouldn't want anything to hurt you. It's very easy to break away when
there's something wrong— it's very tough to make it work. And what
makes it work is this question you ask yourself every time. For
example if there is something wrong and a negative thought comes
into you mind saying, okay I've had it I want to pack my bags and
leave you ask yourself, 'You want this marriage to work?' and the
answer is, 'Yes I want it to work. I got married because I want it to
work.' Who's going to take that effort to make it work? If it's not
your husband then it's you. And you will take that effort. You will say
sorry and you will make up. And that is the effort you have to take
whether it's your fault or it is not. You have to swallow your pride,
you have to swallow your ego and you take that effort. What is
important to you? Is your marriage important to you? Then shut up,
forget about what has happened and carry on. Why? Because it's

*important to you. Not because 'oh the children will not have a father'
and all that jazz. Because you got married because you loved this man
and that's why you have to make it work no matter how he is- that's
what I believe. So at the same time I would like to state here that in
spite of the fact that I am very independent. I am also very traditional
in my thinking. When it comes to the institution of marriage I'm very
traditional.*
Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

*My brother is having an arranged marriage, my sister had an
arranged marriage. A relative ticked me off, saying, 'Your marriage
[by choice, outside her sub-caste] won't last long, so I was
determined that whatever happens I will keep it together.*
Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

This manner of describing commitment indicates a change in the way
women view their marital commitments - not in collectivist terms of duty to their
parents (to remain married for the sake of family honour) or their children but as
an individual choice and responsibility. When women such as Geetika and Jaya
marry by choice they feel a strong responsibility to preserve the marriage. This
attitude to marriage should not lead us to celebrate the triumph of individual
choice over traditionalism without accounting for the underbelly of
individualization. Individualization has the potential to 'liberate' women from the
family but can also remove the family's protective influence leaving feeling
women vulnerable and exposed. Both Jaya and Geetika maintain that they take
more pains than their husbands to preserve their marriages; they are usually the
first to apologise after an argument even if they don't believe themselves to be at
fault. Financial independence may make it easier, as Geetika argues, to walk out
of a marriage. However, Meenakshi's experiences (of harassment) as a recently
divorced woman indicate that women can be highly vulnerable outside a marriage.
As Adkins (2000) argues, reflexivity has different consequences for men and
women; rather than disembedding them from traditional constraints reflexivity re-
embeds women within existing and new constraints. Moreover, while the
language of individualism may apply to the private tie between husband and wife,
marriage continues to be conducted under the scrutiny of the kin-group:

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*I am not allowed to address him by name in front of my
relatives and all. They're very particular. They're still in
[a] back[ward] stage. You're not supposed to call your
husband by his name. I say hogo-baro (go-come) to him at
home but in front of them I have to be respectful. I'm forced
to say bannee kooth-koli (please come and do sit down). I
feel he is very distant to me and he also doesn't like it.*
Hema, 26, Administrator, Married

Couples move between their more equitable relationship in private to one
that recognises the authority and dominance of the husband in public. Even the
husband's professed discomfort with the latter equation does not motivate him to
change it before the extended kin-group. Some collusion is necessary to win the
extended family's approval of a woman's conduct. In cases where the
breadwinner-caregiver model has been overturned i.e. when women's income
exceeds that of their husbands, they take pains to rationalize or underplay the
situation. Thus they selectively uphold some traditional norms of unequal status,
receiving love, support and protection within the marriage.

The reification of romantic love and the ideals of egalitarianism encourage
women to seek equality within their marriages. Yet structural inequalities
(differences in income, age and life-experience), cultural factors (the continuance
of the breadwinner-caregiver model and the romanticization of the husband-
protector ideal) and traditional norms (such as the hierarchy between bride-givers
and bride-takers) prevent them from fully realizing this equality. Some
participants attempt to mask this inequality by indicating that they are 'equal in
the ways that "really count"' because the closeness of the marital tie 'calls for
some disguise of subordination' that women experience within it' (Hochschild,
2003:169). Being equal in the ways that count include joint decisions about
children, being consulted on financial issues, being encouraged to remain in
employment and some (but not equal) sharing of household tasks.

4.4.4. Daughter-in-law: Complying by Choice

> *Anjali*   *You can go as far as you want you can rise as high as you want to [in the workplace], but I think on the personal front, on the family front there are a certain amount of things that you need to do or you want to do. I don't think anybody dictates that you have to do it but it's a certain amount of the upbringing, certain amount of maternal instincts and your wifely instincts, [laughter] daughter-in-law-ly and sisterly—*
>
> *Swarna*   *But we also do that because it makes you happy at the end of the day if you want to be a typical daughter-in-law it's because it makes you happy ultimately. So what's happening to us is that we've finally realised it's very important to make ourselves happy rather than make others happy.'*

Anjali, 30, Manager, Mother; Swarna, 31, Manager, Mother

In late-modern globalizing middle class India a woman's in-laws no longer expect that she will demonstrate loyalty to them by ensuring that her 'identity as wife overrides her other identities as daughter and sister' (Madan, 1993: 291). As Anjali and Swarna argue women may 'choose' to treat their parents-in-law with deference, rather than being 'expected' to do so, but their choice is mediated within several cultural parameters (cf. Adams, 2003): the concern of her own parents (that she demonstrate that she has been well schooled in the responsibilities of motherhood and wifeliness), the overt or covert expectations of her in-laws, the substitute care that they provide for her child, gendered messages acquired in childhood and fear of negative evaluation in the kin-group.

While women over thirty tend to be fairly committed to nurturing the relationship with their in-laws, there is significant variation amongst younger women. Nitya, who married by choice describes how she is learning the customs and language of her husband's community, making an effort to win over her in-laws who initially opposed her marriage. In contrast Rupa, whose marriage was arranged, maintains '*a decent working relationship*' with her in-laws and avoids direct confrontation while ignoring what she considers their unfair demands.

You've come into a new house where you have to adjust with
three new people: your husband included. Why do all these
expectations have to be piled on to you? It's not fair. They need
to be making the first move towards some kind of adjustment.
Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

Given that women are repositories of family honour, a daughter-in-law's
behaviour impacts directly on the family's reputation and consequently requires
close monitoring and self-censorship.

I am quite different at my in-law's place. I am very soft spoken
and I don't cross my legs [a sign of casualness and disrespect
towards elders] in front of my mother-in-law. It is not like
pretension or anything. The atmosphere calls for that.
Nalini, 37, Executive, Mother

When in-laws visit for a short period of time, hospitality is shown through
the preparation of elaborate meals, day trips to local attractions, shopping
expeditions and making changes in daily life:

I usually leave work only when I have reached a logical break
in my schedule but I try not to work late when they are at
home because they don't like it and you get comments like, 'It
is not safe to return home late' and such.
Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

Marriage implicates a woman in a complex network of ties with her
husbands' kin. When she is interacting with her husband's sister and brother-in-
law, she is positioned as a member of his (her husband's) family and therefore as
bride-giver. As daughter-in-law and bride-giver she is responsible for maintaining
the family's honour by honouring their son-in-law i.e. her sister-in-law's husband.

I would see that there was an elaborate meal with non-
vegetarian food ready every day when they visited us and my
husband would open a bottle of whisky — since this is my
husband's sister and her family visiting us we make an extra
effort for them.'
Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Women who are assertive in the workplace, and modern in appearance and demeanour within their own homes, perform their traditionalism when visiting in-laws and in front of the kin-group, out of respect for the latter's values and not as a pretence Nalini argues. The temporarily suspend their modernity, allowing their identities as individualistic professionals to recede while their identities as traditional complaint daughters-in-law come into sharper focus. Parekh argues that human beings have plural identities which influence different areas of their lives. 'The context decides which identity is relevant, and that identity, as socially defined, largely dictates appropriate behaviour (Parekh, 2008:23).'

Women savour the praise that they receive for conformity and for fulfilling their duties as daughters-in-law and homemakers. Meenakshi's remark below indicates how much this praise is valued even after the marriage has broken down:

Meenakshi	*They say circumstances make you learn things and do things. I knew nothing about cooking but one instance that made me cook like Tarla Dalal [a famous Indian cookery expert and writer]. When my mother-in-law said, 'Your mother hasn't taught you to cook.' One word and the next week I started cooking like I have been cooking for ages! So the only thing was that I needed the push from someone.'*
Jyothsna	*What did she say after that?*
Meenakshi	*She was so happy! 'Oh my god, you have learnt cooking!' She came and she hugged me. She started like, 'Oh child, molle [daughter], my girl!' That's how it was. I needed someone and I learnt it and my mother-in-law was very happy that I was taking care of the house very well.*

Meenakshi, 24, Executive, Divorced

In spite of their exposure to ideals of equality and egalitarianism middle class women respect the traditional norms associated with their status as daughters-in-law and behave accordingly. They are rewarded for their compliance with affection, care and support for their professional lives. The manner in which compliance with tradition is exchanged for practical and emotional support, help with childcare and encouragement of professional life will be further examined in Chapter 6. However, it is important to emphasize here that women describe their conformity using the vocabulary of individualism prevalent in late modernity. They see it not as a constraint but as a choice that is gladly made. Women no longer find traditional discourses around the importance of wifehood or motherhood and the associated vulnerability of a woman in her marital home useful in explaining their positions as daughters-in-law. The individualist discourse of self-fulfilment and self-expression allows them to account for their behaviour whilst also maintaining their self-identities as modern, independent and self-sufficient women. Jackson's (2008) argument of relational reflexivity is appropriate here. Women's construction of their self-identities depends not only on their ability to reflect on themselves but to do so in the light of the opinions of others. The praise and affection they receive augments their self-worth and sense of personal fulfilment.

4.4.5 Mother: The Child as a Delicate Project

As I argued earlier motherhood is the cornerstone of a woman's identity and producing children (preferably within the first two to three years of marriage) is considered an essential part of a woman's kinship obligations. The pressure to have children is a result of family expectations, cultural norms and expert advice on the appropriate time for childbirth. Amongst the women in my study the married women who were as yet childless were going through extensive soul searching regarding the optimal time to have children. They claimed that this discussion often came up with their friends, female colleagues and their husbands. Much of this soul searching is in vain as the nature of the IT industry makes it impossible to identify a right time to slow down in one's career, while

uncertainties in the market prevent any sense of financial stability when married couples can confidently take on the responsibility of a child. In addition children in contemporary middle class India are an expensive investment: they require private education, after school activities, educational toys, exciting holidays and other forms of cultural capital (usually paid via the mother's income). In addition to traditional discourses eulogising the sanctity of the bond between mother and child and sacrifices by mothers for their children women are also influenced by their own experiences of being brought up by stay-at-home mothers whose intensive and highly involved parenting styles are hard to emulate when balancing motherhood and paid employment. However there is an additional source of pressure on women: late-modern discourses from the fields of child psychology and education that emphasises the importance of the mother in rearing healthy, emotionally well balanced children.

I have argued in Chapter 2 that one of the defining characteristics of late modernity is the tendency for individuals to turn to experts for advice on all aspects of intimate life and relations. Of all areas of intimate life, parenting (in particular motherhood) is arguably the subject that receives most attention and is most stringently policed. A specific conceptualization of child development evolved in the twentieth century where 'primary objective of child rearing changed from a focus on rigid behavioural training to a focus on nurturing the wholesome, inherent goodness in children' (Hays, 1996 in Hattery 2003:23). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argue that the concept of the child as a delicately managed project is a major feature of late modernity. Conception, pregnancy and motherhood are no longer seen as natural occurrences but 'projects' to be undertaken with responsibility and under expert guidance.

Most of the mothers report that they regularly read books, newspaper/magazine articles or websites on parenting; one reported receiving books on pregnancy and parenting as a gift from her husband and mother-in-law. Keeping abreast of such information is considered important to mothering. Some

participants file articles for future reference and consciously implemented the recommendations in them while others used them more generally to inform their mothering. Whatever their level of involvement, their tendency to rely on this information suggests that women are influenced by late-modern culture's message of responsible and 'intensive mothering' (Pocock 2003: 81). Reading to children, supervising their homework, overseeing their nutrition, planning their extra curricular activities and ensuring their emotional wellbeing are considered essential to good mothering. Women take pains to complete all these tasks while also keeping up with the housework and other kinship obligations.

Like their counterparts in the West, women experience guilt, anxiety and continued soul searching when they return from maternity leave into full/ part-time employment (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Pocock, 2003). However, as the responses of participants imply, the decision to return to paid work is never conclusive even if it has been carried out: it is repeatedly revisited, re-examined and questioned. This re-examination can be triggered off by a number of incidents that are the regular stuff of family life. Growing children suffer a variety of minor or major illnesses, go through phases of withdrawal or misbehaviour; become unhappy at school or fail to meet educational standards. Any such occurrence might lead a mother to rethink her commitment to work.

> *At the last PTA meeting that I went - it wasn't very great. I saw*
> *the previous conversation the mother and teacher, they are*
> *going gaga over that kid and she was spending more [time] -*
> *probably half an hour. I was waiting for my turn when I went*
> *we hardly had five minutes talk in a way. It was okay for me, I*
> *wanted to come back to office but I was wondering why.*
> Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

Pocock argues that the 'mythology of 'proper mothering'' (2003:75) creates impossibly high standards for mothers causing what she calls 'an epidemic of guilt' and confusion (2003:83). The consequences of this for women in paid employment and the strategies women use to find substitute childcare will be examined in Chapter 6.

Many participants experience motherhood differently from their own mothers who were not in full time employment and therefore did not feel the same guilt. Their mothers were also not under the influence of so much conflicting information from the experts on child development. Discourses on the emotional wellbeing of children had not become as entrenched as they currently seem to be and parents expected children to obey the rules rather than reasoning with them.

> *When I was growing up we never- we would not be sitting with*
> *our parents chatting with them. We were like [told] 'go, do you*
> *homework'. We never do that [with my son]. I reason with him*
> *and I ask him why he did something wrong. We talk like friends.*
> *When I was a child is that I did not have lot of time talking with*
> *them about things which I spend time doing with him.*
> Savita,32, Manager, Mother

This use of conversation as 'the medium of mothering' (Larson and Richards, 1994 in DeVault, 1999b) is an essential part of women's daily lives. Participants tend to be highly concerned with the emotional development of their children, encouraging them to be uninhibited and expressive and to develop confidence in their abilities. Those who have suffered from the middle class pressure to achieve even assert that they will encourage their children to take on more creative and less stressful professions. Older children are often involved in family decisions: which brand of television to buy or where to go for a holiday.

The plethora of child rearing choices and the responsibility to choose wisely add to rather than reduce a woman's guilt and anxiety with mothering. While decisions are shared with fathers, the early stages of education are overseen by mothers. The agonizing over educational decisions: choice of school (there are several private schools in Bangalore with diverse philosophies, curricula and facilities), [75] after-school activities, how much academic pressure is optimal are an

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[75] Public or state sponsored education is favoured only by the very poor; only a few state sponsored schools run by the central government and defense services have facilities that are marginally close to those of private schools.

intrinsic part of a mother's daily life and something that they share with mothers in other cultures (see Raey, 2000).

> *Very difficult decision! Believe me! Oh my! I wish there was*
> *just one other parent who has done that. I don't know of anyone*
> *I don't even dare tell people that I did this because they'll say*
> *'What kind of mum are you? You removed your son from school*
> *...what's going to happen with him!'*
> Maya, 37, Senior Manager, Mother

Maya's decision to withdraw her son from pre-school and wait until he was older to re-admit him, Nalini's concern that her son should not misinterpret his parents' arguments and Savita's tendency to encourage her son's emotional expressiveness are all manifestations of the child as delicately managed project that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) describe. The discourse of individual choices and responsibility ensures that women take almost exclusive responsibility for 'project child'.

4.5 Care Debts and the Work of Servicing Kinship Obligations

Women in paid employment constantly need their parents' or in-laws' help with childcare, pregnancy and childbirth. Traditionally women returned to their natal homes for the birth of their first child (Kakar 1988) however the professional commitments of my participants do not always allow this. Consequently their mothers visit closer to the birth, providing help with the baby and running the household for a few months. This eases the transition from maternity leave back to the workplace. I found that while their children are growing women continue to receive help in discharging those responsibilities that are traditionally associated with their positions as wives and mothers. As far as possible parents step in and fulfil their daughters' responsibilities themselves (which sometimes necessitates their moving to the city where she resides, changing residence within the same city to live closer to her or moving in with her temporarily or permanently). These responsibilities include cooking for the daughter's family, overseeing domestic help, childcare, chores such as banking, interacting with

school authorities and taking care of investments. Parents keep in touch with the extended kin-group, attending family functions on their daughter's behalf (making excuses for her non-attendance by citing how busy she is). Whilst fulfilling these responsibilities parents constantly remind their daughters of their kinship obligations as these two accounts from different points in my interview with Anjana indicate:

Anjana   *The first year at --- (company name) is when I had my kid. It meant a double kind of a responsibility: one is I had to ensure that I do well in my career, another thing I had a small little baby at home who I had to also support – at the same time do justice at both sides. Somewhere you need to – there is a little amount of injustice done either to your profession or to your personal life. ... I had to leave my baby just about eight weeks old and get back to work because work was – There was a very critical project and I had to get back to work. Yes, there was certain amount of guilt -I wasn't there for my baby at least for about twelve weeks which is an ideal mom who would be with their kid but my mom helped me then. I had a wonderful support system. I had my mom who was there, my dad, my brother and sister- in-law also who were like – Everybody pitched in to ensure that I stand on my own feet and I do well for myself, I get to do something in life which I wanted to do for a long time.'*

[And later in the interview...]

Anjana   *Earlier my mom and my dad, everybody would feel that my late working hours would rub the wrong way with Balan [her husband]. He will not be able to accept it and he is just trying to accept it because he doesn't want to confront it. They would feel like, you know you are coming home at ten thirty, eleven and your husband is here by seven thirty, eight. What would his mother feel? What would his sister feel? Mom will say –*

Jyothsna *As the parents of a daughter also that concern is there*

> *Anjana* *Yeah that concern is there, see, because ultimately they need to answer to a lot of people around them. Everybody would come and say, 'She has not come, he has come home. How is she managing?' And all those kind of ugly questions that normally happen. But I think the day Balan stood up and told [them] 'You don't worry about how we are doing it. I know where she is and I know what she's doing. You don't –you just relax. I know what my wife is and if anybody has a question ask them to ask me I will answer back.' The kind of confidence – that is when they realise that my husband is okay with whatever I am going through.*

Anjana, 33, Manager, Mother

Bailey (1971) argues that fear of gossip is a powerful motivator for individuals in a closely integrated community to conform to normative standards. In a society where women are expected to take primary responsibility for the home and family, a married woman who works the kind of hours that Anjana does is pushing the boundaries of normative behaviour. Therefore her job is not only a source of pride but also a source of anxiety for her parents. Their fear that she might incur the displeasure of her in-laws was only mitigated when her husband stepped in to reassure them. In contemporary middle class India parents' commitment to helping their daughters is motivated not only by affection and the obligation of care but also by a desire to preserve the quality of their family lives and their marriages. By substituting themselves for her, they prevent her from being blamed within the marital home and the kin-group for neglecting her domestic duties. Thereby they preserve her honour and reputation in the community and by association their own.

Time and care are gifted from parents to daughters thereby putting the latter under obligation to them. As they progress from old age to infirmity their daughters (whose children would by then be older and less in need of close supervision) feel obliged to return this care, not because it is demanded of them but as a gesture of affection. Thus care and concern circulate between the generations strengthening kinship ties and mutual obligation (Afshar, 1989a).

Care is also reciprocated through conformity to tradition, deference and respect which in turn raise the respectability of the entire family within the community.

In some instances in-laws provide substitute childcare and help with domestic work. There are also cases where a grandmother of one partner oversees the domestic help but their role is more supervisory; the actual work is done by hired helpers. When help is refused it can lead to conflict as in Kanti's case (see section 4.1) or Jaya's (her in-laws refused to move to Bangalore to support her because their own daughter was undergoing marital difficulties).[76] The gift of time and effort from in-laws is received somewhat differently than from parents. Traditionally it is the daughter-in-law who take care of the in-laws; to reverse the situation and call upon their help requires tact and diplomacy. Given the delicacy of the relationship and the traditionally lower status of a daughter-in-law her obligation to the in-laws is keenly felt on both sides. As a result she needs to demonstrate an even greater degree of gratitude, respect and deference in return for their support than she would to her parents.

> *I am a very traditional person. I do wear Western jeans and trousers and all Western formals but I prefer wearing Indian dresses in front of my in-laws. When I go to my in law's place I wear saris with pallu (the end of the sari) on my head. When they come here I manage with salwaar kurta but I usually try avoiding wearing skirts and Western formals and jeans. I wear only salwaar kameez or saris in front of them ...not Western clothes and in --- [name of hometown] I cover my head with my sari. ...They feel happy when the neighbours come and see that the daughter-in-law is following the traditions.*
> Swati, 35, Manager, Mother

Whether women are supported due to the prestige that their jobs bring to the family or because of their financial contributions, these issues are rarely vocalized. It is simply acknowledged that the affection of grandparents motivates them to help with childcare.[77] Within the Indian kinship system a child is believed

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[76] She asserts that she now understands their decision and that the relationship is cordial.
[77] Many women rationalize their guilt by arguing that grandparents make better carers than parents.

to belong to the entire patrilineage and not just the parents (Das, 1993), yet the sense of obligation to the grandparents is keenly felt. The manner in which debts are serviced, and the relationship between the kinship and care work that women undertake and their paid work will be examined in detail in Chapter 6.

4.6 Conclusion

Giddens (1991) argues that in late-modern society collectivist structures begin to lose their influence over the biographies of individuals, implying that personal and professional decisions are based on the individual's personal value system rather than traditional norms. It may be surmised on this basis that by engaging in paid employment in the transnational economy women become more independent of the influence family. However, my research finds that the decision to qualify for employment in the transnational economy itself is influenced by a woman's parents and underlined by her sense of duty to them and the prestige that her professional status creates for the family. Once she is in paid employment a middle class Indian woman becomes more closely embedded in reciprocal kinship obligations due to the care debt that she incurs by requesting help with childcare.

Tensions are evident between individualist and collectivist tendencies in women's marital choices, career choices and decisions to remain in fulltime employment after childbirth. Families play an important role in these decisions but women also attempt to influence the situation in their favour through tact, negotiation, compromise, mutual give and take, 'personal equations, subtle strategies and the manifest designs of individuals' (Dube 2001:37). However, women's individualistic decisions rarely threaten authority structuresin the family.

Individualism needs to be redefined in the Indian context: it does not opposed to collectivist structures or collectivist tendencies. The pursuit of individualistic ambitions is related to family loyalty and women's motivation to maintain and augment family honour. While families' need to strengthen their

social and economic position in globalizing India motivates them to support their daughters and daughters-in-law in their careers, women's individual pursuit of professional success in the workplace is closely tied with their responsibilities within the family. This issue will be further developed in Chapter 5 where I discuss women's diverse relationships with paid employment.

Chapter 5

Working in the Transnational Economy:
Multiple Motivations and Varied Orientations

> For women as well as men, work in the marketplace is less often
> a simple economic fact than a complex cultural value. If in the
> early part of the century it was considered unfortunate that a
> woman had to work, it is now thought surprising when she
> doesn't.
> Hochschild, 1997:198

During my fieldwork I visited a middle-aged couple whose daughter is an
IT worker. Their young granddaughter was spending the day with them while her
mother went to work. Possibly feeling the need to justify his daughter's decision
to continue in full-time employment while leaving her child in his care, her father,
a retired government employee, remarked, 'These are not pensionable jobs. You
cannot expect anything on retirement. It is better that you children work as long
as you can and earn enough for the future.' In a nutshell he described the
difference between the two generations' experiences of employment. While their
parents' generation competed for secure, pensioned jobs in the public sector with
assured housing, medical benefits and subsidised schooling, the current
generation of middle class Indians aspire for private sector jobs which are highly
remunerated but have little security and no retirement benefits. Globalization has
increased investment options enabling the middle class to make bigger and bolder
economic decisions but while the availability of credit facilities and global brands
have fuelled consumerism, the dismantling of protectionist policies has also made
the economy more vulnerable to volatility in global markets causing economic
uncertainty and inflation.

As in the case of women in developed nations, contemporary Indian women have increasingly entered the workforce to enhance their families' financial security within an uncertain economy.[78] However, their presence in the labour market is not just related to financial security, it is loaded with cultural meaning. Like the American women referred to by Hochschild (1997) in the quote above, contemporary Indian middle class women face a cultural expectation that they will support their families in anchoring themselves in the global economy and culture not just through their incomes but through their professional status. However, unlike men whose responsibilities as breadwinners are congruent with their professional roles and aspirations, women's presence in the workplace can sometimes complement and sometimes conflict with their family responsibilities. Therefore their relationship with work is more ambivalent than that of men.

In this chapter I examine Indian women's motivations to enter employment in the transnational economy and their shifting orientations towards and ambivalent relationship with paid work. In the latter part of this chapter I propose a typology of three distinct orientations towards paid work that emerged from analysing the accounts of different women. This typology is useful in understanding the diversity amongst participants in their relationship with work and also useful when examining their strategies for managing work and home-life. However, before exploring these issues it is useful to briefly discuss the conditions under which they create their relationships with paid employment in the IT industry.

5.1 The Organisation of Work in the Transnational IT Industry

As I argued in Chapter 3, the IT industry is believed to epitomise India's entry into the global economy. Its contribution to the nation's GDP (5.2% in 2006 see NASSCOM Newsline 2007) and the amount of direct foreign investment it has enabled (US$ 4 - 5 billion in 2008 according to the NASSCOM

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[78] Williams, 2000, Hochschild, 1989 with reference to USA; Pocock, 2003 on Australia ; Yeandle, 1984; Irwin 2005 with regard to UK, Bijapurkar, 2007, Fernandes, 2000 with regard to India.

McKinsey report – see EconomyWatch ca.2009) supports this image. The industry is known for adapting Western management practices to India, particularly 'diversity' (equal opportunities) policies addressed to women. These policies, which include extended maternity leave, flexible working and telecommuting are part of the industry's commitment to increasing the percentage of women in its workforce (currently estimated at about 30 - 35% – see Alexander, 2007) and are well publicised in the media. They form part of the industry's egalitarian self-image.

However the organisation of work in the IT industry contradicts the industry's employee-friendly policies. Given that the greater part of the industry's revenues depend on being able to provide services and products to Western markets at competitive costs, IT workers need to be mobile, flexible and highly individualized (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). Mobility indicates migration to overseas 'client locations' from any period between a few months to a few years. Employees are also expected to regularly visit client sites and other company locations; these visits can take place up to several times a month. To progress in their careers, employees need to show willingness for such mobility; otherwise their career opportunities will be limited to what is available in their hometowns. Even if they are not geographically mobile, IT workers are engaged in 'virtual migration' (Aneesh, 2001 in Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:24) i.e. they are connected online to client sites irrespective of time differences. Both forms of mobility restrict women's career options after marriage and childbirth; while single women accept overseas assignments, married women cannot migrate as easily as men (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). After childbirth even short business trips can be difficult to organise, while being available to clients across time zones as virtual migrants requires working at family-unfriendly hours and conflicts with domestic responsibilities.

When I came back [from maternity leave] I was in low profile
work. I could still manage work and home and all that stuff.
Then when I moved into proper management automatically
travels becomes key and in a year I had seven, eight trips — short
trips. Every time I had to make some arrangements for Rahul
[her son] so it was not looking very good and same thoughts
came back, whether I should be continuing or not.
Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

Flexibility indicates both flexibility in the way work is organised: tele-working arrangements, flexible time schedules and flexibility in location of work (flexibilization of work), and flexible forms of employment such as hiring temporary 'contract labour'. By keeping workers on temporary contracts, companies can adapt the size of their workforce to suit a changing market but such a workforce faces constant risk of unemployment. It is usually the lower graded employees who are on flexible contracts and many of them are women.

Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) argue that although flexibilization leads to job insecurity and high attrition, these are offset by high salaries, the demand for labour and opportunities offered by the industry as a whole. Ideal workers are expected to be entrepreneurial (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006) finding new projects in the organisation, networking within and outside the company and taking initiative to build their own careers by seeking suitable training and job opportunities. However while the engineers ('techies') and managers can be entrepreneurial, it is difficult for administrative staff, who are usually on temporary contracts and whose employment is mediated via 'labour contractors', to negotiate higher wages, training opportunities or better working conditions. Flexibilization therefore benefits employers, Bauman's (1998) fickle 'liquid capitalists', who can move in search of more conducive labour markets rather than labour who tend to be 'fixed' to given social, economic and spatial locations.

Flexiblization of work is cited as a way of helping employees adapt work timings to the demands of their personal lives but also allows clients to demand service at family-unfriendly hours. Though promoted as a work-life balance strategy it can be negated by norms of long work hours and the demands of client

centred work (Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport 2007). Ideal employees are expected to work flexibly according to the demands of the job even if those conflict with family needs. This characterization of ideal workers disadvantages women who may be restricted by their caring and domestic responsibilities, their personal vulnerability or prevalent social norms and structures that restrict travel, migration and late-hours.

> *I left that company to join a smaller set up, just to ensure that I have more quality time with my family and my child. And the first condition that I put to them ... I told them I'm going to be available for them at a time when it is more suited to my family life. I don't shy away from working late or something but I will work remotely at home, but I will not stretch my day in the office. I have to physically be there for my child. That was a compromise I had to do with my profession per se.*
> Anjana, 33, Manager, Mother

Anjana's account contradicts the argument that the IT workforce consists of highly individualized, 'self-directed, goal-oriented and autonomous individuals – a process that conflicts with existing communitarian social values giving rise to internal tensions and conflicts within the family' (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:iii). Her decision to join a smaller company and work remotely indicates that female IT workers strategise not only in terms of their careers but also in favour of family life. Anjana indicates that the choice to work remotely and in a less demanding job affected her career. The impact that the inability to put in 'face-time' (work in the office in full view of their peers and superiors) potentially has on women's career growth, even when they are willing to work long hours, is obscured by the rhetoric on the IT industry's flexible working policies for female employees.

Individualization is perceived as both desirable and undesirable depending on its impact. On the one hand companies encourage workers to take responsibility for their own careers, negotiating their own contracts, working arrangements and wages, rather than depending on collective structures such as unions or professional associations. On the other hand, HR professionals and

managers often complain about employees' lack of company loyalty and their short-term view of career progression. These claims are apparent in the accounts quoted in Upadhya and Vasavi's (2006) study as well as those of my participants: *'There's a standing joke that says all IT companies are like revolving doors; people come, stay, go, come, stay, go' (Savita, 32, Manager, Mother).*

> *See, there've been people who've had twenty years in this organisation and had very interesting careers. They've done so many different things, and that's one thing that all organisations have been trying to impress upon employees – unsuccessfully [laughter]. You wouldn't have had this kind of attrition if they could understand that. I myself have counselled so many employees saying that have a long-term perspective; you can grow your career here. But the only thing that works is if you say, 'I'll give you a twenty five percent hike in your pay check.' People have a very short term focus. They will not think long-term. They will jump companies purely for money, it is not a question of career growth.*
> Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

In contrast to the popular image of IT workers, few of my participants claimed to have changed jobs more than two or three times in their career; some have been with the same company for several years. Their job changes are not always a result of individual choice but necessitated by external circumstances such as marriage, transfer of their husbands, harassment or sudden changes in company policy that adversely affect them; only a few consciously change jobs to acquire broader experience or boost their curriculum vitae. Participants with young children argue that their occupational choices are restricted as they cannot travel, relocate or change to a more demanding role. Many remain loyal to their companies because they have built a reputation there which stands them in good stead when asking for 'favours' such as flexible timings or telecommuting. This may not be an immediate possibility in a new organisation where they would first need to establish themselves. Some are loyal to their companies due to past 'favours' such as being granted extended leave due to family emergencies or

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being allowed flexible hours while children were young.[79] Their lack of individualization thereby benefits their employers.

Women may not meet *all* the normative standards of ideal workers in the IT industry such as flexibility, mobility and individualization due to family constraints, even though the same family constraints tend to make them more loyal employees. Their caring responsibilities often diminish their ability to take an entrepreneurial attitude to their careers and make strategic professional choices to take high profile, demanding roles. However, they need to work within the norms of the industry. On the employers' part, the need for labour obliges them to offer a variety of working arrangements and strategies, while the need for profit limits the degree to which these strategies can be implemented or at least noticeably limits the career progression of those who chose to benefit from them. Women's relationships with paid work are constructed within the realities of IT work and the norms of the industry.

5.2 Multiple Motivations for Women to Enter Paid Employment

5.2.1: Subjective Motivations

> *I get a lot of meaning and it's a kick for me, it's huge. I've gone*
> *and made a difference for whatever it's worth just a – whatever.*
> Jyothi, 29, Executive, Mother

Women's motivations to work are complex and varied: even within a single account women veer from highly instrumental reasons such as the need for additional income to subjective motives such as personal growth and self-actualization. The question 'What motivates you to go to work every morning?' elicited a range of responses, several which uphold the late-modernist notion of the individual as engaged in constructing a reflexive self through a 'series of decisions not only about how to act but who to be (Giddens, 1991:81)'.

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[79] Notably, none of the participants spoke disparagingly about their current or previous employers even if they had difficulties with individual colleagues or managers. While this may simply indicate professional discretion, it is also suggestive of loyalty to and identification with the organisation.

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Savita   *I think the feeling of having achieved something*
beyond being married, beyond being a woman. I
think that's important for me and number two is:
I've worked very hard to get where I am. It doesn't
come easy so why give it up? And the third thing is
that I think I would drive myself crazy if I'm at home
but you know I think the first reason is <u>*the*</u> *reason.*
Jyothsna *To be something beyond...*

Savita   *Something beyond... I've seen women they did not—*
they were not professionally very ambitious. They
took up jobs like a teacher or a – something very
small to keep themselves occupied rather than a
profession. And I don't know the English word for it.
In Hindi they say 'astitva' right?

Jyothsna *Identity?*

Savita   *Identity. I always have a niggling worry that if I*
were not working what would my identity be? Will I
have one because today it is the result of various
things, not just of the home things but also your
career. You are what you are because of that also.
Savita, 32, Manager, Mother

I have to pay my [parents'] home loan! (laughing)— Until I
started working I was Ashok's daughter, Raghu's sister...People
said, 'They're looking for [a suitable husband for] her,' so I was
always somebody's something. Now they're like [identifying my
family as] Lathika's dad, Lathika's mother, Lathika's brother.
They're all seeing me in new light; my parents are seeing me in
new light ...They're saying we never knew you were like this, we
never knew—
Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

The increased respect within the family, the satisfaction of overcoming
challenges and the enhanced self-esteem that women report corroborates earlier
research (Lahri-Dutt and Sil, 2004; Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Verma and Larson,
2001; Dex, 2003). Such accounts are typical of old middle class women who are
usually in executive or managerial positions where they have a chance to display
their talents, employ their creativity and make decisions. In contrast new middle
class women tend to be concentrated in administrative positions where their work

is constantly monitored by others, limiting their capacity for self-expression through their work. They initially quote more instrumental motivations to work: *'I have to sustain my family. (Sumaiya, 29, Married, Executive, Mother)'*. However they enjoy interacting with people and gaining new skills; they value their relationships with colleagues. Hema who initially claimed that she worked *'for the money, nothing else'* later indicated her pride in her work by arguing:

> *I got more confidence that any problem, anything I can face it*
> *and I can resolve it. That confidence I didn't have earlier. May*
> *be after joining – [company name] I got more confidence, like*
> *it's a huge organisation and you interact with more people. The*
> *managers are more supportive and they were pushing you to*
> *learn everything and they will make you to learn and you will*
> *proceed on that. So that made me completely strong in whatever*
> *I am doing. Today you can check in – [company name] with*
> *anybody like any job that is given to Hema will be done.*
> Hema, 26, Adminstrator, Married

Irwin argues with regard to Britain that both middle class and working class women 'with more circumscribed opportunities' see work as an essential element of their subjective sense of self (2005:102). Even new middle class women whose poor access to cultural and educational capital limits their opportunities in the global economy find fulfilment in their professional lives. In cases where women face harassment or hostility within the home the workplace provides much needed respite and relief:

> *Cristina   My mother-in-law used to expect lot of things like I*
> *should come early from work, take care of the child*
> *like she is doing a favour for me and I have no*
> *responsibility.*
>
> *Jyothsna You never thought of giving up your job?*
>
> *Cristina   I never thought because I knew that it would be a hell.*
> *At least eight hours I see the other world.   In the*
> *house I have nobody except my child.   [I] don't see or*
> *talk to anybody.*
> Cristina, 29, Secretary, Mother

It may seem that participants' entry into the workplace grants them opportunities for self-fulfilment, empowerment and a chance to create a life outside of the family thereby supporting Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) argument that 'the female biography has gone through an individuation boost'. However other factors influence their presence in the labour market.

5.2.2 Financial Motivations

> *There are lot of risks that we have taken, for example, this building, this house – because IT industry is very dynamic, anything could happen anytime. There is this threat of us— Yeah, I need to tell you this. There is this threat of us losing our jobs and there is this threat of us downsizing and taking an undercut in our salaries. Whatever we plan today, we plan our future [thinking] ' Ten years from now, I am going to get similar kind of salary, ' and we go ahead and do our commitments whereas we don't know—. There is this constant stress that one month if I don't get my salary, what am I going to do where am I going to pay the bills from, so in fact, when we had to take the decision for building this house, I was very tense. What if I lose my job or what if something happens? He [her husband] has been very considerate on those angles. He said very clearly, 'You don't worry, worst comes to worst, we'll sell one property. ...whatever we have built, we'll sell it off and pay back the loan. Just keep cool. ' That was one of the major things that helped me because I was going through a very rough period. What will happen if something like this happens and because I was working for a company where a takeover was pretty easy and if a takeover happens the senior folks will be shown the door first. Very complicated, no, my life (laughing)?*
> Anjana, 33, Manager, Mother

Involvement in global capitalism implies living within the individualistic ethos of a capitalist economy and its values competition, profit orientation and consumerism. The availability of global brands, hire purchase facilities, low interest loans and salary advances have unleashed the consumerist appetites of the middle class (Gupta, 2000; Varma, 1998). Recall Jyothi's remarks from Chapter 3 on how globalization affects middle class spending habits:

I remember the kind of products that were available for us. We were three sisters and I remember there was one shampoo bottle which we used to get which was a Tata shampoo [an Indian brand] which everybody used to buy... Today for my daughter, she just needs to name her brand and I'll bring it home because it is so easily available and that's globalization for you.
Jyothi, 29, Executive, Mother

However, as Anjana implies, living within the capitalist free-market economy also has a dark side: the risk of redundancy, fluctuations in financial markets and job insecurity. In such unpredictable financial circumstances women's incomes play a crucial role in increasing the family's security whilst taking advantage of the new economic opportunities. However there is a distinct difference between the manner in which women's incomes are employed in old and in new middle class families. Although Anjana is afraid of financial risks, the worst that can happen is that her family will sell one of their two properties. In contrast, Cristina's income plays a much more crucial role in preventing her family from falling out of the middle class bracket. Her husband's lower paid job as a college lecturer earns them respectability but her income provides the lifestyle that preserves that respectability and secures their middle class status.

Basic needs he pays from his salary but all the luxuries, sudden emergency needs I take care [of]. That's why I'm managing [continuing in paid work] with all the problems [two young children and inadequate child care].
Cristina, 29, Administrator, Mother

Earning an income does not make women independent of the family, rather their incomes are directly connected with their family responsibilities. Contrary to popular belief middle class women do not earn to satisfy their own desires but to give their families a better lifestyle and a more secure future:

Holidays, travelling or food or going out every other day or expensive clothes— the pocket money which people said women earn. It's family pocket money.
Punita, 37, Executive, Mother

Nalini   *Initially we invested on a site so I thought, 'Okay, since I'm working let me take loan.' I took loan and gave it to him. That way I could support him in lots of ways that sitting at home I could not have done. See if you have money with you, Jyothsna, the moral support is there, the love, all that is there but money plays a parallel role. I feel when that is there all this can be achieved. I can provide them with good family life.*

Jyothsna *That second income coming into the family is very important?*

Nalini   *Very important. That can be diverted into many developmental issues and as of today I feel we have we made enough for my son. ...Now itself I can plan his higher education: his technical course, medical, whatever. So I can concentrate, invest on that. I can prepare myself, right?*

Nalini, 37, Manager, Mother

We feel that we've made it on our own without any support from the family. We'd like to support our children for as long as we can and whatever we are earning today is for them. For example may be my husband would have loved to study aboard but he couldn't because the income was- the capital wasn't there in the family to make him go there and study. So when we talk about our sons today we say we should have enough to give them that option, they should not grow up thinking that 'Oh, we want to go abroad and study but the money is not there.'

Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Nalini who is from the new middle class (she is breaking into the Striver category) and Geetika who belongs to the old middle class (entering the Globals) are planning for their sons' university education, but even Sumiaya, a Seeker, whose income is much more limited has similar aspirations. She quizzed me in detail about schools in Bangalore arguing that a good education is a worthy investment.

Not only mothers but even married and single women support their families and find satisfaction in giving their parents luxuries that they could not otherwise afford. When asked what motivates her to work, Lathika laughingly began, '*My home loan…*'(for the house she shared with her parents) before listing other motivations such as self-actualization enhanced self-worth (see the previous section):

> *The money I earn can afford me a meal at Leela [a seven star hotel]. Otherwise at no cost [no way] can I spend that three or four thousand rupees on my dad's or my mom's birthday. Like last week she bought black beaded bangles for Diwali. Dad said, 'I'm gifting you twenty k [thousand rupees] so you go buy what you want.' So we went to the jeweller and he said, 'For twenty k you can get only two.' So I told mom, 'Two doesn't make sense, you buy at least four.' So I pitched in twenty k and I could, whereas if I had been like my dad's friend's daughter working in a bank for four thousand, I wouldn't be able to afford [it].*
> Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

However, contributing the family's finances does not necessarily translate into greater authority within the family, or even the freedom to spend one's money without consulting elders.

> *There have been times when I've called mom and I said, 'Okay, I'm calling from Tanishq [a high-end jewellery store] and this is five thousand [rupees] can I buy it?' She would say, 'Okay if you like it buy it,' where my other friends who would never do such things. They envy me because of freedom that I have. Only money can bring in that.*
> Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

Lathika views freedom not in terms of being able to spend the money that she earns freely, but in having the money to spend on her parents and on herself after consulting with them. Similarly, Swati explains that she consulted her husband before investing in a house and taking a loan to finance it. Even though she researched the market and short-listed the options, the final decision was his.

See yeah, it's a very personal thing. If you see a public sector salary [her husband works in the public sector] and an IT industry salary [her income] there is a huge scale. So I always keep this in mind that he should not feel inferior that she has money and she is spending. That is why she is taking all the decisions. It's more of giving him more importance. And I know he always respects my decision, I have that confidence. It's not that he has to take decision and I don't have that confidence on my decision. It is more of giving him importance and more of giving him that belongingness.
Swati, 35, Manager, Mother

It is apparent that real estate is an important investment option for the middle classes. Not only old middle class women but new middle class women also aspire to owning a home. Hema's first investment after marriage was in a one bedroom flat and Sumaiya on receiving my good wishes for her career at the end of our interview responded, *'And a flat, wish that I have my own house.'* The income earned by women from the new middle class services the family's debts, creates security through buying a house or property, and helps the family invest in a car or in domestic appliances such as mixer grinders, washing machines and fridge freezers. New middle class women also buy 'luxury goods' which would be difficult to purchase without a second income: hi-fi equipment, DVD players. Hema confided her plan of buying a digital camera for her husband while Nalini was considering the purchase of an LCD television on her son's request. Like the foreign holidays and restaurants mentioned by old middle class women, these goods indicate a family's 'middleclassness' (Favero, 2005:132) and its modernity.

While they feel a sense of pride and satisfaction that they can meet the needs of their parents and children from their earnings, participants do not flaunt this pride before their families for fear of appearing disrespectful or insensitive. Sumaiya claims that her husband's earnings only meet the cost of childcare and the transport that he takes to the office, but though highly unconventional in several respects she does not encourage him to reverse roles and stay at home.

Many times I feel that it would be better if he stays at home and looks after the child. What he is earning, for the effort it is not enough but it gives him happiness. But I don't want to hurt his ego so let him do it.
Sumaiya, 29, Executive, Mother

It may be concluded from women's accounts that it is important to them that their individual earnings do not overshadow their husband's identities as providers. Even when this is the case the matter is always treated with tact and discretion. However, in new middle class families women's contributions are so crucial they are difficult to underplay, and can threaten the authority of the elders leading to mutual suspicion and conflict.

Cristina *With my husband from the day I got pregnant, he never used to get fruits, vegetables for me. A pregnant woman needs nutritious food so I used to buy fruits. Initially I discussed with my husband, should I give my salary to my mother-in-law and he said, 'I don't need it, you keep it,' so whatever was required for me or for my house I used to buy it. I never used to look at my husband [to provide it]. I'm used to eating fruit but she used never buy fruit and biscuits— like carrot are very important but she never used to buy that. She is a very miser[ly] person. She said [that] if I can't follow the rules in the house I can get out.*

Jyothsna *What do you buy with your money?*

Cristina *I buy clothes for myself, my husband and child. I never had permission to replace anything old in the house like music system or anything. She says what we have is enough. I don't have control over anything in the house. I go to the supermarket and pick up things.*
Cristina, 29, Administrator, Mother

As part of the patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988), after years of subservience to their own mothers-in-law, older women look forward to gaining a position of respect and authority in the household through the arrival of their daughters-in-law. However, by making crucial contribution to the family's income, their daughters-in-law threaten their authority and rob them of the powers

associated with seniority causing envy, suspicion and conflict over the management of the home. On the daughters-in-law's part although they hope to gain a degree of empowerment through their income, this empowerment threatens to lose them the confidence and support of their mothers-in-law.

5.2.3 Social and Emotional Motivations

In addition to financial benefits participants also derive a number of emotional benefits from being in paid employment, benefits that are closely tied to their roles as mothers, wives, daughters and daughters-in-law and are therefore social rather than subjective in nature. Several of these benefits such as appreciation of the quality time spent together by both parents and children, the creation of positive role models, enhancement of the marital relationship, treats and holidays afforded through the mother's wage and the transferability of skills and knowledge from work to the home are enumerated in Dex's (2003) study of the effects of paid work on family life in Britain which indicates that they are not unique to Indian women.

> *The way my parents look at me— I have a younger brother. It was assumed that he's going to have a career but for me it was a 'nice to have' thing but not some thing they thought I would pursue, you know. ... I think somewhere now they're proud of the fact that I have stuck it out. So if relatives or friends or whatever – I see them mentioning it more proudly.*
> Anita,32, Manager, Mother

> *When my father-in-law introduces me he says this is my daughter-in-law, she is a chartered accountant...she is doing the same job as my son. It feels so good!*
> Nitya, 27, Manager, Married

By entering paid employment, women are not just contributing to family income, but also to family prestige. Careers in IT are highly aspirational in contemporary India since they are associated with high incomes, foreign travel, hi-tech work environments and a comfortable lifestyle. Therefore, by promoting

their daughters' or daughters-in-laws' careers, families get a chance to display the 'respectable modernity' that Thapan (2004) describes. It is a mark of a family's cosmopolitanism and embeddeness in contemporary globalizing India that its women work in transnational IT companies.[80] As Shenoy's (2003) study of IT managers in India and the UK found, parents, husbands and children express pride in a woman's professional achievements. This increases her sense of self-worth and, in the case of some participants, morally obliges her to succeed.

Once I had to speak [in public at my workplace]. My husband [and children] came to pick me up and they were standing right at the back since they came early and my daughter was only six years old. [She] says to me afterwards, 'While you were speaking there was something in my throat, you know.' There was a lump in her throat. They love it when they see their mums, you know. They feel very proud. That's when they grow up.
Punita, 37, Executive, Mother

A woman's work has a positive impact on the quality of her relationships with her husband and children. It gives her insights into her husband's professional life, creates common interests between partners and greater equality between spouses. Cristina whose husband teaches human resources claims:

He gives me good ideas, how to take the feedback from managers, how to respond to them. He says you should not escalate it immediately, you should wait. ... I also tell him my experience. First he used to not be interested in what I am doing. Now he says that it is very interesting. He gets real examples for what he is teaching from [listening to my experiences] my work.
Cristina, 29, Adminstrator, Mother

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[80] Deshpande (2003) argues that modernity is a highly aspirational value for middle class Indians but one that is carefully balanced with tradition. Women know that they are representatives of the family's modernity as well as its traditionalism, therefore they take pains to convey a fine balance between these through their dress, demeanour and behaviour. This issue will be investigated in the next chapter.

The sense of emotional well being derived from self-expression, self-actualization and a life away from family also have an impact on women's family relationships and the quality of time she gives her children.

> *Being at home from morning to night wasn't really giving me the satisfaction that 'Oh my kids are best or I'm bringing them up in the best way,' because I was not very happy. I'm happier when I'm at work and making a contribution to society and that whole thing of being independent and having a salary coming and the – just the whole feeling of doing something for myself that makes me happy. So if I'm happy then my family is happy. If I'm mentally more at peace with myself then my kids are happy, my husband is happy and everything and everyone around me is much more greener and better. That's what I realised but sitting at home just doing the day to day stuff it was just... it was just very tough.*
> Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

The skills and experiences acquired in the workplace are transferable to home life: the skills of negotiating with and motivating junior employees are employed in parenting, time management at work helps women organise and manage the home efficiently and finally, exposure to contemporary issues, to the Internet and the communication skills acquired at work benefits children:

> *For example when he had [to do an] environmental day project [for school] if I am at home [was a homemaker], I would have definitely have taken some thing from the newspaper, something from TV, I would have given him some experiences [examples/inputs]. But since I am working in HR, I am involved in all these activities. I know how we celebrate all these things in the office. I could give him all these practical examples. It's a value addition to his education, no?*
> Nalini, 37, Executive, Mother of one

> *I think all the stress is worth putting up with and you know why? I feel happier about that tomorrow, I will be able to tell my daughter. I will be able to identify with what she goes through. I think things will be much easier then and I think things will be more structured, more supportive, many more women will be in the work place. I didn't have anyone to turn to for advice and my mother didn't have the advice because she wasn't working in*

*the first place. But I will be able to handle her in a better
manner, at least I will be a sounding board for these kind of
issues. I can at least hope to be a sounding board for situations
like this— at the risk of sounding very pompous (laughing).*
Anita, 32 Manager, Mother

Anita derives satisfaction from the conviction that she is providing a role
model to her daughter and will be able to support her in her own career; the daily
challenge of managing multiple responsibilities becomes meaningful as she sees
herself as an agent of change in her family and perhaps in the community as well.
It may be concluded that there are a number of reasons why contemporary Indian
women enter into paid employment and remain there in spite of the challenges of
managing their multiple responsibilities. However even for individual women, the
motivations to remain in the workplace are complex and varied. They may cite one
reason as 'the reason' but this only obscures others that are almost equally
significant. In addition, it is noteworthy that even women's subjective motivations
such as satisfaction and enhanced self-worth are not individualistic but closely ties
with their responsibilities within the family. By succeeding professionally in the
transnational economy, they perform their identities as dutiful daughters to their
parents, caring partners to their husbands, smart and respectable daughters-in-law
to their in-laws and responsible mothers to their children within the 'moral
economy' of their kin-group (Afshar, 1989a).

5.3 Shifting Motivations and Changing Circumstances

Recent debates on women's motivation to work have centred on the
question of choice versus circumstances. Hakim (2000) argues that women's
motivations to work may be understood on the basis of three 'preference groups':
'home-centred' who prefer not to work, 'work-centred' whose primary focus is
paid employment and 'adaptive' i.e. those women who want to combine work and
family (Hakim 2000:6). This last category includes 'drifters' and those who have
unplanned careers. She argues that most work-centred women are voluntarily
child-free but that even those who have children do not see motherhood as the
cornerstone of their identities. Like Giddens (1991) Hakim implies that in

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developed economies individuals take decisions based on values rather than normative and structural constraints.

Hakim's ideas have been severely criticised for failing to account for the influence of structural and normative conditions on women's career choices (See Irwin, 2005; Crompton, 2006; Ginn et al, 1995; Proctor and Padfield, 1998; Pocock, 2003). Her critics argue that women's participation in the labour market is not determined by fixed orientations towards paid or domestic work but by a series of transitions which may be determined by labour market trends, class position, personal circumstances, the support (or lack thereof) of families, the availability of adequate childcare and the employment situation of their partners (Pocock, 2003; Proctor and Padfield, 1998). Proctor and Padfield (1998) in their longitudinal study of the career paths of British women found that aspirations and situations are mutually influential: a change in one affects the other. From the accounts of my participants it seems that two types of circumstances influence their employment decisions: the opportunities available and changes in their personal lives. Several participants argue that their professional opportunities have been strongly influenced by globalization or the IT boom as it is conventionally known. While some believe that they would have been employed even without economic liberalization, their choices, they claim, would have been restricted.

Jyothsna   *Having grown up and started working in the mid-*
           nineties, if the IT boom had not happened or the
           economic reforms had not happened how do you
           think your life would have turned out?

Lathika   *It would have been miserable. I think it would have*
           been just miserable like my parents. I think I'd have
           just either I'd have become a housewife or I'd have
           just gone off to the US like how other guys— eh,
           girls married people and gone away.

Jyothsna   So married and gone away, not gone there for
           further studies?

Lathika   Anyway my parents wouldn't have sent me. My
           parents always said you should pick up a bank job.
           I would say, 'why a bank job'. I hate to sit there like
           that and do that job so I used to wonder, 'What will I
           do when I grow up?' So eh I used to say, ' no way will
           I do that.' So I think if IT wouldn't have happened I
           wouldn't have lived this way. I am today I'm thirty
           three; I have a house of my own. I'm almost like a
           man now. I've got a car of my own, I've got a house
           of my own, I've got some jewellery. I'm just ready to
           get married to any 'girl' you know.

Jyothsna   [Laughing] So you need a wife?

Lathika   Yeah, I need a wife [laughter].
Lathika, 33, Manager, Single

In contrast to Lathika who was unsure about what career path to follow, Malini grew up with fairly clear ideas about employment. When I began the interview by asking if she had always been keen to work outside the home, she responded, 'That was the whole idea why I studied, I wanted to be financially independent.' However her aspirations changed to suit the changes in her life-situation. She defends her decision to take a career break to bring up her child by arguing that her education and previous work experience now serve a 'broader purpose' than initially intended.

Now I feel what I studied has also made me a little broad
minded and I'm aware. Suppose I go to a party or something-
there's some subject they're talking about, I can also contribute
because I have a little glimpse into what the world is, so I think
now that studying has now taken a bigger picture than just
getting marks and getting a job.
Malini, 33, Not currently in employment (resigned as manager), Mother

Both Lathika and Malini are the same age and started their careers together in the same company in similar roles. Although her parents had no strong

ambitions for her, Lathika's choices expanded due the emergence of the IT industry in of the 1990s. Malini who was initially strongly committed to a career decided to take an extended break after having her child; her choice is a result of life-circumstances. Both women have shown a degree of agency: Malini in opting out of the labour market and Lathika in exploiting it. Both have resisted current social norms and exercised a degree of individualism: Malini, in her choice to give up professional success in favour of fulltime motherhood[81] and Lathika in choosing to remain single and resisting the pressure to marry a man she considers unsuitable. However, their choices are not completely individualized. Lathika's inability to find a suitable partner is partly a result of her high income and position in the IT industry. By her own account, her success and her aspiration to be a human resources consultant are influenced by the available opportunities and to some degree enabled by her single status. In contrast, Malini's options have been restricted by the unavailability of suitable part-time work and the cultural values attached to motherhood. Her decision is not an individual one but has been 'developed and created over time, interweaving material and moral dimensions in negotiation with others [her husband]' (Crompton, 2006). Proctor and Padfield's (1998) argument that changes in employment or life situations influence women's professional aspirations or expectations of family formation and vice versa is applicable to both Lathika's and Malini's situations.

> *Either we should have taken a decision that we should not have*
> *children and [I would have] continued working. No hassles*
> *about that but if you have a child I think I should do justice to it.*
> *Suppose we had financial difficulties, yes, in which case I would*
> *have had to work out an alternate because we had no choice.*
> *But here my job would not be for money. It would be for*
> *satisfaction of my ego or my requirements so now that it's an*
> *option and we opted to have a child. I think you've to do justice*
> *to it so I've squared it that way.*
> Malini, 33, Not currently in employment (resigned as manager), Mother

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[81] To paraphrase Hochschild's (1997) comment at the beginning of the chapter in contemporary globalizing India it is thought surprising that a woman of her qualifications (she has an MBA) doesn't work.

The experiences of my participants contradict Hakim's (2000) argument that women's orientations to paid work remain fixed, rather it seems that they change based on external circumstances and normative constraints. Although their choices have increased, the nature of those choices is complex. As Malini's account indicates, her choice to remain in or leave paid employment are experienced as moral dilemmas and influenced by prevalent ideologies of motherhood, the level of job satisfaction experienced (she tried part-time work but was not supported by her line manager), the financial needs of the family and the availability of reliable and affordable childcare (Crompton, 2006). However, as Parekh (2008) would argue, it is also influenced by her self-identity: her definition of herself as a responsible mother. Based on this self-identity she makes a moral choice to give up paid employment and constructs a series of arguments which are consistent with her identity and related worldview. She expresses her decision using the prevailing vocabulary of individual choice and responsibility, however at no point in her account does she indicate that her husband and not she could have made the choice to be the stay at home parent. The vocabulary of choice masks the reality that her choices are made within 'extant material social relations' (Irwin, 2005: 84 emphasis in original).

Women's commitment to paid work is rarely fixed, but is influenced by a number of factors: personal circumstances such as encouragement of family, spouse's support (Shenoy, 2003), economic position and cultural issues such as 'ideologies of motherhood' (Hattery, 2001:18; Crompton, 2006). In addition traditional constructions of womanhood and material conditions created by economic liberalization (inflation, consumerism, lower job security and dismantling of social support) have a significant influence on women's employment decisions. Given the risks in the global market women see it as their duty to share the burden of earning an income with their husbands (Irwin, 2005; Hochschild, 1989). However, these structural conditions cannot be separated from their subjective motivation to work (Irwin, 2005). In the later half of the 20th

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century, work has acquired greater meaning in women's identities across industrialized economies (Pocock, 2003; Posner, 1992; Hochschild, 1997 Irwin, 2005).[82] Hochschild's (1997) claim that it is considered surprising if a woman doesn't work is as relevant to globalizing India as it is to USA.[83]

5.4 Orientations to Paid Work

Keeping in mind the argument that women's motivations to remain in paid work are neither fixed at any given time nor do they remain constant over a period of time, I suggest a typology of women's orientations to work. These orientations describe the relationship women have with paid work and the manner in which they approach it based on the accounts that emerged in the interviews. These motivations are influenced by family circumstances, levels of job satisfaction, subjective needs and the encouragement (or lack thereof) received in the home. Unlike Hakim's classification my typology does not assume that women make unchanging 'lifetime decisions' regarding employment. An unexpected change in life circumstances, better job prospects, changes in organisational policy, a breakdown in support systems or the needs of children may cause women to take decisions that contradict their current relationship with work. Given the unpredictability of the economy and the contradictory cultural messages that women receive, decisions are always taken 'for the present moment'.

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[82] Pocock, 2003 with regard to Australia; Posner, 1992 and Hochschild, 1997 with regard to USA and Irwin, 2005 with regard to Britain

[83] As Malini's account suggests, a woman needs to create a strong argument justifying why she isn't in the workplace.

The three orientations include:

- Trailblazers, who manage family commitments to fulfil their professional ambitions; professional success is essential to their identities. This category consists of women in managerial positions and is drawn from the old middle class

- Balancers, who moderate professional ambitions to suit family responsibilities; their ability to perform adequately in both spheres is important to their self-esteem. This category includes women in both managerial and administrative positions, drawn from the old and the new middle class.

- Instrumentalists, who work primarily for the income, enabling their families to maintain their tenuous middle class positions, but also, crucially, to gain a degree of empowerment in patriarchal households; this category consists largely of women in administrative positions drawn from the new middle class

The following table shows how the participants in the interviews have been classified into one of the three orientations:[84]

Table 5: Orientations to Paid Employment[85]

Social category	Trailblazers	Balancers	Instrumentalists
Mothers	Savita, Maya Jaya, Shreela Anjana, Swati	Geetika, Anita Nalini, Malini	Kanti, Cristina Sumaiya
Married without children	Nitya	Rupa, Deepika	Hema
Single	Lathika	Meenakshi	

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[84] Participants in focus groups have been left out of the classification because, unlike the interviews, focus groups did not address issues of motivation in depth.

[85] Given that mothers are more constrained by their circumstances, they can be more clearly classified into one category or another. Unmarried women and married women without children are classified as showing potential to fall into one of the categories but their orientations may change if/ when they encounter motherhood.

5.4.1. Trailblazers

Trailblazers are the most ambitious of the three categories of women. In many cases their ambitions are underpinned by the aspirations and the support of parents, husband and in-laws. In most, though not all cases they have a high level of cultural capital due to an English language education, post-graduate qualifications or having college-educated parents. Trailblazers who are over 30 years of age are in middle to senior management positions where they are responsible for heading a team. They enjoy professional success, aspire to achieve their full potential in the workplace and are strongly motivated by challenging work as Shenoy (2003) found in her study of women managers in the IT industry. Savita, a trailblazer, defines success as follows:

> *Growth in an area where I am qualified in and I should use*
> *my skills and I should be able to learn as well as I grow*
> *...ehm somewhere along the way that also means some*
> *lateral positioning in the company vertical positioning in*
> *the company [hierarchy] ... I would say that's internal and*
> *social pressure because that sort of makes you want to be*
> *out there. And of course money is important because all of*
> *us some of us don't have [wealthy] business backgrounds*
> *and we need the money. I think these three are important*
> *for me. I also want a profession where I can also have a*
> *work life balance.*
> Savita, 32, Manager, Mother

Savita's remarks indicate her identification with middle class standards of success: promotion within the company hierarchy, money and realising her full potential (several trailblazers are the primary wage earners for their families though they avoid drawing attention to this matter). She adds a rider: success includes work life balance. However, as I will argue later, her actual work day reflects the continuity of her work into her family life rather than a balance between the two.[86]

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[86] For a more detailed discussion of work life balance options and women's responses to them see Chapter 6.

Trailblazers enjoy their work and feel a high sense of fulfilment in leading and mentoring colleagues. They create loyalty amongst team members by offering support, help and advice on professional, personal and work-life balance issues. They see the time spent on these matters as an investment that will help them progress.

> *I've built up a whole bunch of folks who are very confident and do their own stuff and they know even if they make a mess of it, Maya in all probability will support them. And I take the flack for it because that's the only way they'll learn and that's the way I increase my bandwidth. So that's the really how I individually built each person up and I have this thing about, 'Projecting your good work in the right forum is my job and I'm going to do it and I'm going to make sure you get recognition for what you do, just do it.*
> Maya, 37, Manager, Mother

They attempt to take strategic career decisions to enable career growth and build an impressive curriculum vitae; although restricted in terms of overseas assignments, they attempt to travel and to be available over the telephone/ online whenever required. Of the three categories in the typology these women are probably the most politically savvy:

> *At times you feel neglected because they know you have a constraint [a young child] so you may not look out [for a new job]. They take you for granted. In December I knew things were not very great at home [her grandmother who supervised the household left to visit relatives] and nothing was happening here. I said, 'I'm leaving. I don't know if I'm going for another job or going to be at home.' That kind of put pressure and it did enable me to get a promotion. I think at times you're taken for granted. You have to remind them that I have options... Even [though I have a child] then I have options. There is a new STP [software technology park] coming up next to my house - there are several companies coming over there so to I can always look [for jobs] there.*
> Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

Senior management positions 'are premised on a particular organisation of family life' (Wajcman, 1998) which correspond to the norms of ideal work. Senior managers cannot afford to take advantage of flexi-time, tele-working and other work life balance options. They need to put in the long and intensive hours required to rise in the organisation, take conference calls late at night and respond to clients' queries while at home or on holiday. Trailblazers work within the industry's norms of flexibility and migration and do not attempt to question them.

While they are concerned about their families, trailblazers manage their responsibilities in a way that supports continued success in the workplace. Just as men in managerial positions depend on the domestic labour of their wives to sustain their careers (Wajcman, 1998), these women depend on the combined labour of a battery of maids, helpers, mothers or mothers-in-law to support their performance in the workplace. Their attitude to domesticity is managerial: it is perceived as work that needs to be done to enable their presence in the market economy, rather than a means of self-expression. The second shift of domestic work and a 'third shift' (Hochschild, 1989)[87] of emotional labour that women do to reciprocate their parents'/in-laws substitute care will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Trailblazers occasionally adopt flexible working patterns to take care of their children, however they make other sacrifices in their personal lives to grow in their careers including working late into the night, over weekends and during holidays, spending leisure hours socializing with colleagues, travelling frequently and restricting their personal privacy and control over their lives by living in joint households to enable childcare. These personal sacrifices ironically make it difficult for them to limit their careers as it would not only undermine their own effort but that of the families that support them. So they continue working at the same pace within the masculinist norms of the workplace: individualism, competitiveness, hard work, profit orientation, loyalty, assertiveness and team

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[87] It must be noted that women do not speak grudgingly of the second and third shift but accept it as natural if they wish to continue their high level of performance in the workplace.

spirit (Posner, 1992). They do not conceal their domestic responsibilities but function in the workplace as if they did not have them. For instance Savita's day begins around 8 a.m. at home, when she supervises domestic help, cooks and takes care of her son while responding to work related email. She drops her son to school at noon on her way to the office (her father picks up the boy) and collects him from her parents' house around 10 p.m. while returning home. Her workday is about 10 or 11 hours long. Savita's is just one example of how this group 'manage like men' (Wajcman, 1998) in order to compete on an equal footing and earn the same rewards, but a closer inspection of their daily lives shows that they work harder than men and face more complex challenges in order to be perceived as equal in the workplace.

> *Whenever I interact with my colleagues I don't think that I am inferior. I am as good as any other person in the organisation or may be even better. So why to think about whether I am a lady or a gents.*
> Swati, 35, Manager, Mother

Although Swati argues that being a woman has no effect on the quality of her work, her gender causes greater difficulty in balancing paid work with her family responsibilities:

> *And for one day this year my daughter's birthday, there was some urgent meetings. I had come to office and I left at twelve thirty. Then at two thirty my manager called me, 'Can you please come to --- [name of client company] at 3:30, we have a really urgent meeting with the customer.' I went there and my daughter was crying and my in-laws were very unhappy with it. Just one day you have taken leave, you went to office and again your manager is calling you so— Then I went to --- [name of client company]. The meeting I felt was not that urgent. I felt that he would have skipped it, postponed it. There is no point in calling somebody from daughter's birthday. When he called me [I told him] her friends will come by 4:30. 'No, no by then you'll come back.' It's not that I will come back. I have to do the arrangements also and at the same time her dad is not there. My manager is a very nice person. He's a nice human being.*

But he does not understand that a lady, she has other
responsibilities and how important those responsibilities are.
Swati, 35, Manager, Mother

Contemporary Indian middle class women are implicated in two contradictory value systems: that of the workplace which is premised on the notion of individualism and that of the kin-group where their collectivist responsibilities are of key importance. Both relationships are experienced as highly fulfilling so women are torn between investing time and energy in one or another. Given their focus on professional success, however, and their identification with the individualist ethos of the workplace, trailblazers tend to support the view that individual solutions need to found to this contradiction, rather than expecting the workplace to transform itself in line with family life.

Of the three groups it is the trailblazers who speak most poignantly of the sense of mental and physical exhaustion, the guilt and the stress of attempting to have it all, of personal dreams being sacrificed to the middle class aspiration for stabile, conventional and well remunerated career paths. Savita would have liked to be a dress designer but the profession seemed too much like a feminine hobby and not a serious career path; Maya has a passion for wildlife conservation '*but other than subscribing for the National Geographic for the last so many years I don't do anything about it*' while Lathika has given up her interest in classical music due to lack of time. Participants hope to pursue these interests at some vaguely defined time in the future: 'when my son is older,' 'when I feel more financially stable', 'when my office shifts nearer the city centre'. Hochschild (1997:236) argues through such dreams of a 'potential self' that enjoys a more balanced life in the future an individual gains 'powerful emotional satisfaction' even if their 'actual self' delays the realisation of these dreams.

5.4.2 Balancers

In contrast to trailblazers, balancers seek to perform adequately in the sphere of work while acting as efficient homemakers. Women in this category may be found in both managerial as well as non-managerial levels, but as managers they are unlikely to be in charge of large teams. Shenoy (2003) argues that the time women enter middle management positions coincides with the child bearing years. Unlike the trailblazers who overcome this difficulty by finding substitute childcare but refuse to delay career growth, balancers tend to continue in the workplace but seek less demanding work while their children are young. They see work as an outlet for their talents, a space where they can create an independent identity, socialize and earn additional income for the family. Although keen to do a good job and committed to their professions, they are non-competitive at work and choose their jobs carefully to harmonise with home life.

> *I do see myself moving higher up in terms of grade, moving higher up in terms of being promoted, getting more money, but I don't see myself eh, eh you know how do I word this – I don't see myself as becoming the vice president or the CEO of a company. I would be happier to see my husband become that. I don't see myself being ambitious enough to sacrifice the evenings that I have with my children. If it comes to a situation where I may need to put in longer hours as in, come in the evening or work a night shift or work abroad. I will not do it at least until my children are older. I would rather give that glory to my husband and be happy being the CEO's wife, you know. I've taken up something where I work from Monday to Friday, I have the flexibility to work from home if required and I don't work in shifts. I don't have to travel as of now and I don't work on weekends so I'm selfish on that front. And – eh - if these opportunities come up when my kids are small I may not take them up. I want to have a career but I also have some terms and conditions attached to it so I'm not ambitious enough to sacrifice all that and eh have like a seven eight figure salary.*
> Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Balancers evaluate whether their jobs are interfering with the quality of their home life and, as Brooks (2004) found in her research amongst successful women in Hong Kong, are unwilling to continue in the workplace if the demands

of the job exceed its potential for personal satisfaction. To enable active involvement in family life, they use work-life balance initiatives on a long-term basis thereby cueing to peers and bosses that their family life has higher priority and violating ideal worker norms. By voluntarily delaying professional growth while children are young, they use the strategy of 'sequencing' i.e. modifying career plans to suit the life-course of the family (Cardozo, 1986 in Brooks, 2004):

> *What I firmly believe by now is that not everyone's career progresses at the same pace. And you should essentially be comfortable with that. It doesn't have to be an all or nothing kind of situation because I think a lot of times women get frustrated because of that. They want to be there doing it and they see their male colleagues doing much better and taking on tougher roles that involves travel, late hours- very frustrating when you can't do it but we catch up somewhere down the line ... you just compete with yourself and try and do better than you did at your last assignment. That's very fulfilling rather than competing with other people at work... because that is very self-defeating you know. You get very frustrated and stressed.*
> Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

This group takes pains to maintain the quality of their home lives. Although they employ domestic help and seek support from family, they closely monitor their households. Geetika who interrupted our interview at her office to take a call from her maid about the day's menu explains:

> *Geetika*   *I find this easier to do to run my home from office than to be sitting at home and running it I can't explain why. I'm just more happier now than I was when I was sitting at home.*
>
> *Jyothsna*   *So you're delegating but you're also keeping tabs—*
>
> *Geetika*   *<u>Complete</u> supervision. I run the house through the telephone. I have empowered my maid to take some decisions but she must check with me if she has any doubts.*
> Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Balancers view the home as a place to relax, unwind and recreate a sense of family. While the nature of their tasks may be similar to those of the trailblazers,

their approach is different. Unlike trailblazers who have a managerial attitude to housework, ritual duties and 'kinship work', this group tends to take pleasure in these activities because they underline their identities as good home-makers. For instance, whereas the trailblazers may celebrate festivals in the traditional manner to 'please' their elders, balancers anticipate them with pleasure and make the preparations with excitement.

> *I just fasted on Karwa Chauth.*[88] *I was telling my husband it's one of the best Karva Chauths that I've had after a long time. I went all out, I went to the market and got mehendi [henna] put on my hands. I bought new clothes and jewellery and I came to office all dressed up and it was amazing.*
> Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

While this group does contribute to the family income, they are unwilling to take on the responsibility of being breadwinners or to overturn gender roles. They are likely to be married to men employed in similar or higher levels on multinational companies who earn a steady income (only one balancer was an exception to this trend). Unlike trailblazers who work within the norms of flexibility and real or virtual mobility, balancers question the culture of the IT industry. Rupa, for instance, is engaged in serious soul-searching about her commitment to work and the value of remaining in the workplace at the expense of family life.

> *Up till now I have not made any compromises. If I have to give up my job for a few years or permanently, it will be purely a personal choice. I will not feel it is a compromise... I have always felt that you work because it interests you but it's not the sole purpose of your life. There are lot of other things to life that one can do and enjoy and I find that between both of us the quality of our lives is not where it could be. To get up in the morning at 5:30 or 5:45, go rushing to office and come back home tired and then just spend time trying to cope, that's not my — 30, 40 years, I don't want to do that. There are a lot many meaningful things that one can do and it will not work out if both of us have this kind of schedule. ...Simple things like having*

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[88] A fast intended to prolong one's husband's life and prosperity

a regular exercise schedule are not possible and that spare time
of three hours that we get in the evening we could spend
together doing something constructive in the evening[89]."
Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

Rupa's remarks indicate the need for a certain quality of life that many IT workers hanker for (see Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). Many participants speak longingly of having time for personal interests, recreating special moments with their husbands or *'spending time with myself' (Swarna, 31, Manager, Mother)* However while the trailblazers are content to dream of this 'potential self' in some undefined time in the future (Hochschild, 1997), balancers resist the norms of work intensity that prevent them from realising these aspirations. If the culture of IT industry changes to enable a more family friendly lifestyle and better quality of life for its employees it is likely to be through a more active and vocal stand on the part of balancers.

5.4.3 Instrumentalists

Instrumentalists enter the workplace with few ambitions beyond job security and a steady income to support their families. Most women in this group earn incomes equivalent to or more than their husbands. Instrumentalists tend to be in executive and administrative level positions and are largely drawn from the new middle class; consequently their families may lack the resources to encourage their ambitions or support their education. They begin their careers with lower cultural capital: poor command over English and less exposure to people from different cultural backgrounds. Their job security is fairly low:

I was working in --- [company name]. I was handling the
accounts; they taught me tally and all those stuffs. The GM was
very sweet so he taught me each and everything because I never
knew how to handle the front office also. It was a good
experience there. And from there, one person who was working

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[89] When asked to define something constructive Rupa responded with: handicrafts, an exercise routine and reading (activities which she used to engage in but no longer had time for).

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*as an office boy there, his friend was working in --- Bank, he
took some of the customers' cards and swiped – withdrew
money. I was on contract, not a permanent job. That's the
reason I lost my job. They removed all 130 people who were
working in ITPL, especially in this contract. They removed all
of them. I didn't have an option. From there I shifted to ---
[company name].*
Hema, 26, Administrator, Married

From participant's accounts, in the early stages of their careers,
instrumentalists tend to experience the workplace as intimidating. Their lack of
skills, combined with poor cultural capital and dependence on the income, makes
them vulnerable to exploitation and harassment.

Hema   *I was getting frustrated because the boss was
changed and the [second] boss was not very good.
The second boss – eh, some sort of harassment. I'm
not used to that kind of a thing. Some of the girls
were there who were adjusting to all those stuffs.*

Jyothsna *What kind of harassment?*

Hema   *Sexual harassment only. I was little scared so—*

Jyothsna *Touching?*

Hema   *Yes, just coming and hugging, all those stuffs. I'm not
used to it. I was like very orthodox family. Even my
fiancé he never touched me before marriage so I was
just suddenly stopped. May be after he [the previous
boss] quit I was there for one and half months or two,
then I quit. And I said, 'Mamma, I will find some
other offices, and there anyway I have little
experience, so based on that I will find a job for
myself, so don't worry.*
Hema, 26, Administrator, Married

*He used to generally walk in, stand next to my desk. Scream for
nothing: 'How many times I have told you not to do this?', 'Why
are you sitting here?', 'Why are you standing?' For silly things
– and it was my first job and I was not used to somebody saying
something in front of people. He would scream for nothing. I
was zilch when it came to computers. Nothing I knew. He used*

to call me and ask, 'Can you do this on the computer?' when he
knew very well that I can do nothing. He would call me to his
cabin, look at me and go. I was wondering what was happening
there. [In] June I joined there, August I quit.
Kanti, 35, Administrator, Mother

Instrumentalists' job satisfaction is highly dependent on managers and bosses. They do not always have the confidence to negotiate the volume and conditions of work even if they resent it.

My boss called me five times on Christmas day to arrange some
cars for his relatives who were visiting Bangalore. He never
wished me for Christmas or asked if he can disturb me at home.
Many times he keeps me at the office after six to do his accounts.
It is not my work to identify his personal calls in his telephone
bill but he wants me to be sitting there.
Cristina, 29, Administrator, Mother

While work is alienating if managers and bosses are exploitative it can also be highly rewarding and empowering if managers act as mentors and inspire professional ambitions. If they receive this mentoring, members of this group may develop into fairly ambitious professionals. For instance, the career paths of two members of this group, Hema and Sumaiya [90] indicate that they have taken a fair amount of initiative in seeking jobs, developing their skills and acquiring work experience. Although Hema claimed that she works *'only for the money'* she enjoys being *'pushed to learn'* by her bosses and appreciates their interest in her. She is currently pursing an MBA through distance learning and expects to work as a part-time training consultant while her children are young:

You don't have to bore yourself sitting at home. You have to
[be] occupied and you don't have to waste your education or
learnings whatever you have done.
Hema, 26, Administrator, Married

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[90]See Appendix A for further details of career paths and biography of individual participants.

Hema's aversion to 'wasting time' is shared with women across cultures (see Dex, 2003). While she intends to prioritise family over paid work while her children are young, she is unwilling to give up the latter altogether. Her MBA is part of fairly structured career plan to enter Human Resource Management; if these plans are realised, her motivations regarding paid work may cease to be purely instrumental.

This group cannot afford multiple domestic helpers; Hema and Sumaiya do not even have one. They find childcare and housework quite labour intensive especially when they receive little help from parents/ in-laws. Kanti's remarks indicate the stress and anxiety experienced when leaving children in the care of somewhat indifferent in-laws or to unreliable paid helpers.

You know, I've seen these scenes when the baby was crying so badly for food and there was no one to feed her. And I was in a hurry to go to work, I couldn't spend time with her. All this when I put it together I feel, 'why at all have a kid when you can't give it that basic because at that time the baby doesn't want anything it just wants that [breaks down]—
Kanti, 35, Administrator, Mother

Instrumentalists do not receive the same level of support from their families as trailblazers or balancers because the latter are unwilling or unable to provide it. Cristina, whose mother currently lives with her to help with childcare, claims that the arrangement cannot last long as her brother's wife is expecting a baby. She would like to work part-time while her children are young but that option is not available to secretaries in her company. Ironically the women who most need work life balance options are least able to make use of them. Kanti, who was offered the option of working from home in the evenings, was unable to do so because she didn't receive help with childcare from her in laws though she lived with them. Working from home in her rather chaotic household was not a possibility, she argues.

I was on a shift, 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. My boss gave me the option of working from home. My daughter is so boisterous; three

*o'clock she's back. Where is the time for me to log in and sit
down at my computer and do all my work when she's not going
to let me sit and do anything at all? And I can't log in late in
the night. I need to sleep, she needs to sleep, otherwise we
won't get up in time to go to school – there are lot of things
involved.*
Kanti, 35, Administrator, Mother

Both instrumentalists and trailblazers are highly committed to paid work,
though for a different combination of reasons. While both need the income, it
plays a more crucial role for instrumentalists than for trailblazers. Trailblazers
seek self-actualization and a sense of achievement, which are important but not
high priority for instrumentalists. Both work within ideal worker norms:
instrumentalists because they have little choice and trailblazers because they seek
the benefits that are derived from conformity to these norms. Neither of the two
groups make sustained use of work life balance initiatives; the trailblazers are
reluctant to do so due to the negative impact that it could have on their careers
while the instrumentalist are unable to do so. The major difference between
trailblazers and instrumentalists is that while the former can behave as if they are
individualized workers due to the support of their families, the latter have poor
support structures and therefore carry family concerns into the workplace. This
may limit their career prospects. In contrast balancers feel little compunction in
indicating in the workplace that their home life is a priority. They are willing to
accept the negative impact on their careers.

Given the unpredictability of the labour market and the need to coordinate
two career paths, some women might move between the three categories
depending on changes in material circumstances, life-chances and subjective
motivations. For instance, although Jaya is classified as a trailblazer based on the
interview some time after the interview, she took a career break. A combination
of a temporary breakdown in her support systems (her grandmother who
supervises the household left to visit other relatives) and limited opportunities
within her company led Jaya to resign from her job. After spending several

months enjoying her time at home with her young son and researching the market, she launched her own consultancy firm with former colleagues.[91]

5.5 Conclusion

Given the contradictory cultural expectations that they face, contemporary Indian middle class women have an ambivalent relationship with paid employment. Their motivations to work are varied, multi-dimensional and constantly changing. Their employment decisions are influenced by economic conditions and cultural expectations and not just, as Giddens (1991:81) implies, by personal choices about 'how to act' and 'who to be'. Their relationship with paid work depends on a number of factors: personal life circumstances such as parental encouragement, support of the spouse, financial need, interest in the job, cultural capital that can be deployed in the workplace and economic capital to acquire educational qualifications. These are in turn influenced by structural factors such as class, caste, metropolitan upbringing and normative constraints such as gendered cultural expectations and the identification of women as primary carers and upholders of tradition (more on these issues in the next chapter).

Participants' orientations to paid employment can be classified in terms of a typology, however it is important to remember that the orientations of individual participants analysed above emerged at the time of the interviews and are subject to change depending on life circumstances and external factors. It would be interesting to examine if these orientations have shifted under the current conditions of economic recession.

Indian women's individual pursuit of professional ambitions are closely related to their duties as wives, mothers, daughters and even daughters-in-law. They earn to secure their children's future providing them with a good education

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[91] This information was conveyed via email after I returned from fieldwork and I have her consent to share it here although it was obtained outside the context of the interview.

and lifestyle, share financial responsibilities with their husbands, show their appreciation to their parents for the education and support they have been given. Even though they seek self-actualization, personal satisfaction and increase self-esteem through their careers, women also work in the transnational economy to increase their family's prestige in the community by securing their position in the global economy and culture. This occurs not only through the incomes that enable them to invest in houses or flats with the 'right address', lucrative real estate, white goods and a luxurious lifestyle but also through the prestige value associated with the companies for which they work and with an IT career in general. After marriage and motherhood, women's participation in paid employment makes them dependent on the family and re-embeds them in collectivist kinship networks. This will be more closely examined in the next chapter when I discuss not only how gender influences women's ability to act as individualized workers in the workplace and but how their care-work in the home is related to their paid work in the market.

Chapter 6

The Home and the Workplace:

Negotiating the Contradictions

Jyothsna   *We'll begin with whatever you want to tell me*
                      about yourself, your work profession, etc.

Jaya   *We have spoken a little bit already ...probably the*
                      most interesting part has been my work after my
                      maternity. Till then, free bird doing whatever I
                      want. It has been pretty simple and I think the
                      complexity started once I got married. I had to be
                      more careful with the things that I do. Then it
                      became even more complex with maternity.

Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

In the previous chapter I discussed some continuities between paid work and women's responsibilities within their families, the manner in which their subjective motivations to work were tied to their collectivist responsibilities. In this chapter I focus on the contradictions that women face between the workplace and the home and how they negotiate the contradictions between care-work in the home and paid work in the transnational economy. Since mothers experience much bigger challenges in balancing the demands of the two spheres I concentrate on their experiences in the bulk of the chapter; this is not to deny that single women and women who are married without children also face challenges with work-life balance – their experiences are also analysed from time to time. Parthasarthy (1994) argues that the first ten years of career development which require high commitment and long hours of work to get a firm foothold on the professional ladder coincide with the time when Indian women are 'undergoing change in their professional lives upon marriage, moving from their parents' home to that of their husbands, and a change in status from daughter to wife and mother.' Marriage is an important rite of passage for many women but as I have argued in Chapter 4, this is particularly true in India where a woman's position as a

wife is closely tied to her obligations as a daughter-in-law. Motherhood increases these obligations exponentially and brings a whole new set of complexities to the work-life balance issue as Jaya states at the beginning of her interview (also see Shenoy, 2003). Before examining these complexities, however, it is important to contextualise them by interrogating the implied dichotomy between the home and the workplace.

6.1 From the Industrial to the Post-Industrial Period: Home and Work

In order to understand the conditions in which women work in the post-industrial economy, it is useful to examine the organisation of work in the industrial period and the values associated with the industrial workplace and the home. In this somewhat brief account of the effect of industrialization on the organisation of work and home-life, I examine the continuities and changes between the industrial and post-industrial period and their consequences for women. Prior to industrialization in Europe in the 18th and 19th century there was little dichotomy between the home and the workplace (Hattery, 2001; Folbre and Nelson, 2000; Runté and Mills, 2004); many households were productive even though they may not have been self-sufficient: work was done on the family farm or in the artisan's home and shared by adult men, women and even young children (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). However with industrialization, work became identified with the public domain (factories, mills and offices) and care with the private domain. The association of paid work with men and masculinity and unpaid care with women and femininity became an important feature of industrial society and having a non-working wife was a symbol of prosperity (Runté and Mills, 2004). As industrialization progressed into the 20th century, women became increasingly confined to the home (except during the World Wars). The working day and week were fairly rigidly structured and the dichotomies of work : leisure, paid-work : care-work, workplace : home and public : private became increasingly entrenched.

Associated with the dichotomy between the affective and the economic was the construction of the home as a peaceful heaven where individual family members can seek refuge from the chaos, stress and competitiveness of the public realm. Women were entrusted with the responsibility of recreating and sheltering this space from the demands and stress of the workplace (Runté and Mills, 2004). Given this division of labour, male workers could show total commitment to the workplace because caring responsibilities were undertaken by women (Runte and Mills, 2004; Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, 2007; Lewis 2003, Williams, 2000). This lead to the definition of the ideal worker as someone who does not have personal responsibilities and is consequently single-mindedly devoted to the workplace (Crompton, 2006; Wajcman, 1998; Hocschild, 1997; Williams, 2000; Pocock, 2003). This normative standard has continued into the post-industrial period: for instance the term 'zero drag', is used in Silicon Valley to describe employees who have no personal obligations to distract them from work who are 'available to take on extra assignments, respond to emergency calls, or relocate any time' (Hochschild, 1997:xix). This description rarely fits any worker except possibly the very young: most workers have children, partners, elderly parents, homes and other responsibilities which demand their attention. In the post-industrial period where both partners are in the workplace neither can take complete responsibility for care-work in the home, however, the ideal worker norms remain the yardstick by which workers are evaluated and even when non-traditional way of working are available (part-time work, telecommuting or job sharing), the most powerful, prestigious and highly remunerated jobs tend to be those that are most closely associated with ideal worker i.e. '"success" requires ideal worker status' (Williams, 2000)

Although industrialization began in Europe, its associated values and ideals of domesticity and femininity became prevalent within India through colonialism. These values exacerbated the tendency to seclude upper caste, middle class women and limit their access to the public sphere (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). Based on the values of the industrial period the Indian nationalists constructed the home

as an idyllic space to be protected and nurtured by women (Chatterjee, 1989; see Chapter 1). Runté and Mills's (2004) argument that the dichotomous view of men's and women' responsibilities continues in the post-industrial period may be applied to India. Even after Indian women entered paid employment in large numbers, they continue to be the primary carers in their families and take responsibility for the domestic sphere (Verma and Larson 2000, Lahiri-Dutt and Sil, 2004). Even if men share in household tasks and parenting, they do not take an equal share; in many cases they take no share at all as participants indicate.

> *My husband has always supported me. He never said, 'Quit your job'. At the same time he also never made it his problem. It was always my problem to figure out how to do things. 'You want to work, that's fine. Figure it out, who's going to look after the kids.' Even now everything and anything to do with the house is my problem not his – it's just the way things have been.*
> Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Given the division of labour between the male breadwinner and female carer in the industrialized period, the schedules of the home followed that of the workplace but could be run in a more relaxed manner. In the post-industrial period both partners are in the workplace resulting in the stress of coordinating two (competitive) work schedules in addition to schedules of children; the home has become constraining and stressful for adults and children (Runté and Mills, 2004). The need for speed, efficiency and coordination makes it as Taylorised[92] and regulated as the workplace (Hochschild, 1997; Runté and Mills, 2004).

Participants' accounts indicate that the post-industrial workplace itself has changed from being rigidly structured in terms of a nine to five workday into being more loosely planned around the fluctuating demands of work, the

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[92] Fredrick Taylor, an efficiency engineer whose reputation became established in the late 19th and early 20th century is credited with the modern management practice of dividing tasks in a manner that allows the maximum possible work to be accomplished in the minimum possible time- his ideas were widely implemented regulating the work of blue collar workers in the steel and automotive industries. The notion of Taylorization is associated with strict regimentation of tasks to ensure maximum efficiency even at the cost of alienating workers.

variations in work intensity, the personal responsibilities of workers and need to coordinate work across time-zones. This results in the spill over of work to home and more occasionally of home to work. The development of communication tools such as email, instant messenger and cellular phones impose an urgency to respond immediately on issues (which may not always be urgent). Since individuals are always accessible there is a tendency to call them irrespective of where they are and what they may be doing. The home is as much a site of work-related stress, competition and achievement as the office.

> *Shreela   I got a good job. It was again a telecom company here*
> *and it was again a good job. I had a really challenging*
> *role. I was for two years there, more than two years,*
> *two and a half but since it was a telecom company it*
> *was really difficult. If you have seen a telecom*
> *company: you come home and you get a call*
> *immediately. It was that type of support which was*
> *expected. I used to talk for one hour, two hours on the*
> *phone, I used to get some migraine headaches.*
>
> *Jyothsna   This is as soon as you come home?*
>
> *Shreela   Yeah, not daily but at least thrice in a week, something*
> *like that and twelve o'clock at midnight you get calls*
> *because it was an environment that was just coming up.*
> *You have a whole responsibility.*
> *Shreela, 29, Manager, Mother*

The realities of participants' lives wherein they are meeting the demands of the workplace in the home (and to a lesser extent that of the home in the workplace) is seldom reflected in the discourses that 'continues to conceptualize [the home and workplace as] two distinctly separate spheres of life' (Runte and Mills, 2004: 238). As women they continue to take responsibility for maintaining the serenity of the home and protecting it from the demands of the workplace but they often fight a losing battle given their own presence in the workplace and their limited capacity to negotiate their conditions of work. The failure to protect their home-lives from the intrusion of work can cause stress and frustration.

*You get a phone call from work just when you are reading her a
bedtime story. Last thing you want to do is discuss something
that is work related but you have a deadline or a subordinate or
supervisor who wants some information and those are the times
when you feel bad about your work intruding on your personal
time that you have with the child.*
Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

6.2 Long Hours and Time Famine:[93] Psychological Costs

*They're here to save costs, so the bottom-line is 'get your work
done at low costs'.*
Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

Middle class women in the Indian IT industry experience the same conflict
between their responsibilities as primary carers and their performance as ideal
workers that are faced by women in the West.[94] Although transnational
companies espouse the discourse of work-life balance, the long-hours culture and
intensification of work expected in the industry creates inconsistency between
work-life balance discourse and practice. While Fleetwood (2007) and Lewis,
Rapoport and Gambles (2007) have documented this trend amongst employers in
the West, it is further exacerbated in the Indian IT industry due to its unequal
relationships with Western clients. The need to deliver services within
competitive timeframes and save costs has resulted in high levels of work
intensification and causes Indian IT workers to work family un-friendly hours.
For instance, Savita, whose previous assignment was to head a team responsible
for maintenance of products sold to clients, was often required to respond to
clients' queries late in the night via conference calls involving several people
across multiple locations. Such calls could take up to three hours and required her
to work well after mid-night, a negative consequence of what Giddens (1991)
calls 'time space distanciation'. A few participants indicate their awareness of
these global inequalities:

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[93] Hochschild, 1997:199
[94] Posner, 1992, Williams, 2000 with regard to USA; Pocock, 2003 with regard to Australia.

A lot of our advantage in the IT sector comes from the cost advantage that India offers. So therefore people are willing to work more than forty five hours in a week which is what is giving that cost advantage. But what the industry has not realised is that you cannot sustain that beyond a ten or fifteen year period. Burn out will set in.
Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

The norms of the knowledge economy and logic of global capitalism imposes a long hours culture on employees (Lewis, 2003; Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, 2007). Given the logic of maximum profit for minimal outlay, organisations are fairly lean and often go through restructuring (downsizing) processes to cut down jobs. The remaining employees are expected to increase their work-intensity to make up for the reduction in resources.[95] Since work enters the home via the mobile phone or Internet connection, participants find it difficult to divide the day into work-time and home-time or to avoid taking work related calls while at home.

Not [only] in the evening, even when I am on leave also I had to work. I remember one instance, my mother-in-law had invited some of her relatives and I was making some pilaf [spiced rice] and at that time I got an important call from my customer. I told him okay can you please call me after five minutes. He said, 'My customer is jumping on my head so please tell me what to do now'.. And I was talking to him and the whole this thing, it was in a pressure cooker and it gave two, three whistles [which caused it to get overcooked] and it was all a paste. So again we had to cook this rice.
Swati, 35, Manager, Mother

Several participants report working from home either early in the morning, late in the evening or on weekends. They give instances of taking work related calls while on holiday, in hospital taking care of a sick child, during family celebrations or ritual occasions. Software engineers who are engaged in the maintenance of projects for clients tend to be 'on-call' whenever a need arises irrespective of whether they are at work or at home. Administrators tend to be

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[95] Employees are known as resources in the IT industry (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006).

dependent on the schedules and work patterns of their bosses and thereby have little control over the length of their workday though the bulk of their work may be performed in the office. Managers are in charge of large teams and individual team members often call after working hours with questions or problems.

While most participants claim that their long hours are due to the nature of their work, the accounts of trailblazers indicate that they derive satisfaction from their work and tend to become absorbed in it. For highly qualified knowledge workers work can be rewarding, challenging and exciting and therefore result in high levels of commitment (Lewis, 2003; Hochschild, 1997). For this group, long hours are professionally 'identity affirming' (Lewis, 2003: 349).[96]

> *I leave home by eight thirty, otherwise by nine. It takes about*
> *an hour and work starts here and till I come to a logical break*
> *I don't go. For me, I should feel like most of the items I have*
> *scheduled for the day is done and I'm at a logical point to*
> *leave. So many times I leave at around – any time after seven-*
> *thirty usually seven thirty, eight and at times it becomes [late].*
> Jaya, 33, Manager, Mother

Participants' hours extend much beyond the global standard of 40 hours a week, in keeping with the 'slogger' reputation of IT workers (see Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006: 97). Jaya and Swati who are in managerial positions work about twelve hours a day while Maya works for eight to ten hours depending on the volume and urgency of her work. Savita whose workday was described in the previous chapter cut down her sixteen hour workday by giving up her role as team leader for a software maintenance project for a less demanding role: she now works about ten to twelve hours a day.

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[96] Lewis also notes that women feel less free to 'choose' long hours as compared to men, however, the identity affirming nature of managerial work needs to be taken into account alongside other factors (peer pressure and company culture) when explaining long working hours.

Amongst the managers, trailblazers such as Savita, Swati, Maya and Shreela regularly take calls or respond to email from overseas after returning home. In addition, they may participate in company socials and organise parties for their team. Jaya reports that her presence at such gatherings (which are organised late in the evening) is important to boost the team's morale and introduce them to senior managers and clients. Social activities, team building events and training programmes are sometimes organised over weekends and attendance is necessary if workers wish to be seen as seriously committed. While managers tend to work long hours because of the norms of ideal work, administrators feel that they are forced to work long hours because of the demands made on them. Kanti and Hema work ten to eleven hours a day including travel, while Cristina's work day depends on her manager's schedules; he expects her to remind him of meetings and conference calls beyond office hours including giving him a 'wakeup call' at 7 a.m. in time for a tele-conference with an East Asian client.

It could be argued that trailblazers 'choose' to work these long hours, attending office parties and training events, but their choice is influenced by 'the contemporary context [in which] highly skilled workers are more likely to work long and intensive hours'(Lewis, 2003: 347) and commitment is evaluated in terms of presence at work. Performance based pay and team incentives (which create pressure from peers and subordinates to intensify work or to be physically present in the workplace as Anita found) further strengthen the long-hours culture of the industry (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). Women's choice to work long hours needs to be understood in the context ideal worker norms, the logic of global capitalism (maximizing profits and moving to new labour markets when existing ones become difficult to manage) and the structuring of the workplace around what Posner describes as the Protestant/ patriarchal work ethic: the notion that 'work is bad, life is a struggle but somebody has to do it' (Posner, 1992:21).

Given the amount of road construction taking place across the city, traffic jams are a common feature of daily life as public transport is uncertain (auto-rickshaws often refuse to take passengers in directions that are inconvenient). This tends to make the workday even longer and somewhat unpredictable. While some women in managerial positions travel by car, others use company transport (air-conditioned buses) and a few use public transport (auto-rickshaws). Amongst women who are in administrative/ executive positions, Hema has a car while Kanti, Cristina and Nalini use a combination of different types of transport to travel to and from the office: they are either dropped by their husbands (on scooters or in cars), use company transport or take a ride part of the way with other female colleagues and then take auto-rickshaws for the remaining way. While the beginning of the workday is dictated by children's school timings or essential meetings, the end of the workday depends on the volume and urgency of work, the timings of company transport and the availability of auto-rickshaws, factors which add to participants' 'time famine' (Hochschild, 1997:199).

> *The whole day goes in that struggling so that you don't have to*
> *spend that extra one and half hours. My coffee times are*
> *restricted, my tea times are restricted because I know if waste*
> *that extra fifteen minutes something else is going to pile up.*
> Swarna, 31, Manager, Mother

The 'speed ups' experienced at work and at home are stressful to women and detrimental to the quality of family life (Runté and Mills, 2004).

> *Jyothsna   Any symptoms of stress that you notice in yourself*
> *   besides the health problems that you talked of?*
>
> *Maya   I guess my life is so fine-tuned to the last second that*
> *   even if there is a little bit of delay I get very agitated.*
> *   So I guess I'm a little impatient, that's the issue.*
>
> *Jyothsna   Impatient with whom?*
>
> *Maya   With anything you know. It could be that I get done*
> *   with this, I need to get into something else and when*
> *   that gets done then I get to go somewhere else and if*
> *   any one of these things in the chain gets – and it*

always does, right, you can't help it – especially
with the boy [her son], it always does. Then I get
very agitated.

Jyothsna   *What happens? Can you give me an example?*

Maya   *Simple things –he's supposed to wake up at nine in*
          the morning but he decides to sleep in further and he
          refuses to wake up or we want him to wear his
          sweater and he refuses to wear his sweater and he's
          jumping round the house and he thinks it's a game
          and we're progressively getting delayed in the day.
          ... I get very short-tempered which is not very good
          because I was never a short-tempered person. And
          I've become a short-tempered person.
Maya, 37, Manager, Mother

The 'time famine' (Hochschild, 1997:199) has serious consequences for participants' health and emotional wellbeing. Stress is expressed in acute physical symptoms that participants report: backaches, high or low blood pressure, sleeplessness, spondolysis, migraines, recurrent colds and respiratory illnesses and a sense of exhaustion. They also share the psychological cost of anxiety and guilt that is felt by mothers across the world (Pocock, 2003; Posner, 1992; Brannen and Moss, 1991). Participants who are mothers claim that they crave sleep, silence and the luxury of doing nothing (see also Hochschild, 1989).

One of the things I noticed is wherever I am whatever I am I'm
always thinking I'm so pre-occupied, office, home, office,
home, office, home. The wheels are churning constantly and I
think that sort of makes you very tired at times. So when I took
a week off during the Diwali break, everybody's like, 'You
didn't go on a holiday?' And I was like, 'No, I just wanted to
be alone. I just wanted to do my stuff and eh – so that's it.'
Savita, 32, Manager, Mother

When confronted with the image of a 'proper mother' who is always available to her children and does not need to juggle the demands of employment and motherhood, women feel judged not only by their own families but also by work colleagues, neighbours and the wider community. Women tend to feel

responsible for any perceived 'failure' in their children's academic success or social/emotional adjustment due to the popular discourse on child development (Runté and Mills, 2004). Pocock's (2003) description of mother-wars – criticism women who work face from those that stay at home with their children and vice versa – is echoed in Anita's account of how her neighbour's repeated assertion that by staying at home to bring up her children she would really *'see her daughters blossom'* brings on fresh waves of guilt for a mother who is already feeling torn between work and home.

> *I was driving home in the rain on Hosur Road ([a highway]*
> *trying to navigate my way ...and then I had my neighbour*
> *calling up and saying that your daughter is standing outside*
> *[the house] and she's crying and that is really the pits you*
> *know. You really feel like a heel. I like, appreciate the good*
> *intentions of the neighbour but right the next day she told me,*
> *'Anita, don't you think you should quit? It's not fair on the*
> *kid [to be taken care of by maids].' And this is a lady who*
> *has left her career completely – her nature as a woman –*
> *she's had her child. When I got home things were very much*
> *under control. You know how children are, you know a four*
> *and half, five year old. She must have been throwing a*
> *tantrum but I trust the maid – she's an affectionate lady.*
> Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

For trailblazers (and to a lesser extent, the balancers) who do not need the income, this psychological cost is evident in the endless soul searching or guilty comparisons to their mothers, mothers-in-law and friends who are totally immersed in the home. They view themselves as having made a choice in favour of their own need for self-actualization and therefore carry a burden of guilt for 'stealing' time from children and giving it to the workplace. However, the instrumentalists, who believe they have little choice but to continue working (for the income), also suffer guilt and anxiety. Cristina and Kanti, who are forced to leave their children with rather uncooperative in-laws, speak of their anxiety that the children are being neglected at home. When asked if she would like to continue in paid employment Kanti replied with tears in her eyes:

*If I didn't have to earn money and pay my loans I'd just sit [at
home], take care of my kid, cook well... I never gave [her]
anything from day one. Till today I never gave [her] anything. I
don't cook anything for her, neither does she ask me because she
knows that I don't have the time.*
Kanti, 35, Administrator, Mother

6.3 The Double Edged Sword of Flexibility

The discourse of flexibility is fairly entrenched across the IT industry; most companies claim to offer their employees work-life balance strategies such as flexitime and tele-working (See Rathore and Sachitanand, 2007). However flexibility can be either employee-friendly or employer-friendly i.e. employee-unfriendly (Fleetwood, 2007). Flexible timings or remote working blurs the boundaries between home and work, stretching the workday so that the employee is rarely completely 'off-work'. The discourse of flexibility allows employers to demand work at family-unfriendly hours: evenings, holidays and weekends and stretch the workday beyond 10 hours. However, it is masked as a 'choice' that the employee freely makes. While employees may be given the choice of working remotely leaving early or taking time off during the workday for personal tasks, the discourse of flexibility may either be undermined by practice, become detached from practice or mask existing practice (Fleetwood, 2007). An example of an undermining practice is the intensification of work or the client-centredness demanded from employees which requires long hours and willingness to bend to customers' demands.

Indian IT companies tend to uphold the value of 'customer delight' imposing on their employees an obligation to bend to customers' demands by invoking traditional cultural norms of hospitality and graciousness (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:72). This tendency to invoke a sense of duty is comparable to what Fleetwood (2007) describes as the quasi-moral obligation implicit in the Western discourse of employee rights and duties within flexible working systems. Having received the benefit of flexibility, unprecedented salaries, perks and prestige

associated with their jobs in IT companies, employees are obliged to work the family-unfriendly hours demanded of them.

Another difficulty with the manner in which work-life balance is offered is that they are set within the contemporary (neo-liberal) notions of choice and responsibility i.e. employees are expected to take personal control of their time and negotiate work life balance options with managers and bosses (Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles, 2007; Fleetwood, 2007). Human resource executives promote extended maternity leave, tele-commuting and working remotely as a series of options which employees can choose from to create their schedules thereby locating them within discourse of individual choice and responsibility. For instance, Maya, a senior manager in human resources argues that it is up to each employee to articulate their value to the organisation and that managers will always support employees who are valued. Such a discourse fails to challenge cultural assumptions about the primacy of work in an individual's life and does not hold the employer accountable for employee wellbeing.

My research substantiates several conclusions of Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles (2007)'s study of the work-life balance constraints of workers in seven countries including India, UK, USA and Japan: firstly, given the high levels of commitment expected from employees, the choice implied in work-life balance policies are highly constrained; secondly, the need to cash in on the IT boom creates a workaholic culture that individual employees find hard to resist; thirdly, individuals accept the ideology of choice and blame themselves for not making the ideal choices to create an ideal work life balance (Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles, 2007) as this exchange from a focus group indicates:

Jyothsna   *In terms of balancing personal and professional life
           how has it been and has the company helped –what
           policies have helped and what hasn't helped?*

Beena   *I'm doing a very bad job of balancing it. I'm
           pathetic, which is why I go through these guilt pangs*

saying, 'May be I should just quit.' But then every time I talk of quitting then I get talked out of it in office because then you're not being fair to yourself because now you're feeling guilty about doing this to your family. If you quit then you're not being fair you yourself which in a way is true and really, I admire women who manage to get out of office at six thirty, seven and have a fulfilling home life and manage to—

Sarah   *There are no such women.*

Beena   *No, I know women who manage to get out of office at six come what may but then you know that at work they're not giving their best. They're okay with that. May be that's you know that's a decision that they've taken but I don't know— But for me it's not even as if I'm the ambitious type. I know that if I had to, I'd quit it and walk away but when you're at work you want to give it your best and you don't want to leave till you've done it to your satisfaction... So in terms of balance, I've really not managed to achieve it if I could do anything to change it I would do it but–*

Sarah   *I'm finding it difficult to – especially now, I'm doing these mad hours. I'm able to get away with it because I'm staying on my own right now, probably it wouldn't be the same if my husband was staying with me.... I guess what's helped with me a lot because I have a lot of these late night calls and what ever it is I have the flexibility of working from home if I want to. The flip side is also therefore you end up doing all of these odd hours but— I think that's one of the biggest blessings for me. That's what's keeping me here in this organisation— the fact that I have that flexibility. I've made a decision during the week I will work all these crazy hours; Saturday, Sunday, I'll not downloading my email. Forget it. You're working Saturdays and Sundays, your mind is not off. And I find it helps so during the week. Again I do it because like you said you want to do a good job. Sometimes, half the time, I'm getting frustrated and angry because it's not taking me up the ladder— may be it should take me somewhere. Why the heck am I doing my boss's boss's job? In a way you do it because you have that sense of achievement—*

> Beena   *Very frustrating that you can't let go of things when you should.*

> Upasna   *I think for me, I've started growing to strike a balance between the personal and the professional to – Hours in work. More of my hours in working, really I'll have to be more strong to take that on, you know, so really I'm growing to strike that balance,.*
>
> Upasana, 28, Married, Executive; Sarah, 36, Married, Manager; Beena, 30, Married, Manager

In response to my question on which work-life balance policies are helpful, all three women respond by analysing their own capacities to create work-life balance rather than company policies. They do not question the long-hours culture or their positions in the global economy that undermine their ability to take advantage of work-life balance policies. They view their capacity to create a work-life balance through the lens of choice and responsibility without accounting for the structural or normative factors that influence these choices. It is argued that the discourse of choice masks the way in which individuals choices are socially embedded (Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles, 2007, quoting Lewis and Guillari, 2005); moreover it overlooks the need for systemically changing 'cultures, structures and practices' (Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles, 2007:365). These structures include the division of labour between the sexes, the undervaluing of unpaid work, the high status associated with paid work, the demands of client-servicing roles, the 'identity affirming' nature of (certain) jobs Lewis, 2003:349 quoting Thompson and Bunderson, 2001; Kofodimos, 1993), and the construction of the ideal worker as the one who works longest.

> *I had a team member who had defaulted a lot. I felt very cheated [when] he sought a male colleague as a mentor. I had done a lot of cover-ups for him. People who are inefficient are more likely to clutch at straws. They try and externalise the blame in any way possible and if you are a lady boss then you are a very easy target. 'She doesn't stay late. She doesn't travel. How are we to deliver? She can't blame it all on us.'*
>
> Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

The pressure that participants experience from colleagues, superiors and subordinates influences their ability to take advantage of work-life balance policies as Hochschild (1997) found in her study of work-life balance in an American company. Even when they do take advantage of these policies, the costs of doing so cancel out the potential benefits that they derive. For instance Anita, Anjana and Savita who work remotely from home work similar hours to their male colleagues, thereby not actually cutting back on their work hours. However they are perceived by colleagues to have done so. This brings another disadvantage: they work long hours, but without the benefit of 'face time' (visibility in the office) that enables them to be seen as serious workers with high career aspirations.

6.4 Responses to Work-Life Balance Strategies

Rupa   *As an organisation we need to recognise that we need to handle different employees differently. We have not gone as far as saying we will do something different for women employees so but the good thing is that there is always a willingness to learn and respond to the environment so there's no cultural resistance to that, just that it does not exist but I find that most companies that are in the market today they don't do anything radically different for women?*

Jyothsna *Is there a need for that?*

Rupa   *Yes, you have the challenge of getting talented employees and the talent acquisition challenge is very strong in the market. On the other hand you have a whole lot of women who would have worked for one or two years and given it up because of family pressures; then you have a whole lot of women who take a break because they cannot because the company does not allow them to work half time or whatever; then there are people who make a conscious choice and take very low profile role and can't handle a very high profile job- the flexibility in terms of timing and all that is not there and if you look at it in the larger context those are not very big things. Flexibility can be provided and productivity can be maintained.*

Jyothsna	So you feel that there is still a need for companies to respond to that but what are the things that have been tried till now?
Rupa	I think that they haven't even tried. Even when these policies exist on paper they are not implemented. Managers find it very difficult to implement something like this. They will not tell a women that because you have been recently married, use flexitime. They will not tell you that. As an Indian manager he will never tell you that or even if it's a she, she will never say that.
Jyothsna	They don't even let the employee know that this exists?
Rupa	It's not that they have intentionally hidden it. It does not even come to their minds. It does not even come to them that the flexibility exists and you just have to give it. I think you know this industry has evolved over five six years. Indians by nature are very workaholic in temperament. You can't seem to draw the line between your work and your family life. The concept to work life balance does not exist. It has just started creeping into the minds of some people. Nobody will go home at six o'clock. They will waste their time in meetings and stuff like that but they will not manage their time in such a way that they can go home at six o clock. There are very, very few people who I can count on my fingers who do something like this. The general culture is that you have to work long and hard to be successful in this industry. That is the kind of mind set that has been in this industry.

Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

Rupa's arguments echoes the finding of earlier research that managers often block the implementation of flexi-time policies viewing it as problematic and time-consuming to organise; top management speaks the rhetoric of work life balance and creates the policies but 'disincentivizes' flexi-time by pressurising middle managers to increase profits and speed up work (see Hochschild, 1997). While work-life balance policies exist in many companies, women's access to them depends on individual managers (Cieri et al, 2005; Hochschild, 1997). In contrast to Kanti and Jyoti, whose manager is less flexible, Nitya, Hema and Deepika work with a manager who strongly supports work-life balance. As Rupa argues, managers do not always inform employees of work-life balance options

except on hearing that a woman is considering quitting the company or if she is facing serious childcare problems on returning from maternity leave.

Flexitime and tele-working receive a mixed response from participants. Trailblazers are less likely to use these options on a regular basis as it prevents them from putting in the 'face-time' essential to progress in the organisation and function as ideal workers. They use them as short-term solutions in case of a break down in support structures, a medical emergency or sudden absence of a maid. Using flexitime does not decrease the hours trailblazers work, it merely changes the location from the workplace to the home. Savita and Anjana perform an overlapping shift supervising their children or catching up on housework whilst checking work related email or answering calls from colleagues. Their experience is similar to that of workers in other counties (UK, USA, New Zealand and Canada) who find that working from home tends to 'exacerbate overwork' and 'increase work's dominance over family' (Sullivan and Smithson 2007: 449). Interestingly some trailblazers claim that they counsel their team members to use these options during important life changes such as marriage or motherhood even if they do not make use of these policies for themselves; this indicates that based on their own experience they understand the stress of trying to have it all:

> *If women have the option of financially [not] depending on the salary, [let them] take a year off. Career is not running away, nothing is running away. Every time I talk to women and their moms or whatever, [I say] 'Why should you work? Your baby needs you.' It's all focussed around the baby while I think it is important for women to set aside the one year for themselves, especially if you're the one who goes to the office and all that, your stress levels are slightly higher (assuming of course that you don't have stress levels at home). I think it is important because if you're at peace with yourself and you're able to do your post-delivery [rest and concentration on yourself and the baby] and whatever, you can do wonders for the baby and of course the family.*
> Savita, 32, Manager, Mother

As I argued in Chapter 5, Balancers are most likely to take advantage of these policies over a long period of time sacrificing the 'face time' required to be identified as ideal workers (Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles, 2007:366). They avoid travelling on work and staying late while their children are young. However, they are also constrained to choose the less glamorous positions associated with limited growth where these policies can be implemented. This group is more vocal in demanding effective work-life balance policies, however they risk alienating more ambitious colleagues who believe that such policies undermine their ability to succeed without company support.

> *I don't want to be identified as part of the minority community.*
> *... It's like you know this is the special interest- special group*
> *that gets all these little, little things [flexible work hours; 'no*
> *travel' jobs] I'm not very comfortable with it. Either you do*
> *well on your own terms or you just let it go or you do as well as*
> *is possible and be happy with it. ...My issue is after asking for*
> *all these all the additional support that you need at the*
> *workplace you can't also expect to be paid the same, to have the*
> *same career progression at the same pace as somebody else who*
> *didn't ask for those and is still working. That is unfair to the*
> *rest of the workforce. It's not like my set of issues are any less.*
> *I have found a solution. Somebody may not have that solution*
> *somebody may have another solution to it.*
> Maya, 37, Manager, Mother

Instrumentalists are least likely to benefit from these policies as their home-lives are not flexible and may be somewhat chaotic (see Kanti's comments in the previous chapter). Mothers-in-law are unlikely to understand how they can be physically present at home but not available to take over childcare and the house may be too small to afford the quiet and privacy required to work. They may not have fulltime maids to care for the children while they concentrate on work.

As Liddle and Joshi (1986) argue, employed women are expected to take on the full burden of housework and mothering when they are at home. The reaction from family members to working from home is not always positive. They may feel ignored or neglected and show their annoyance.

Some people feel that working from home is very good but working from home is actually horrible. It's like all the times your phone will be ringing, everyone will be ringing. Now-a-days after having this mobile and everyone having this mobile number is horrible. ... Working from home is all that time you are doing the office work, getting calls and whoever is at home, he or she will feel that you will do something for that person. All the time [I am] talking on the phone. Sometimes my daughter also gets irritated. 'Mamma why are you at home? You go to office!' My maid also says, 'Didi [older sister] you better go...'
Swati,35, Manager, Mother

Working from home contradicts the image of the home as a protected environment. The success of this arrangement depends on the support systems available to a woman at home (reliable home help, an understanding family and privacy to work with minimal interruption). Given participants' caring responsibilities, the arrangement may not always succeed in reducing their quadruple shift (Castells 2004). They are constantly struggling to find effective strategies to combine paid work and care. Given the 'choice rhetoric' (Williams, 2000:14) most participants, especially those in managerial positions see this as their own responsibility rather than that of the organisation or a joint responsibility between themselves and their husbands or families (even though their work benefits both themselves and their families).

6.5 Strategies for Managing Paid Work and Care

Women across the world use various strategies to combine work and care: child-minders, nurseries; extended or unpaid maternity leave ranging from four months to one year; enlisting parents, in-laws and other relatives for childcare and working from home (Eng and Huang, 2004; Crompton, 2006; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Williams, 2000). All strategies have their advantages and disadvantages, but given the conceptualization of care as an altruistic and emotionally charged activity, marketized care is seen as inferior (Folbre and Nelson, 2000). Thus although using paid help is a

popular strategy in India where domestic labour is affordable, women tend to be suspicious of paid helpers and prefer to combine marketized care with unpaid care.[97]

6.5.1 Childcare Strategies

Maids, child minders and other forms of migrant domestic help are popular but are not considered reliable (they are believed to be prone to absenteeism and leaving without notice). They might not take the same pains as a parent or grandparent takes to coax a fussy child to eat, ensure that the child does her homework or washes well. They might allow more television viewing than the mother considers optimal, be more strict than required or compromise the child's safety by carelessness or oversight. They need careful supervision either by a grandparent or via the telephone. A responsible maid who is patient with the child and follows instructions carefully is invaluable. Women therefore make an effort to keep reliable maids satisfied, offering food, clothes, television viewing and loans of money as an incentive.

Geetika   *I look after my maids very well, I have always been treating them like family members. ... I've kept my kitchen open for the servants. I think food is a very important thing for them. All of them work in many houses but they eat in my house. ... What is it [at] end of the day? What will happen if you order an extra loaf of bread because your servants will want to have it with a cup of tea or you order an extra kilo of sugar? How much is that going to cost you? How much are they going to eat? It's not like I'm giving them mutton, chicken or something. If that's also there as leftovers, I give it to them but atta [flour] is on the house you have your chapattis. Bread is on the house. There is chai patti [tea leaves], sugar, milk. Have your tea. Sit aaram se [comfortably] eat well and work well in my house. If I'm looking after you, you look after my house. That's my policy.*

Jyothsna   *You also need to come to work yourself without—*

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[97] The increasing use of paid domestic helpers by middle class employed women and the potential for exploitation of (predominantly) female care workers has been discussed in earlier literature (see Crompton's (2006) discussion of Hochschild's 2003 and Anderson's 2000 work).

> Geetika   *Without worrying about all these things, and the*
> *girl who looks after my children, she needs to be*
> *well fed and well looked after so that she looks*
> *after my children. That's what I feel...That's the*
> *arrangement I have kept from the beginning as far*
> *as domestic help is concerned.*
> Geetika,32, Manager, Mother

The most popular substitute care is that of grandparents who are perceived to be selflessly interested in the child's welfare.[98] While this reduces anxiety regarding the child's nutrition and wellbeing, some women are concerned about not having complete control over their children's upbringing, burdening their parents in their old age, and 'giving up' their responsibilities. To reduce the burden, participants employ maids to take on the more onerous tasks under the supervision of senior women but by calling on their parents' assistance, women still become closely implicated in reciprocal care exchange with the elders. For this strategy to work parents or in-laws need to live close by or in the same house; in some cases the elders move in temporarily. However, two participants sent their children on an extended visit to the grandparents who lived in another city. Geetika's son visited her parents during the ten-day 'Dushehra holiday':

> *It was either that or ten days of sitting at home and watching*
> *television with the maids. I feel it has increased his confidence*
> *and made him more independent. He's very proud that he*
> *washed himself and dressed himself without help at his*
> *grandparents' house so now we tell him to look after himself at*
> *home also.*
> Geetika,32, Manager, Mother

However, Shreela who was forced to use this as a longer term option (since her parents could not come to be with her) is more ambivalent about her decision, although she attempts to justify it:

> *Back in January, I felt it's high time I got to my normal routine*
> *and it was really a tough decision that I made to leave my son*
> *there but I didn't have an option. Day cares in Bangalore start*

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[98] This is true for all but two cases where the grandparents' help was given grudgingly: that of Kanti and Cristina.

only from [when the child is] two years basically –[my husband
and I decided to] let him also explore things from his side which
might be good for his future also. [She indicated later in the
interview that she wanted her child to be more independent and
a 'risk taker'] Moreover, my brother's daughter is there for
company so I think he is having good time and we are also
travelling [to see him] every alternate weekend.
Shreela,29, Manager, Mother

A third strategy, sending the child to a crèche or play school, carries the
stigma associated with marketized care; it connotes less control for the mother
and more possibility of neglect since the child to adult ratio is greater than at
home. Women use it sparingly, only in cases where there is no other alternative.
In some cases play schools and nurseries may be used in combination with other
strategies to give the grandparents some respite or to prepare the child for formal
school.

6.5.2 The Second and Third Shifts[99]

Castells (2004) argues that women do several shifts of work in a day in
addition to paid work. In spite of their long work day (arguable because of it)
women engage in a second shift of household work in the evenings or in the
morning. This is a common feature in the lives of employed women across
cultures (Wajcman, 1998; Hochschild, 1989 and Pocock, 2003). Amongst my
participants it includes cooking, cleaning, shopping for the family and supervising
domestic help. The use of domestic help varies considerably. All the participants
have some form of paid domestic help except Hema and Sumaiya who prefer to
do the work themselves. Women in administrative positions tend to have part-
time maids. Most women in managerial positions have servants, cooks and live-
in maids who take on the more onerous household tasks (Liddle and Joshi, 1989;
Crompton 2006) but as Geetika put it when she interrupted the interview (at her
office) to take a call from the maid, women often *'run the home on remote*
control' via the telephone, giving instructions on cooking and housekeeping and
checking if children have eaten, washed and completed their homework. They

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[99] Hochschild, 1989.

also receive calls with questions, complaints and updates from the childminder and the child. To assure their families of their involvement in housework, many participants do some household tasks even if they employ domestic help:

Swati   *We all [she, her parents-in-law and her daughter]*
         spend some time together, take breakfast and some
         discussion and after going from office also I make it
         a point that I will talk to them for some fifteen,
         twenty minutes or half an hour and then I take my
         daughter and make her study. I make sure that I
         cook the dinner: at least one dish I do [in spite of
         having a live-in cook-cum-maid]... I start cooking
         around eight – eight thirty and my maid she cuts
         vegetables and gives me the spices. And my mother-
         in-law she also stands in the kitchen and she will be
         talking to me something, something.

Jyothsna *Time gets passed?*

Swati   *You don't realise that is it an overhead. Earlier I*
          used to feel it's an overhead but now I feel it is part
          of life.
Swati, 35, Manager, Mother

Swati's description of her day indicates the importance of small routines in creating a sense of family togetherness. Folbre and Nelson (2000: 129) argue that as families purchase services, 'the emotional content of home life is becoming more and more concentrated in a relatively small number of activities such as sharing meals and telling bedtime stories which cannot be purchased'; these activities are therefore all the more important to constructing the home as an affective and tranquil space. The sharing of news, reading of bedtime stories and supervising of homework are an important part of the third shift of emotional or affective labour that women do to compensate from their long absence from home (Hochschild, 1997). As Hochshchild (1997) argues, this emotional work includes 'receiving' the pent up frustration and tantrums of children who have been hurried to school, extra-curricular activities, grandparents homes and back and are hungry for parental attention or simply in need of a more relaxed schedule. It may

involve dealing with the questions of parents and extended family and their annoyance at the busyness of women's lives and smoothing over the annoyances of in-laws and husbands who have been co-opted into childcare.

6.6 Emotional Work and Emotional Labour

One way in which women cope with the stress of managing paid work and care is through emotional work and emotional labour. Hochschild defines emotional labour or the management of emotions in terms of its *exchange* value and emotional work in terms of its use value. (2003:7; emphasis in original). It has been argued that due to their unequal status in patriarchal society and their cultural positioning as the caring sex, women tend to do more emotional work/labour than men (Hochschild, 2003). This emotional labour can be alienating and create a sense of inauthenticity as Hochschild (2003) argues with regard to flight attendants. However, it can also be rewarding and emotionally satisfying as Staden found in the case of nurses (1998). Women may be praised for their ability to diplomatically handle emotionally charged situation or diffuse tension in the workplace and at home. Their emotional work in the family may win the affection or respect of kin making it easier for them to call upon family members for support. They may participate in their own construction as the 'emotional sex' because it gives them access to certain forms of power, prestige and rewards. In examining emotional labour it is useful to consider both its empowering and disempowering consequences.

6.6.1 Emotional Work on the Self

Given the stress of coping with long working hours, the collision between work and home and the overt or unspoken criticism that they receive in both spheres for supposedly neglecting their duties. Women experience emotions of guilt, anxiety, frustration, irritability and overall stress (Runté and Mills, 2004; Posner, 1992). They manage these emotions through self-talk, by confiding in female friends or relatives, going to the gym or going out for a drive. Many of them underscore the importance of spending time on their own or undertaking an

activity for their own pleasure such as visiting the mall, taking a pottery or music class, reading or tidying and decorating the house. These activities, though seen as important for relaxation and rejuvenation, are often given low priority, especially for women with young children. Additionally, reading books on self-management, parenting or self-help are considered helpful in re-energising oneself or meeting the challenges of daily life.

Anita	*I make sure that I have some time that I have on my own to think through the day and think about how I manage the day.*
Jyothsna	*Do you get the time?*
Anita	*I make it a point to get it. It is more difficult with two children.*
Jyothsna	*So when is that?*
Anita	*Post-dinner mostly. I try and read something. How I cope with the stress is have read a lot of self improvement kind of books. Anything that I can lay my hands on, even management books.*
Jyothsna	*Management of what?*
Anita	*Time or work or just being better in what you are doing, doing more in less time.*

Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

I wanted to pursue something creative so when I'm doing [pottery] I'm not thinking anything because one of the things I noticed is wherever I am, whatever I am [doing], I'm always thinking. I'm so pre occupied: office, home, office, home, office, home – the wheels are churning constantly and I think that sort of makes you very tired at times.
Savita,32, Manager, Mother

Socialising with one's own friends (as opposed to one's husband's friends or relatives) is considered essential to emotional wellbeing although finding the

time for it is difficult. Anjana argues that her visits to the pub with friends are not appreciated by her parents who feel concerned that her husband might object. Along with the emotional work of taking care of herself she also performs the emotional labour of explaining her point of view to her parents.

> *When I go to meet my friends they [my parents] feel it is not*
> *needed. 'Why do you have to go? Your son is going to come*
> *back from school now; your husband might not like it. You*
> *can take your husband also.' I'm like, 'No I want to live life.*
> *I want to go with my friends when he goes with his friends.*
> *I'm not neglecting any of my so called duties. But at the*
> *same time I want to live my life.' Initially I would get very*
> *upset when somebody would question me because there is*
> *this set norms saying, 'a daughter can't do this after she gets*
> *married,' or 'you can't be a mother if you are like this.'*
> *Getting their approval to agree on what my point is also*
> *equally important for me. I would sit down and take pains to*
> *justify myself and explain myself to them to just understand*
> *and accept me. I go to larger lengths to do that.*
> Anjana, 33, Manager, Mother

A few participants manage their emotions through religious discourses or through contemporary Western or new age philosophy and self-help books such as Robin Sharma's 'The Monk Who Sold his Ferrari' or Spencer Johnson's 'Who Moved My Cheese'. Like religious discourses these books may be helpful confronting difficult situations such as abusive spouses or in-laws, to manage their own emotions or to recreate their identities within the home and community as down-to-earth, family-orientated women, loving daughters and obedient daughters-in-law. Although religious discourses and self-help books come from different sources, both serve to reconcile individuals to their realities however unfair these realities seem.

> *There were a couple of books such as 'Tuesdays with Morrie'*
> *and 'The Life of Ramakrishna Parmahansa' which showed me*
> *how to accept your situation and live beyond your limitations.*
> *Then I said God has given me everything and I am still*
> *cribbing. At end of the day, you're just a human being.*
> Anjana, 33, Manager, Mother

*I was already patient. I became more calm. I had started
thinking that if my own husband treats me badly who can I
trust but after attending church I felt strengthened. I said, 'I'm
going to live my life alone, let me speak to people.' ...When you
go to church, when the preacher tells you things that you
should do at least that minute and for the rest of the week you
are nice to people even if you are not getting in anything in
return ... [laughing] It also says don't leave your [abusive]
husband [this is something she has been actively considering].*
Kanti, 35, Administrator, Mother

Religious festivals and regular religious activities : 'poojas' or rituals,
fasts and visits to the church or temple, are important to create a sense of
togetherness in the family and in turn increase women's sense of emotional
wellbeing. The shared anticipation of the festival and combined effort to prepare
for it are believed to strengthen family bonds and create an enjoyment of family
life in a world that is increasingly shaped by individual pursuits and governed by
the stringent 'Taylorized' schedules of school timings and calendars and office
schedules which prevent family members from spending quality time together on
a daily basis (Hochschild, 2003). This sense of bonding and the emotional well
being that results from shared religious activities increases women's sense of
psychological security in an increasingly uncertain world/ market and gives them
the strength to face the stress of daily life and the demands of the workplace.

*The feel, you know, of getting ready for something- that festival I
think that should be there in the family. Otherwise you know I
don't see any challenge or excitement in family to get along or
run.*
Nalini, 37, Executive, Mother

6.6.2 Servicing the Care-Debt: Emotional Work or Emotional Labour?

When women sell their time in the market economy they cease to have
enough to devote to family. The inability to devote uninterrupted time and
attention to children, parents, spouse and in-laws results in a 'time-debt'
(Hocschild, 1998) and a care-debt that causes guilt and internal conflict and may

also invoke criticism from the family and community. The time-debt incurred during the week is serviced in the weekend and through gifts, treats (meals in restaurants, expensive holidays etc) and other gestures of affection. The care debt to parents and in-laws is met through daily phone calls, weekend visits, errands, accompanying them to see the doctor, driving them to visit friends and relatives and planning family outings around their interests and abilities. This results in the exclusion of activities that participants enjoy but which exhaust or bore the elders.

> *I can walk for hours [in the mall] but she can't ...and also for that generation going to the mall is frivolous so our leisure activities are focused around her interests. We go to Hopcoms [a vegetable shop] or Foodworld [a supermarket]. We have some common interests: we both like exhibitions so we do things like that. I don't tend to invite people home or throw parties because I think it will burden her so I think social life with my peers is reduced.*
> Anupama, 32, Manager, Mother

Food is often used as medium for expressing respect and affection (DeVault, 1999: 54).[100] Swati insists that the day's menu should be planned around what her father-in-law and daughter would enjoy rather than her own tastes while Savita refuses to tell her mother-in-law what she would like to eat but eats whatever has been cooked for the rest of the family to indicate her gratitude to her mother-in-law for taking over the major share of housework. Similarly Beena substitutes processed foods with a cooked breakfast when in-laws visit: *'they know you are not doing this on a daily basis but out of a sense of regard you go an extra mile.'*

In addition, women service the debt through adherence to traditional norms and practices: observing fasts and rituals and religious duties, preparing special foods, visiting temples, dressing traditionally. By deferring to their in-

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[100] However, food and drink can also be used to indicate rebellion against norms or individualism. Geetika recounts how her neighbours who live in strictly vegetarian Brahmin households requested her to serve them non-vegetarian food and alcohol at a ladies' lunch so that they could taste what was taboo in their homes.

laws' traditional lifestyles, women convey their gratitude for the support they receive. Compare these two comments from Swati's account:

> *I wear only salwaar kameez or saris in front of them ...not*
> *Western clothes and back home I cover my head with my sari.*
> *They feel happy when the neighbours come and see a daughter-*
> *in-law who is following the traditions.*
> Swati, 35, Manager, Mother of one

> *I never hide these things from my in-laws that I wear Western*
> *[clothes]. It is always there in my cupboard. It is there*
> *meaning she is wearing it. She is wearing but she is not*
> *wearing in front of us is a respect for them.*
> Swati, 35, Manager, Mother of one

It is not as if the older generation is unaware of Swati's Western clothes or Anjana's occasional drink at the pub with friends. By being discrete about their lifestyles women are not attempting to deceive their parents and in-laws but are indicating their deference for the latter's values. This deference may require women to underplay the individualism and self-assurance that they display in the workplace and perform the identity of a compliant daughter or daughter-in-law.

> *My parents feel it is their right to know where I am, with whom I*
> *am what I am doing ...when I decided to meet you today I had to*
> *tell them who you are, what you are doing, why this research is*
> *important. I said she is my friend's friend. She needs two*
> *hours... I have to give a lot of justifications. With my husband, I*
> *just say, 'I am going with Nima's cousin,' it doesn't make a*
> *difference. My friends say, 'Why do you need to justify yourself*
> *so much?' but it hurts them if I don't tell them all the details.*
> Anjana, 33, Manager, Mother

Other parts of Anjana's account indicate that she is an independent and self-assured woman who is capable of making her own decisions irrespective of the approval of others. But by seeking her parents' approval and acceptance of her decisions she is making two related gestures: she is reassuring them that her success has not gone to her head and she is showing her respect, gratitude and

consideration towards them by performing her identity as an obedient daughter thereby increasing their honour and respectability in the community and kin-group within whose gaze her relationship with them is conducted. By changing their identity to suit the situation, women ensure their continued presence in both the home and the workplace.

Using Hochschild's definition it may be understood that work done on the self to cope with the stress of daily life or with specific forms of sexism, inequality and harassment that women face in the workplace, home or community as well as unpaid, intangible, work done within the family to preserve the tenor of family life, engage with other family members and ensure their psychological wellbeing are emotional work, while work done in the market (e.g. with colleagues or clients) is emotional labour because it is exchanged for a wage. However, the emotional work of respecting, honouring and showing consideration for parents and in-laws to reciprocate and acknowledge their support in childcare and housework has exchange value in that it enables them to earn a wage in the market. Although this work happens in a private context and without calculating its monetary value (in fact participants would consider doing so highly mercenary and demeaning), it can be indirectly exchanged for a wage.[101] Within the context of the reciprocal Indian kinship system, certain forms of emotional work may be defined as labour since they enable women to continue in paid employment.

6.7 Conclusion

The transnational IT industry espouses the ethos of gender sensitivity and offers a variety of strategies of work-life balance to women. However, the industry's position in the transnational economy does not allow it to fully realise this ethos in the day-to-day organisation of work. Flexibility in terms of where and when to work allows managers and clients to contact employees outside of regular working hours, at home and even when they are on holiday. Given their

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[101] While I make this argument with regard to Indian women employed in multinational companies, this idea could potentially be extended to employed women in other cultures as well.

position in the global economy Indian IT workers are unable to resist these demands on their time, a negative consequence of Giddens's (1991) notion of 'time space distanciation'.

The rhetoric of work-life balance is often undermined by the need for profit in a globally competitive market. Even when work-life balance strategies are offered to women employees, their implementation is not always straightforward. Women who choose to work from home may actually work much longer hours than those in the office but their work, like housework, is potentially rendered invisible and thereby goes unaccounted when they compete for rewards, promotions and higher remuneration. The most popular of work-life balance strategies, tele-working remotely from home, is ironically available to women whose support networks are the strongest i.e. their families are already highly supportive of their careers and willing to allow them the time and privacy to work from home. Alternatively they are in a position to afford full-time domestic help or homes large enough to allow quiet and privacy. Women whose families are less supportive of their careers, who nevertheless remain in the workplace for financial and personal reasons may not be able to make use of tele-working facilities due to their domestic situations or the nature of their jobs may not allow this option (for instance they may be secretaries supporting individual managers). The industry's discourses of flexibility, choice and individualism, which is part of the larger discourse of the late-modern period, masks how the workplace and the home compete for women's time and energy causing frustration, guilt, anxiety and a feeling of being torn apart.

In order to perform their identities as individualized workers in the transnational economy, women need to mobilize support in the home by invoking the principles of reciprocity within the kinship system. However in doing so they incur a debt of time and care which then needs to be serviced. In attempting to perform their identities as individualized workers in the workplace women

perform[102] a variety of identities within the home: the dutiful and obedient daughter, the loving mother, the understanding wife and the smart yet traditional daughter-in-law. How they construct these identities in relation to prevailing discourses, and within the gaze of the family and community will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[102] The term 'perform' does not indicate deception, rather the conscious construction of one identity rather than the other, in relationship with other people.

Chapter 7

Shifting and Relational Selves:

Narratives of Self-Identity

> When research participants engage in the practice of story-
> telling, they do so because narrating has effects in social
> interaction that other modes of communication do not; what the
> narrative accomplishes can become a point of entry for the
> narrative analyst. Most obviously, individuals and groups
> construct identities through storytelling. Yuval-Davis develops
> the point: "Identities are narratives, stories people tell
> themselves and to others about who they are (and who they are
> not)." But "the identity is fluid, "always producing itself
> through the combined processes of being and becoming,
> belonging and longing to belong. This duality is often reflected
> in narratives of identity."
> Yuval Davis, 2006:201 in Andrews, 2007:9 in Riessman, 2008:7-8

In this chapter I examine how participants create narratives of self-

identity; I mainly am concerned with their selfhood or subjectivity i.e. their

personal identities although I also examine the dialectical relationship between

their social and personal identities (Parekh, 2008). The recent popularity of the

term narrative in academic and non-academic has the disturbing effect, (for

narrative analysts) of its coming to signify almost any type of text or utterance

(Riessman, 2008). In a bid to create some boundaries around the concept

Riessman distils the following characteristics of narratives from the various

definitions given across disciplines: they consist of 'a sequenced storyline,

specific characters , and the particulars of a setting,'; they are 'contingent

sequences which "demand the consequential linking of events of ideas...imposing

a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected"' and

in the disciplines of psychology and sociology they are 'extended accounts of

lives in context that develop over the course of a single or multiple research interviews', (quoting Salmon, forthcoming, Riessman, 2008:5-6).

Given this loosely structured definition can my participants' accounts be defined as narratives? I would argue that while all of their accounts were not narratives (when they were commenting on company policies or describing their work or home situations they were answering questions), the narrative of self broke through (as Riessman, 2008 implies) both voluntarily and involuntarily, and with my participating as co-creator and 'coaxer' (Plummer, 2001). This tendency was particularly evident in the way some participants would lapse into 'career narratives' reminiscent of job interviews: 'I took up 'x' job and accomplished 'y' after which I wanted to change to 'z' because of 't'' or personal narratives of 'I took decision 'a' because of I am a person of type 'b'' what Parekh (2008) describes as the moral or ontological responsibility for choices. Such narratives represent a subjective sense of self or a narrative of self-identity.

The reason for this tendency partly may be attributed to the nature of the questions I asked, which encouraged reminiscing and asked for illustrative anecdotes and accounts of why participants took certain decisions or made specific choices. It may also be attribued to what Riessman calls the 'cult of "the self" as a project in modernity' (2008:7); the more individuals are thrown on their own resources and required to create their own biographies through a series of choices, the more they tend to construct a narrative of self – a sequenced story of how I came to be who I am. Given their embeddedness in the late modern globalized world my participants are frequently exposed to this type of 'self-making' through telling stories.

Identities are rarely fixed (Parekh, 2008) and the self that emerged in my interview was 'true for the moment'; it emerged in response to the questions I asked and the way I asked them, individuals' current circumstances and the challenges they were facing at the time. Two years afterwards, the same stories

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may not be told, the same selves may not emerge. This does not mean that the stories lack authenticity, but it points to the shifting and contingent nature of self-identity (Parekh, 2008; Jackson, 2008). While at any given moment the self is experienced as real and concrete it alters over time and changes in context.

Individual narratives of self- identity draw on public cultural narratives (discourses in the Foucaludian sense) to create an identity that is both a work-in-progress as well as 'holistic' and complete at a given moment (Plummer, 2001). By their omnipresence in popular culture, in religious dictates, in the texts and talk of 'experts': priests, psychologists, writers, parents and elders of the community discourses exert power over individuals (McNay, 1992) and help them to create a narrative of self. However, it is not a power that is submitted to passively. Individuals attempt to 'make sense' of these discourses in their narratives, accepting, discarding and modifying elements of the discourse to create a self-identity. Arguing from the interactionist perspective of Jackson (2008) and Adams (2003) it may be said that the discourse becomes a cultural resource that individuals actively draw on and thereby modify in their self-creation rather than an external entity that positions individuals in one way or another.

I have found two discourses to be recurrent in the accounts of my participants. The first of these is the 'neo-nationalist' discourse of 'women as both bearers of tradition and symbols of "good" respectable modernity' (Thapan 2004: 415-416; Sunder Rajan, 993). The historical evolution of the neo-nationalist discourse has been discussed in Chapter 1; several elements of this discourse are strongly evident in participant's accounts although it has acquired certain new dimensions for women in the transnational IT industry. However, another, new discourse is also emerging in women's accounts: that of individual choice and responsibility.

I would argue that the notion of individual choice and responsibility constitutes a discourse:[103] it is a way of explaining and ordering the material world of globalizing India and the transnational workplace. Meritocracy is one aspect of the discourse, the pursuit of professional success is another, self-improvement is a third. These ideas are present in the ethos of transnational IT companies (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006) and supported by some of their practices: for instance the emphasis on training and development within IT companies, the pressure on individual employees to take responsibility for their own careers and the responsibility of finding the individual solutions for work-life balance. It is evident in Bagchi's (2007) argument that women need to decide if they want to be homemakers or professionals and then 'be at peace' with their choice.[104]

I begin this chapter by describing some important elements of the two discourses using examples from the accounts of individual participants. I examine how the discourses reinforce or contradict each other. I also give examples of how women attempt to challenge the discourses or live beyond them. I then analyse the accounts of four of the participants in the research in an attempt to suggest the self-identity that emerged within the interview. The four women differ in terms of age, position in the hierarchy, orientation to paid work and life-stage; they are not representative of all the 26 women I interviewed but they mobilize the two dominant discourses in different ways to create a narrative of

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[103] The notion of individual choice and responsibility holds the individual accountable for his/ her circumstances, and does not take into account the structural conditions that created those circumstances in the first place.

[104] In addition to the transnational workplace, the discourse of individual choice entered India through the audio-visual and print media, (mostly American) self-help literature and the ethos of the multi-national workplace. With the launch of satellite television in the 1990s middle class women encountered a variety of American soaps, sitcoms and television serials whose female protagonists espoused values of career orientation, sexual openness and independence from family. The American women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* was launched in India in the mid nineteen nineties with the strap line 'Honest, Sexy, Smart: Are You Up To It'. The price of the magazine and editorial line indicated that it was targeted to upper middle class/ economically independent women but it had an impact on the editorial line and design of the established English language women's magazines in India which addressed a wider audience: *Femina*, *Savvy* and *Women's Era* which re-launched themselves to compete with the foreign glossy. In addition to fashion and glamour, the women's magazines now devoted space to professional and financial concerns, intimacy, lifestyle and travel. While it is unlikely that Indian women absorbed the values represented in the global media uncritically, it did give them alternative choices for identity construction.

self. I discuss the tension between individualism and collectivism in their narratives of self and the manner in which the two tendencies influence each other. The relationship between these two tendencies will be taken up again in the conclusion of the thesis.[105]

Participant's selves are constructed in a variety of contexts; this thesis is broadly concerned with two such contexts the family and the workplace which have contradictory expectations of women. Women's self-identities shift from one context to another in relation to the constraints and expectations of each. However, even within one context such as the family, identity is constructed differently depending on which family members women are interacting with: their parents/in-laws/ extended family and husband. Their families, colleagues, friends and 'significant others' participate in this construction of self so that what emerges is a co-constructed identity (Parekh, 2008; Plummer, 2001:44). Their sense of self is influenced by the social identities available to them and selecting one over the other may not always be a matter of free choice (Parekh, 2008; Jackson, 2008). In analysing women's narratives I attempt to throw light on how others are involved in co-constructing their identities.

7.1 The Neo-Nationalist Discourse Revisited

The neo-nationalist discourse of the new Indian woman arose in conjunction with economic liberalization; under this discourse women are encouraged to pursue higher education, build their careers and participate in professional and public life, while continuing their commitment to home and

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[105] I engage in thematic narrative analysis: analysing what was said within women's accounts rather than the manner in which the narrative was structured (Riessmann, 2008). The term narrative is used here to indicate a temporally ordered 'storied account' of 'who I am'. While my interview did not follow a sequential order from childhood to the present moment, I did encourage women to make comparisons with childhood or to reflect on how their careers/ lives evolved. In some cases such storied accounts emerged without my prompting. The narrative is of self is not always presented in a sequential form, rather I attempt to analyse what the story says about women's sense of self. Reissmann argues that narratives usually attempt to create a pattern that shows coherence between disparate events. Women attempted to create such a pattern- to construct a self that 'made sense' with me, the interviewer/ coaxer of the narrative

family, particularly to children. This discourse co-opts the vocabulary of feminism equating women's 'freedom' with professional and educational choices (within prescribed limits), financial independence and consequent power of consumption. The 'new' Indian woman portrayed in advertising is 'attractive, educated, hardworking and socially aware ...having a family of the right size and constitution (two children, invariably one boy and one girl) ... [and] exercises her autonomy – her education, her earnings – on behalf of her family's well being' (Sunder Rajan, 1993:131).

Under this discourse education continues to be valued for women, as it was under the nationalist discourse; in addition, paid employment and financial independence are also considered important. Women are given a measure of autonomy, perhaps encouraged to participate more actively in choosing a partner, but are still seen as the bearers of the nation's and family's honour. The chastity of women and their unstinting devotion is believed to sustain the family (Poggendorf-Kakar, 2001). The selective incorporation of elements of modernity into constructions of ideal Indian womanhood around an indestructible inner core of traditionalism (Thapan 2004) indicates the continuity with the 19th century nationalist discourse. While the idea of a companionate marriage is still upheld, now both education and work are valued in providing intelligent companionship to men.

> *I've seen the same world, I've been in the same field so I*
> *can understand his work timings. But suppose I had no*
> *idea of how that world is – let's assume I'm not even*
> *educated and I get married and I see my husband comes*
> *home only at ten. Then he locks himself in the room and*
> *he's always on a call. The whole night he's working and in*
> *the morning again he's off. It would've been difficult to*
> *digest.*
> Malini, 33, Presently not in paid employment (resigned as
> manager), Mother

Somewhere I understand his stresses more because I am at
the workplace and am answerable to someone. So I can
appreciate the fact that he's also got work related stress.
There are days when we're both stressed and it becomes a
very pressure cooker like situation, but we are able to
appreciate what the other person is going through. You're
able to connect better because of that...much better than
my father and mother were able to connect because she
wasn't earning. ... I think your husband values you a little
more intellectually as an equal person because you have
your own occupation.
Anita, 32, Manager, Mother

Just as an educated woman was believed to be a more suitable companion to her husband in the nationalist period, so a 'working woman' is valued for her intelligence, understanding and ability to empathise with a man's concerns in the era of globalization. While Malini values her (previous) work experience for the insight it gives her into her husband's work pressures and her ability to accept his non-availability, Anita indicates that the common experience of facing workplace stress draw her and her husband closer as companions and equal partners. The neo-nationalist discourse redefines companionship to include shared experiences of the outside world.

The increasing egalitarianism between husband and wife[106] provides positive role models for children to emulate and increases a woman's esteem in family, especially in the eyes of her children as Nalini argues with regard to her son: *'His respect for women will increase. He will say, "Yes, there is a voice for my mother also in the home. She takes decision with my father."'* Thus paid employment not only enhances a woman's role as a companion to her husband but also enables her to provide her children with a more 'rational' and progressive upbringing.

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[106] However, the bourgeois ideal of the nuclear family home as the site of domestic happiness and marital bliss was built around the model of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker as I have argued in Chapter 6. When both spouses are bringing home the stress of the workplace, when paid work enters the home, the *'pressure cooker like situation'* belies the idea of peaceful domesticity. Women struggle to maintain this idyllic atmosphere feeling guilty and anxious when they fail to do so.

While the neo-nationalist discourse emphasizes the significance of work in a woman's identity, it also contains strict codes of behaviour in the workplace. Women attempt to work as equals with male colleagues dealing with gender bias with tact, approachability and firmness, preserving a dignified and modest demeanour to avoid unwelcome attention. A delicate balance of propriety and approachability is required to overcome potential hostility.

Rupa   *The way you carry yourself makes a lot of difference Eh the kind if impressions that people arrive at about you will determine the way they will respond to you.*

Jyothsna *When you say, 'carry yourself' – I know it's quite an intangible thing but if you can put it into words?*

Rupa   *You carry yourself in a sensible dignified manner and – eh if your work speaks for yourself it shouldn't really make a difference.*

Jyothsna *But what is a sensible manner?*

Rupa   *The way you dress, wearing a loud jazzy kind of colour or a short skirt and a plunging neckline; the way you communicate with people there are people who get too friendly with colleagues ... people take as much liberty with you as you give them. So if you're talking to a colleague and you ask too many personal questions or generally making loose statements or cracking all kinds of jokes and things like that, that gives people a lot of liberty. You have to choose whom you give this liberty and to whom you don't.*

Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

I look eye to eye – maintain eye contact and show complete professionalism. With my boss also we discuss all these issues [of sexual harassment] together. I never show my shyness; it's part of life. I am very, very firm. Many people told me that you really bifurcate [between professional and personal] things. When I talk to you, I can demarcate when it's professional I should talk to Nalini and when it is personal only to this level I can talk to her. 'How is your family? How are your kids?' That is all.

Nalini, 37, Manager, Mother

Like the nationalist discourse, which emphasized 'culturally visible 'spiritual' qualities in a woman's dress, eating habits, social demeanour and religiosity' (Chatterjee 1989:247-248), the neo-nationalist discourse underlines the importance of visible markers of appropriate modernity in public including modest dress and demeanour and the ability to mingle with men socially and professionally while maintaining clear boundaries. Nalini's remarks conform to the notion of 'smartness' as being 'the opposite of shyness in unwanted places' combined with a distant civility (Tokita-Tanabe, 2003: 174).

The neo-nationalist discourse continues to entrust women, especially married women and mothers with the duty of preserving and transmitting tradition. However many women exercise choice in terms of which traditions to follow and how to follow them. Participants, particularly those from the old middle class who have grown up in multicultural and multi-religious neighbourhoods, do not restrict themselves to the festivals of their particular caste or linguistic group but celebrate whatever festivals appeal to them, focussing on the celebration rather than strict adherence to rituals and avoiding customs that seem superstitious or exclusive:

> *The moment my kid was born, I wanted to know what each occasion and what are the dishes you want to make, the story behind it. I had a four month old baby and in the middle of the night I was making besan ka laddoo which was getting burnt. I don't know what it was but I wanted to pass on all those— It's because all the festivities were associated with so much joy and fun, I wanted her to have the same experience... It was not just our festivals, I wanted to celebrate Christmas. My husband thought I was mad, coming back at 8 o'clock from work wondering where I could get a good Christmas tree.*
> Anjali, 32, Manager, Mother

> *We actually had this function for my daughter's birthday. My mother-in-law has a sister who became a widow last year, so my mother-in-law asked me, 'Do you have a problem with her coming?' because usually they don't allow widows to come [to ritual occasions] especially in the first year [after widowhood]. She said, 'I don't have a problem but I wanted to ask you.' I said [that] I don't have a problem, why exclude somebody.*
> Jyothi, 29, Executive, Mother

Since married women are seen as having fulfilled their traditional gendered role in becoming wives, daughters-in-law and mothers, they have an advantage over single women in that they are usually protected from harassment in public spaces (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). Given the emphasis that the neo-nationalist discourse continues to put on women's traditional roles, marriage and motherhood add a dimension of respectability and strength to their identities (Kakar, 1988). Shreela argues that on getting married, women see a *'remarkable progress in their careers'*. This progress may be attributed to their capacity to engage fully in their professional roles with little fear of unwelcome attention from male colleagues. Since many women wear visible signs of marriage (toe-rings, *mangal-sutra* – the married woman's necklace and vermilion) their married status is easily proclaimed leaving those without signs of marriage vulnerable.

The neo-nationalist discourse continues to uphold the significance of a woman's collectivist commitments, therefore her individual professional success is a matter of pride not only to herself, but the entire family: parents, siblings, spouse and in-laws (Shenoy, 2003; Liddle and Joshi, 1986). The family's prestige is enhanced by the professional status of their women. Moreover, a woman's earnings are important to the financial security and lifestyle of the family, and the educational opportunities of her children. Thus her individualism and individual ambition 'functions for the social good' (Sunder Rajan, 1993:195).

7.2 The Discourse of Individual Choice and Responsibility

As I have argued in Chapter 2, following Jackson (2008) and Adams (2003), Giddens's notion that each individual is free to construct their self-identity through a series of choices is a characteristic (Westernized) late-modern society. Thus individual choice and responsibility are not a feature of late modernity but a discourse that makes the planning of one's life-course and the construction of one's self-identity a cultural imperative. Within this discourse, each individual has a responsibility to herself to create 'a life of one's own' (Beck and Beck Gernsheim 2001:22). To quote Bauman again, 'refusal to participate in the

individualizing game is emphatically not on the agenda,' (2000:34) so each individual needs to make choices and take responsibility for the consequences. The individual is not an autonomous being who is reflexively constructing her self-identity; she is engaged in a socially constituted reflexivity which encourages her to view herself as responsible for her fate and not as a puppet of circumstances. This discourse does not account for the constraints imposed by structural and normative factors. Even when such constraints occur the individual is encouraged to believe that she can overcome them through the effective implementation of choice. Since choices are not seen to be socially embedded, the responsibility for facing the consequences of those choices falls squarely on the individual.

However, women's choices and associated responsibilities are often in conflict due to conflicting expectations of culture. Given the plurality of identities that individual women have, they can never be made without a sense of ambivalence, nor are they ever 'final'. The discourse of individual choice and responsibility indicates that the right blend of choices will lead to success in familial and professional life. However, this 'right blend' is so delicate a balance that it is rarely achieved and few of the participants claim to be happy with their current blend of choices. Those who do, such as Geetika and Nalini, have chosen to limit their professional ambitions in favour of family responsibilities. The discourse of individual choice can put a high degree of pressure on women as it does not allow them to 'fail' on any front: domestic, professional or personal. The notion of responsibility is deeply embedded in women's accounts: responsibilities to themselves, to their children, husbands, parents and in-laws.

> Swarna *I leave the house at six thirty in the morning as soon as my son wakes up and he sleeps at seven thirty in the evening so if I don't go home at five thirty, I haven't seen him the whole day. You feel, 'Is it worth it?' But spend one day at home [and] you realize, ' I can't do this.' I've educated myself and I enjoy—*

Anjali   There's a lot more you can do with your—

*Swarna   And I'm so passionate about what I do.   I just love
            what I do, so why not?*
Swarna, 31, Manager, Mother; Anjali, 30, Manager, Mother

In addition to the conflict between the responsibility she feels towards herself to realise the investment of time, money and effort in her education and her responsibility to her son, Swarna's remarks indicate a conflict between her need for self-actualization through her work and her need to be available to her son and enjoy motherhood. The notion that each aspect of one's life is a means of self-expression is part of the discourse of individual choice (recall from Chapter 5 Savita's remarks on the need to be *'something beyond a mother being married'* which she describes using the Hindi word for identity: *astitva)*. The career becomes part of the individual's attempts to create a meaningful self-identity, to answer the question: 'who am I?' However, motherhood is also perceived as a means of self-expression, a choice and a joy. Therefore women are called upon to make a choice between self-expression through motherhood and self-expression through a career – unlike men whose responsibilities as fathers and providers correspond with their pursuit of professional success and financial stability.

With individual choice comes responsibility and this responsibility is greater if the choice has been made against parental advice. Women who marry against parental advice and wishes experience a fair amount of stress and feel a strong responsibility to make a success of the marriage (see Chapter 4). However, even when choices are made within current cultural expectations such as having children within a few years of marriage, women construct them as an individual decision and therefore an individual responsibility.

*I try and do the maximum justice to my work and my child... simply
because I think I should earn my living if the company are paying me
and I should do justice to my daughter, because I made a decision to
have a child, so it's not dictated by anything or anyone else but
primarily by what I feel.*
Anjali, 30, Manager, Mother

Anjali's choice to have a child may have been influenced by cultural norms regarding the 'right' age for motherhood and the expectations of the extended family, and occurred with the concurrence of her husband. However, *she* conceptualizes it as an agential decision. This puts the responsibility for the child's well-being almost completely on her shoulders, constructing the involvement of the child's grandparents and father as a favour rather than a shared responsibility. Thus the discourse of individual choice and responsibility, instead of emancipating women from normative and structural constraints further embeds them within the family in addition to increasing their guilt and anxiety.

Williams argues that this is partly because of the transition 'from status to affect' in defining gender roles in contemporary marriage partnerships: wives are no longer bound to comply with husbands due to inferior status. In the modern 'egalitarian' marriage, decisions are taken from the point of view of what's best for everyone's (but especially children's) emotional wellbeing. Thus women may 'choose' fulltime motherhood or part-time work as the best option for their families' happiness and to meet their own emotional needs as wives and mothers. Her arguments may be extended to other family relationships as well: as daughters and daughters-in-law women may no longer have an inferior status within the family, however they choose to defer to elders out of affection and respect. This behaviour is part of their patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988): the exchange of compliance for protection and respect within the contemporary middle class Indian family, however it is expressed in the vocabulary of individual choice (see Anjali's and Swarna's exchange on *'a typical daughter-in-law'* in Chapter 4).

Giddens's (1991) notion of the individual as a free agent making reflexive choices in creating her own biography in a de-traditionalized environment is contradicted by the reality of my participants' lives. While it may be argued, following Adkins (2004), that they are 'reflexivity's losers' I would claim that they suffer certain losses while gaining certain victories. By entering paid employment women gain access

to new avenues for constructing their self-identities beyond the strictly bounded positions within the family. Paid employment creates the means for self-actualization and financial independence which in turn give them greater confidence and wins them greater esteem within their families and communities. However, they also become caught up in the challenges that employed women face across cultures: the conflict between home and the workplace (Pocock, 2003; Posner, 1992), the guilt related to children, the 'time famine' (Hochschild, 1997:199) and the possibility of exploitation and harassment (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). As Indian women they also face the challenge of reconciling traditional discourses which position them within the home and underscore their collectivist identities with the individualist expectations of the globalized workplace. The relationship between the two discourses is a complex one: overtly the individualism of one contradicts the collectivist nature of the other; however, they can also reinforce each other from time to time. When the discourse of individual choice and responsibility is interpreted by women in the collectivist context of Indian kinship systems, they find collectivist ways of being individualist.

7.3 The Interplay of Individualism and Neo-Nationalism

The conflict between the two discourses is most evident in the dilemma between living for others and living a life of one's own (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), as Swarna's remarks on the choice between work and being at home for her son indicate. Women not only have the choice to live a life of their own, the late-modern period creates an expectation that they will do so. At the same time, they also feel the pressure to be available for their children. In the following remarks, Geetika indicates that she has a 'selfish need to have a career' as well as 'a selfish need to be there for her children'.

> *Geetika*   *I'm happier when I'm at work and making a*
> *contribution to society in some way and that whole*
> *thing of being independent and having a salary*
> *coming and the – just the whole feeling of doing*
> *something for myself that makes me happy. So if*
> *I'm happy then my family is happy. ...Sitting at*
> *home just doing the day to day stuff, it was just... I*

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think it was just very tough. ...But having seen both sides I say, 'Definitely hats off to all the women who only sacrifice their own,'— I think it's a big sacrifice to sacrifice their own life and just be a mom and a good wife... I couldn't do it for too long. It's also a little selfish where I feel I must have my own friends and I must have my own life other than what I'm doing for my children and my husband and family. So to me it's also sort of escapist kind of thing. To me this is my life and it's my need to satisfy my own selfish needs. Of course I also want to contribute to my family where I say that where there's one more income coming in we have a better quality of life but that may not necessarily be true because touch wood and thank God my husband is earning well. ...I've taken up something where I work from Monday to Friday. I have the flexibility to work from home if required and I don't work in shifts. I don't have to travel as of now and I don't work on weekends so I'm selfish on that front and eh- If these opportunities come up when my kids are small I may not take them. I want to have a career but I have some terms and conditions attached to it.

Jyothsna   *You used the word selfish in two contexts – you said, 'I'm selfish, I want a life on my own, I want a career not just family,' and then you said, 'I'm selfish, I don't want to travel or work on weekends.' Why does the word selfish come to mind?*

Geetika   *Interesting that you asked me this... I think that would be in comparison with my own mother and my mother in law or maybe my mother-in-law more because my mother has also had a life of her own. ...While I see a lot of women in my workplace here, I also go back home where I am living in a complex which has eighty apartments. I think out of all the families that are there, there are just three or four women that are working. All the other women are at home with their kids. I don't know why. They're capable, they're intelligent, all of them are educated. There are couple of them who have great IT backgrounds and have worked before but have just stopped working after their kids were born or after they got married, I don't know why. I don't know I'm also human. There lot of areas where I'm*

*may have a pang of guilt sometimes especially
where there are areas where something goes wrong,
where one of them falls sick – one of my children
falls sick or gets hurt while playing in the park or
whatever, then I'll probably have a momentary
feeling of, 'Oh, I should have been around.'*

Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) argue that dilemmas that women such as Geetika are a result of 'incomplete individualization'; while this may be true, I would argue that there is no indication that my participants are moving towards 'complete individualization'. They are caught between conflicting expectations and subjective pressures to perform adequately in both spheres. Unlike men whose familial role of being a breadwinner complements their quest for professional success, women's professional success comes at a cost to their familial responsibilities and vice versa. Through the industrial period men have been able to depend on the domestic labour of their wives to allow them to perform adequately in the workplace; women have to depend on the domestic labour of other women (hired help or family members) if they want to succeed in paid employment. Unlike the marriage contract which presupposes the sexual division of labour, the contract between two generations of women in the same family cannot be taken for granted; it needs to be negotiated with tact and diplomacy and is contingent on the reciprocity of care. Thus to create the conditions in which they can live 'a life of one's own' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), women paradoxically are called upon to live for others.

The two discourses may also reinforce each other as in the case of motherhood. While the neo-nationalist discourse valorises motherhood as a sacred patriotic duty, for which women must be prepared via education and modernization, the discourse of individualism makes parenting into a highly demanding project (Beck and Beck-Gernheim, 1995). For instance Malini treats parenting as a fine-tuned performance with each hour of the day accounted for: play, nap-time, mealtimes, exercise and reading. Her account implies that having

given up her career for motherhood she attempts to justify her presence at home by performing her duties as a mother to perfection and transferring project managerial skills from the workplace to the home. This sense of responsibility is shared by other mothers such as Anita and Maya who are also influenced by the ideologies of motherhood (Hatterly 2001:18). In Chapter 4 I argued that the late-modern ideas on child development put very high stress on mothers since they take the primary responsibility for 'project child' (and consequently the blame for 'project failure'). Their anxiety and guilt is exacerbated by the discourse of individualism which conceptualizes childbirth as a personal decision, thereby eroding the responsibility of the father and the extended family.

Another instance of how the two discourses interact is in the connection between the pursuit of individual financial security and a better life for the family on the one hand and pride in India's technological and economic progress on the other. This pride is evident in the notion of 'India shining'[107] (and 'me' shining within), the idea that India has 'acquired its rightful place' on the global stage via policies of economic liberalization. This notion tends to be more prominent in the accounts of women below thirty whose professional experiences and life experiences have not led them to examine the negative consequences of an uncontrolled economic boom and the related value of individualism (women over thirty tend to be more ambivalent about changing values and concerned that the boom might not last).

> *I was driving through the tech-park that is behind the Hewlett Packard office where the Dell and Microsoft Offices are ...It was so good that it was a carbon copy of the Dubai Internet City – if you've ever seen a picture – ditto like that. That's when I felt let's forget the traffic, let's forget the [lack of] infrastructure and everything, India's got that global feel.*
> Nitya, 27, Manager, Married

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[107] This slogan was used by the Bharatya Janata Party, the then ruling party during the 2004 general elections to emphasise their contribution towards the country's prosperity and progress; it became a watchword for those who supported the idea that India has acquired its rightful place amongst the world's fastest growing economies as well as an ironical catch phrase for those who argue that the nation is still deeply divided in economic and developmental terms.

The self-perception of the middle classes as having the moral authority and responsibility to envision the nation's future can be traced to its leadership of the nationalist movement (Varma, 1998; Favero 2005; see Chapter 1). In the contemporary period of globalization, the 'India shining' notion is part of the 'self-congratulatory rhetoric' (Varma, 1998) of the middle classes: national pride associated with the idea that their talents are finally receiving recognition and that they can now fulfil their potential and acquire the lifestyles they have always aspired to at home instead of emigrating aboard.

> *We have emigration papers for Canada lying there and our*
> *passports – we're not interested. This is the happening place.*
> *We're not moving, no way. Yes, if this thing wouldn't have*
> *happened, we'd have moved to where we can use our potential*
> *to the maximum and then may be come back again and served*
> *the country, I don't know. But for sometime at least, for the*
> *kids, I would have taken that step. It gets very frustrating – if*
> *the boundaries wouldn't have shrunk we'd have crossed them.*
> Punita, 37, Manager, Mother

Varma (1998) argues economic liberalization has removed the last vestiges of middle class antipathy that Nehruvian Socialism created towards the unfettered aspiration for wealth and conspicuous consumption. The globalization rhetoric celebrates the Indian middle class's capacity to create wealth through consumption. As Punita indicates, patriotism can now easily be linked with an individual's pursuit of profit or a family's desire for a better life.

> *Swarna*   *I think somewhere else they may be thinking we're*
> *global now because we can reach India.[Laughter]*
>
> *Anjali*   *Eat Indian food and experience Indian culture; may be*
> *this is globalization for them.*
>
> *Jyothi*   *You're right. A sense of pride also comes with this.*
> *Probably the choice today somebody would make is,*
> *'I'd like to stay back in India' because I get lot more*
> *variety, meet the right people– the culture, the sense*
> *of pride that's crept in– it's amazing, really amazing.*
> Swarna, 31, Manager, Anjali, 31, Manager, Jyothi, 29, Executive,

Participants' pride in their Indian identity stems from India's new status as an emerging economy in contrast to the nationalist pride of the pre-independence period which was based on the idea of a glorious past. Today the middle class combines the 'ancient culture' rhetoric with a futuristic outlook, one that sees India emerging as a global power. Women become the embodiments of India's ability to take on the world while maintaining her traditions, the uniqueness her identity as a nation. Towards the end of one focus group I gave the participants a pile of magazines asking them to create a collage symbolizing contemporary Indian women. I left the room while they were at it, and when I returned they pointed to the caption in the centre:

Swarna   This is what I would like to believe about my country.

Punita   'Even the West calls it the best.' I think we can believe it
about Indian women also.
Punita, 37, Manager, Swarna, 31, Manager

7.4 The Influence of Social Identities on Personal (Self) Identity

Giddens's argument regarding the decreasing influence of the state, religion and community over individuals' sense of self is contradicted by participants' accounts. Not only do they take pride in their Indian identities, they also underscore their religious, regional, linguistic and caste identities although the term community is usually used in place of the politically loaded term caste.[108] For instance Shreela claimed *'my husband and I belong to different communities but we are from the same area'* rather than 'my husband is from a different caste': the latter remark might have indicated parochialism or bigotry. In instances of marriages across castes and communities women indicate that they follow the customs of both communities, however the extent to which the husband's communal identity is adopted varies and seems to be a matter of personal preference. Swarna who married outside her religious community continues to identify herself with the linguistic, regional and caste affiliations of her natal

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[108] However, community could also connote regional, linguistic or religious community.

family and celebrate associated religious festivals. Sumaiya who also married outside her religious group tends to follow her husband's religion, Hinduism but this is because she was educated in a Hindu school where she learnt Hindu customs and prayers rather than the insistence of her husband.

The three women from religious minorities, Sumaiya, Kanti and Cristina are much more explicit in claiming their religious identities than those from the majority Hindu community. Sumaiya who is married to a Hindu claims that although she follows Hindu customs she reads the Koran and thinks that '*Islam is a beautiful religion*' while both Kanti and Cristina make repeated references to their Christian faith and its significance in helping them face the challenges of daily life. This is unsurprising considering that their faith is an ever present indicator of difference both in the workplace and the wider community. For some women language is an important marker of identity; they argue that it is important for them that their children learn their mother tongue and are critical of those who do not take pride in the language.

> *I think language forms a very important part of cultural identity.*
> *We learnt English, Hindi at school and with friends you only*
> *speak English or Hindi so that's the way it is but there was*
> *always a lot of – Kannada is our mother tongue so there was a*
> *lot of emphasis on learning the language at home even when we*
> *were outside Bangalore which was fairly large – for quite some*
> *time. You know, that was the time when we were growing up*
> *and learning the use of language and at that time parents made*
> *it a point that we don't forget our mother tongue.*
> Rupa, 28, Manager, Married

However, pride in one's linguistic identity does not prevent women from trying to create cultural capital through improving their command over English. Those who did not have early exposure and access to English are particular that their children do not suffer the same disadvantage.

Nalini   *I like Kannada books – story books. I read Shivram Karanth.*

Jyothsna *What about your language?*

Nalini   *I speak Kannada with my husband. With my son I speak English more and Kannada. He is also comfortable in that but he speaks to his Papa in Kannada and with others – [my] in-laws [his] grannies, he speaks Kannada.*

Jyothsna *Is this a deliberate decision that he should speak Kannada with Papa and—*

Nalini   *My husband likes Kannada, he is sort of pro Kannadiga I can say. We should speak mother tongue and—*

Jyothsna *But your interest in the [Kannada] language also seems strong?*

Nalini   *It is very strong because till SSLC [equivalent examinations to O levels] I studied in Kannada medium and only in college I changed the medium so that could be the reason. Since I studied in Kannada medium I had little difficulties in my career also in expressing myself very clearly before others and communication difficulties. I never had it for my son to face that so that could be the reason why I was speaking to him in English. And now-a-days parents are well educated, they have – their language is good where they do in offices they do better in house to speak in English.*

Nalini, 37, Manager, Mother

In addition to specific caste and linguistic identities women also identify themselves as North or South Indian and distance themselves from women of the other region in creating their identities. Women from north India such as Geetika and Swati tend to position south Indians as more academic, less sociable, more conservative and less willing to experiment with 'modern'/ Westernized lifestyle choices, a positioning that the latter seem take pride in, as evident from Nalini's the remark below:

Yesterday I handled one sexual harassment case...It was with
one south Indian girl- the comparison I am making is with south
Indians and north Indians. Previously also I have come across
one sexual harassment of this girl who was from the north. She
was just out of the college but she was such a bold lady, she
immediately reported to management... the same day. While
this other south Indian girl I spoke with yesterday kept quiet for
six months because she was afraid that if she tells this to
someone else in the company it might give her a bad reputation
or they might say that she's cooperating with the guy. I felt like
the difference though they are bold and courageous, they go out
to work and all that still the conservativeness in our south
Indian girls, it still exists.
Nalini, 37, Manager, Mother

Nalini positions South Indians as conservative, reserved and traditional in spite of their outward modernity (Thapan, 2004). Her remarks are reminiscent of Favero's description of attempts at identity construction by middle class Indian men by continuously distancing themselves from upper classes, the poor, NRIs (non-resident Indians or diasporic Indians) the more conservative members of their own class, a process that he calls 'moralizing 'othering'' (2005:130). Like the men he interviewed, my participants constructed themselves as Indian, Punjabi, Tamilian, Bengali, North Indian or indicate that they are conservative, cosmopolitan, progressive or traditional as the situation demands. Geetika who identifies herself as North Indian and Punjabi, was brought up in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Mumbai and therefore distances herself from North Indian, Punjabi in-laws who are from Delhi; she describes them as conservative and traditional:

He was sure he would never get married to a small town girl.
Not that he found anything wrong in his mother. He adores her,
he worships, he is very close to her. But at the same time he
wanted somebody who was different. He wanted somebody who
can have a conversation with him when required and I'm sure
he didn't bargain for the fact that there would be so much of
arguments and so much of conversation but these are the things
that I feel drew me and him closer where he felt that I had got so
much of exposure at a young age and I had been brought up in
this cosmopolitan town where I had exposure to so many
communities in India. I speak so many different languages. I
can speak in Marathi, Gujrati, Sindhi, Hindi, Punjabi, having

*been brought up in Bombay [Mumbai]. Unfortunately Bombay
girls are known to be fast. I think that's very sad because that's
not true. I think it's really in terms of fast; may be we're more
exposed and more mature. Eh – I think that's misconstrued by
the north many times. Erhm – I think one of the reasons why he
married me was because I'm so different from his mother in
terms of exposure and in terms of family background.*
Geetika, 32, Manager, Mother

Geetika positions herself as both conservative and cosmopolitan (see her remarks on marriage in Chapter 4: '*When it comes to the institution of marriage I'm very traditional*'), modern and traditional, Punjabi but not like some Punjabis, choosing a social identity that is relevant to the current context. Favero uses of the metaphor of Trishanku the mythical king who remains suspended between heaven and hell to describe the tendency to adopt different identities for different occasions. However, this metaphor can be misleading as Trishanku is popularly used to indicate confusion or ambivalence; as Favero himself points out the tendency to give primacy to one identity over another is 'a statement of their capacity to view India [and themselves] from different angles rather than a sign of the ontological homelessness that supposedly characterizes the condition of (post) modernity. It is thus a statement of identity' (Favero, 2005: 147).

This capacity to view oneself from different angles does not create endless possibilities for identity construction. Individuals make agential choices from amongst the available options. Parekh (2008:21) argues that as individuals we have 'a plurality social identities', however some identities are more significant to the individual than others and one identity becomes primary in one context as opposed to the others. In constructing our self-identities we allow one or more social identity to exert more influence and to be more dominant.

7.5 Weaving Narratives of Identity: Four Case Studies

In this section I examine the identity narratives of four participants to investigate the manner in which they engage the neo-nationalist discourse and the discourse of individual choice and responsibility to create their identities. I examine the manner in which they carve out their identities through the process of 'moralizing othering' (Favero, 2005:130). I point out the apparent inconsistencies in their narratives which may indicate the plurality of their identities or may point to tensions between their individual selves and discourses.

The four women do not represent the diversity across the entire sample but occupy different positions with in the middle class. Thirty seven year old Nalini is a Seeker who is breaking into the Strivers category. Although born and brought up in Bangalore, she belongs to a family from the rural new middle class who converted their income from farming into cultural capital in the city and lives in one of the more conservative areas of the city. A Balancer in terms of her orientation to work she nevertheless takes pride in her many diplomas and professional accreditations.

Maya, is the same age as Nalini. A Striver who is breaking into the Global category, she had a metropolitan upbringing in Mumbai before moving to Bangalore in search of professional opportunities. Maya's cultural capital comes from her education in one of India's premier Human Resource Management Institutes, her parents' education and exposure to the global market (her father worked for a transnational company in the pre-globalization era). A Trailblazer in terms of her orientation to her work, she is highly motivated both by her own ambitions and the aspirations that her family have for her.

Hema is twenty six years old and a Seeker who has recently moved up from the Aspirers category by the dint of hard work. Like Nalini she resides in the more conservative section of the city. Brought up in a conservative lower middle class Brahmin family in Bangalore, she accumulated little cultural capital

until she entered the IT industry. However, she is now making an effort to acquire additional educational qualifications while also developing the 'soft skills' (aptitudes) required to succeed in the global market. Currently an Instrumentalist, she shows signs of becoming a Balancer or even a Trailblazer if her career plans are realised.

Nitya, a Striver who is poised to enter the Globals category, is twenty seven years old and belongs to an old middle class family based in Bangalore. Her cultural capital comes from her education in Bangalore and her parents' educational qualifications (both her parents have Masters' level degrees and are in paid employment). A Trailblazer, she is professionally highly ambitious, however, her recent marriage has prompted her to consider her personal priorities.

7.5.1 Nalini

> *Professionally, I have not achieved a very good level...*
> *financially it might not be much, but the status that I have,*
> *whatever I have achieved through my behaviour in the*
> *community, the respect that people give me in my*
> *community... it is very good.*

Nalini, 37, has been married since the age of 18. She has a 12 year old son and is a legal adviser (junior manager) within the human resources team of a multinational information technology company. Nalini describes herself as 'orthodox' (conservative), traditional and family oriented. Although she already has a Master's degree in social work and another Master's in business administration and is currently taking a degree in law she describes herself as *'not ambitious or career oriented'*. Yet, her current role seems to require a fair amount of responsibility. An active sports woman, she has participated in national level athletic competitions and regularly visits the gym. She attributes her *'high stamina'* [ability] to run the house, bring up her son, pursue a full time job and continue her further education to her training in sport. This assertion indicates her strong sense of agency and self-determination. Her remark above can be read in

many ways. At face value, it indicates a lack of 'material' success, but the rest of Nalini's narrative contains many references to her professional achievements and financial wellbeing. By indicating that she has '*not achieved a very good level*' she evokes humility and lack of materialism while simultaneously emphasizing her personal success which is represented by her reputation in the community.

> *I can be a good friend to my husband and I can be a good*
> *daughter-in-law to my in-laws, a good daughter to my parents.*
> *I am the beloved sister of my brothers. I connect with people.*
> *They feel I am very approachable. If they need any help*
> *financial or otherwise or for any problems, any issues they tell*
> *me. Many people have followed my ways.*

The cornerstone of Nalini's identity seems to be her success in maintaining family relationships and fulfilling family responsibilities. Work plays an important role in her life, but mainly as a way of enhancing and supporting her familial responsibilities: acting as a helpmate to her husband, bringing worldly wisdom and insights into the relationship and relieving him of some of his responsibilities as a breadwinner in a somewhat unstable economy; bringing up her son in a rapidly changing culture.

Her work enables her to make a contribution to her family's financial security, allowing her husband to make larger investments, take bigger financial risks and plan for their son's education (giving him a wider range of opportunities than his parents enjoyed). In discussing money, Nalini reveals the middle class values of future orientation and commitment to financial stability/ growth. She argues that money plays a '*parallel role to love and moral support*' between husband and wife. Seeming to contradict herself, she also underplays the family's need for her income with repeated comments such as '*I am from a financially sound background,*' or '*I don't need the money*', a common tendency in middle class families according to Liddle and Joshi (1986). This assertion also indicates that her husband is able to support her. The tension between her need to affirm her own contribution and maintain her husband's dignity and authority by

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declaring that he is '*the finance minister of the house*' as he has a better head for figures and '*no bad habits*' [spendthrift tendencies or addictions], indicates an overlap between two discourses: the individualist and the neo-nationalist.

When she argues that the exposure she gets to current issues through her work helps her to bring greater '*value addition*' to her son's education (see Chapter 5), it seems that Nalini's notions about parenting are embedded in the neo-nationalist discourse.   However, she is strongly influenced by the notion of the child as a project (Beck and Beck-Gernisheim, 1995):

Jyothsna   *What about the method of bringing up children?*

Nalini   *That is really changing. Sometimes I feel we discuss a lot in front of my son so that gives him lots of – he is aware of things that is happening at home and many times we ask his decision also. I think this open discussion at home may not be entertained in families where women are not working. I am not sure but I have seen all my sisters discussing before kids. For example, tomorrow I need to change my TV. My husband asks, 'Shall we go for a Sony LCD?' I said, 'LCD is very costly, we'll go for the other one: flat one.' We ask my son also. He will say, 'Mummy, we'll go for LCD only.' If it is in our budget we will go for it. So we take his opinion into consideration. Many times I fight with my husband. I feel that might be negatively affecting my kid. Then immediately I will speak with my kid. This was the reason I fought with him. Not for anything big. [It's not that] I'm not okay with him [his father]. I'll update him [my son] so that way he feels. 'If my parents fight also they had some reason to fight it out not for some silly reason.' Otherwise it will really have some wrong effect on their future life. That's what I read: that if parents fight with their kids later in their family life they won't speak at all with their partners. They could feel that is the negative. They treat it as a very negative thing. They don't want to continue in family life later.*

Jyothsna	*I think this is also a change now — we take lot of expert advice.*
Nalini	*Yeah, that's what I say. We browse through network [the Internet] and study. It gives lot of input to our family also. We can learn many things and implement it immediately. I never think that my mother asked my decision or anything. It was like we were one amongst the group. It was told to us [and] we were doing [what was told to us]. I think that independence was not there. Today my son being the lone kid or the exposure they are getting they can speak out for themselves. It's only through expertise the things we get from newspaper and TV or whatever.*

By treating her son as an equal member of the household, sharing information and taking his opinion into account, Nalini hopes to not only influence his development as an emotionally well adjusted human being but also to 'expose' him to new technology and new ideas and enhance his decision making skills. She is concerned about her son's nutrition, education, emotional wellbeing and development into a well-rounded individual (as indicated by the variety of after-school activities she plans for him).

In addition to her role as wife and mother, Nalini takes pains over her religious duties: observing religious festivals (especially those that involve prayers for the prosperity of the family), fasts, regular visits to temples and rituals within the home. She follows these in minute detail in spite of her professional responsibilities. In other words, her economic independence and identity as a professional have not diminished her traditional nature. Here her identity seems to indicate her conformity with the identification of women with the spiritual essence of home and nation.

Whatever we do outside the family, that's fine, but ultimately you have to come home and do something else for yourself and your family. Whatever we have brought from our mother's time, that should be continued. Like Sankranti festival (the new year). Many people sit at home and don't do this ellu bella

*[distributing a mixture of jaggery and neem leaves] but I
prepare everything one week in advance. The feel, you know, of
getting ready for the festival, I think that should be there in the
family. Otherwise, I don't see any challenge or excitement for
the family to get along or run. I really observe [follow] all the
festivals: Mahashivratri, Ugadi ...whatever my mother was
doing still I continue: weekly visit to temples, doing pooja
[rituals], meditations. I really want to continue that
atmosphere... when we are at home the atmosphere should be
very cool [peaceful].*

Her religiosity and desire to keep the peace do not prevent her from
asserting herself within or outside the home. Her remarks quoted in the earlier
section on the importance of eye contact and boldness indicates that she is
unafraid of asserting herself. She recounts various incidents when she had to use
both tact and firmness in dealing with factory workers, government inspectors and
colleagues accused of sexual harassment. She attributes her success in handling
these situations to her ability to remain decorous and dignified while standing by
her point of view. This decorum and dignity are the visible markers of her
spirituality and 'purity' which preserve her reputation and her virtue in the public
space (Chatterjee, 1989). The following response to the question 'how would you
define professionalism' indicates how professional competence, dignity,
assertiveness and chastity are inter-woven within her narrative.

*I tell you one incident how I behaved and how my colleague
behaved in the same atmosphere. I was very direct with people
very, very direct since it is a manufacturing unit I can't be
carrying bad image with people I am in HR and whatever I
speak people have to [want to] catch that out. If I carry a bad
image it will very difficult to run the company and to take these
people into confidence and deal with them. We had two
unions. It was very difficult so that was my approach so people
were scared to talk to be that if we say something to this lady
she will give it back she is so direct. But my colleague – she is
very timid – she was not showing people that she is tough she
wanted to be good to all. I really hated that. You should be
what you are. She had that incident that guy who showed her
pornography –another issue with a colleague where they
discussed all these family matters. That guy was married and
he had problems with his wife's delivery, so many issues. They*

were discussing these things you tend to discuss all personal
issues some things can spill out from that relationships – she
never shared anything but she was listening. After three, four,
five, six months this may come to you and he might say would
you like to have something with me – [it would be like] inviting
him to come forward with some advances. I put a very thick
line between professional and personal. That girl faced lots of
problems with the office atmosphere being very nice and
attentive to people. ... My husband also has confidence [in
me]. If I take a drop with a male colleague also he knows me
[for] what I am. And I travel a lot. Last time I had been to
Pondicherry for some issues. I was to come back the next day.
I told the inspector I have to get back tomorrow so that
inspection went on till two in the night. My manager didn't
believe that a government official was willing to stay and look
at my documents till two o'clock. I had trust in myself and I
was ready with what I had to get done with this person – I got
it done.

Nalini indicates that her honour and chastity are preserved through her assertiveness and her reticence/decorum. She is able to take a tough stance with a union leader or ask a favour from a government official, but can do so only because of her reputation as a dignified and assertive woman. This reputation allows her to enter masculine spaces and time-zones, without fear of harassment or public dishonour. To prevent sexual harassment she feels that boldness should be combined with modesty in dress and behaviour, particularly by refraining from *'loose talk'* [sexual innuendo; personal references]. In underscoring her ability to draw clear boundaries she otherises women who are overly approachable or timid.

While it contains traces of the discourse of individual choice and responsibility, Nalini's narrative is strongly embedded in the neo-nationalist discourse and brings together a number of seemingly contrasting values: assertiveness and modesty, boldness and reticence, traditionalism and progressiveness, materialism and spiritualism. However, she displays little awareness of these apparent contradictions, choosing to emphasize one value over another depending on the context in which she is creating her identity. The neo-nationalist discourse reconciles these values by claiming some as core to a

woman's identity, closely associated with the home, and others as required by her participation in the public world. Thus a woman's boldness, her materialism and outward progressiveness evident in her appearance, her interaction with men and her participation in the seamier side of the public world (investigating sexual harassment) are necessitated by the economic exigencies of globalization (the need to access the economic opportunities it throws up). This 'superficial progressiveness' is 'only skin deep'(Sunder Rajan, 1993:133) and is outweighed by a more 'genuine' self which is deeply embedded in tradition, religiosity and patriarchal family relationships. However, even while accepting the unequal relations of power within this patriarchy, women recognise the value of assertiveness outside the home and economic independence within it to prevent the balance of power from tipping completely against them. By a discerning use of tact and assertiveness, they communicate their own power and capacity for self-determination.

7.5.2 Maya

Maya is 37 years and has a two-year-old son. She is a senior manager in a multinational information technology company and has a very demanding job. Although she describes herself as very focussed on her career, her repeated references to her son and her concerns regarding his education and development show that motherhood is an important part of her identity. Maya positions herself as a conscientious and committed career woman, recounting how she began her career in IT by arriving in Bangalore without her parents' knowledge to look for a job in the (then) emerging IT industry.

> *As I mentioned I have been working for about thirteen odd*
> *years. I had a graduation in biochemistry and bio sciences and*
> *then I've done my MBA in human resources. I started off in*
> *Bombay actually I grew up in Bombay so I lived there for a very*
> *long time but I moved to Bangalore around '95 and reason I*
> *moved out was that my folks were moving out of Bombay. My*
> *dad had retired and he was moving out to our own home which*
> *is Lucknow and I guess somewhere I was a little bit of a spoilt*
> *brat because I had a very cushy life and I used to live in South*

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Bombay – very comfortable and office was a few steps away and knowing that on the kind of salary I was earning in those days, I would have to go into new Bombay and to that huge commute didn't make any sense to me so I moved cities... the second was also the fact that I wanted to be in information technology companies so it made sense for me to move out of Bombay which had limited scope in that area, therefore moved over to Bangalore and that's really the first time I started living alone. So I did a little bit, I actually came here without my parents' knowledge [laughter]. My dad was then in Lucknow, my parents and sister had gone there for a vacation and I sneaked out and came to Bangalore to do some interviews without letting them know. My luck would be such that my father's younger brother was in town and came to check me out and he found the house was locked. So all hell broke lose and all terrible things happened because then what I did I came back – and those days how hiring used to be all on the spot decisions – so I came back with multiple offer letters and like this horrible brat that I was I actually faxed them to my dad – and they were all back in Bombay by the next flight. They were completely shocked that I had done something like this but anyway to cut a long story short it was... I guess I was trying to see – going out and trying my own thing. I also believed that Lucknow was not the place for me to go. Interestingly, that was also the perspective of my parents. My mother especially was extremely ambitious for me. My father has always guided me rather than pointed to the answer. I was one of the few who at that age got career counselling. Others wish they have had it. It's common place today. It wasn't so common place that time.

Maya recounts her 'rebellious' and 'spoilt' behaviour with much delight and amusement thereby setting up her identity as an independent, self-determined and committed career woman. However, she almost immediately acknowledges that her family (her parents and husband) *'are extremely ambitious for me more than I am frankly, for myself.'* [109] This apparent tension between her identity as a self-determined woman and her pride in her family's support results in a form of individualism accommodates collectivist obligations and ideals.

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[109] Her parents have now followed her to Bangalore and help with the childcare.

During the interview, Maya was approachable but business-like; her responses to questions were fairly brief and to the point. Unlike many other interviewees she did not meander from one topic to another. At first the interview proceeded more as a question and answer session rather than a conversation. Moreover, she seemed to position me as a feminist scholar who was researching policy-initiatives for women in the workplace and made a point of declaring her opposition to such policies quite early in the interview and without my even referring to them: *'I am a bit worried that people will see us as this special class of people who need special attention because that is something that takes away from your achievements.'* The underlying message seemed to be that her success is the result of her own effort and hard work rather than any concessions to her gender. She is keen to distance herself from women who demand such concessions arguing that they *'cut a sorry figure'* in the workplace and diminish the achievements of those like herself who succeed without concessions.

> *Whoever said this is a level playing field? Whoever said that everyone starts at the starting line and everyone runs the same race? That's not true. Some people have advantages, some people don't. After asking for all these additional supports (policies for women) you can't also expect to be paid the same, to have the same career progression at the same pace as somebody else who didn't ask for those and is still working... It's not like my set of issues are any less. I have found a solution. Somebody may not have that solution somebody may have another solution to it.*

The remark above reveals how Maya creates her identity as a serious, committed, fair-minded and responsible professional by 'otherising' women who believe that they are entitled to concessions based on their gender. Her own solution for childcare is to leave her son with her parents through the day, and, when pressured at work, through the night. Therefore, she does not need to seek *'additional supports'* in the workplace, where she can 'manage like a man' (Wajckman,1998). Maya's argument of individual responsibility for individual choices is contradicted when she attributes her success to the support and encouragement of her parents and husband but to acknowledge that other women

may not have the same support (and may therefore need it from the workplace) would undermine her own narrative of hard work and self-determination. She also indicates that to some extent she feels compelled to live up to their expectations. Her family have invested so much in her identity as a strong, successful 'career woman' that it seems impossible to retract: *'They see me like this, I think it would be hard for them to accept my shifting gears.'*

When she refers to her parents' involvement in her education, in giving her appropriate inputs (such as taking her to career counsellors) or encouraging her as a *'girl child'* to be *'financially independent'* Maya is positioning her own family as progressive and open-minded compared to other families where girls may not receive the same encouragement. These inputs seem to inspire a sense of obligation, which is repaid through achievement, thus increasing the family's honour and social standing. Thus, her narrative, while being overtly located within the discourse of individualism, also contains collectivist elements of the neo-nationalist discourse which glories in the success of 'good' daughters in the public spheres of education and work. Her success allows her family to perform their modernity and cosmopolitanism.

Within her professional identity, Maya values her role as a mentor to her team and her relationships with her subordinates, which *'outlast the task at hand,'* making it a point to find common ground with each individual member of the team, inviting them home for meals, acknowledging important occasions such as marriages and birthdays all of which requires considerable time, effort, and planning. She takes pride in their loyalty and commitment recounting how they welcomed her back after her maternity leave or covered for her while her son was in the hospital. Part of her reason for nurturing these relationship is that they support her own career growth:

*I've built up a whole bunch of folks who are very confident and
do their own stuff and they know even if they make a mess of it,
Maya in all probability will support them and take the flack for
it because that's the only way they'll learn and that's the way I
increase my bandwidth[capacity within the organisation].*

Just as she brings a mothering quality to her professional work, Maya bring a certain business-like attitude and vocabulary to her maternal responsibilities and concerns for her child's health, education and development.

*Right now, I'm putting together a list of things such as taking
him to museums and play parks and such like. And, you know
<u>drive to it</u> because he does need some of those inputs.*

The business jargon 'drive' in the remark above which translates as 'taking responsibility for a goal'/ making sure it happens' indicates how Maya draws on the the notion of the child as a project. However, this masks her emotional investment in her role as a mother. We had a long conversation about her decision to take her child out of play school as it was affecting his health and emotional well being. The decision had caused much soul searching and stress and was finally taken on the basis of 'evidence': medical bills that she had collected over the months that he was in school.

Jyothsna   *It sounds like a decision based on research and logic
           rather than emotion.*

Maya   *No it was emotionally based, no, because I took the
           call because I couldn't see him suffer any more. I
           just sort of felt that what happened because of what
           ever reason and he used to hate going to school by
           the way. He said he wouldn't go out to play! He got
           so angry with us! And he's just a two year old. He's
           like, 'I won't!' He wouldn't go out to play in the
           school. He wouldn't go and play with other kids.
           Now I said two year olds are not supposed to be very
           social people anyway, but you at least expect him to
           go out and play with the swing and the slide in the
           break. I said forget it I don't want to send him to
           school- he's not going.*

Maya's narrative of self-identity raises shows an apparent contradiction. While she is committed to her identity as a career-woman, motherhood seems to have created some degree of ambivalence around this identity; she shares the guilt that other 'working mothers' experience around the question of giving adequate time and attention to her son. When she speaks of her job as a source of self-fulfilment and self-actualization, arguing that she and women like herself are responsible for their career choices and the consequences of those choices, she locates her narrative within the discourse of individual choice and responsibility. However, her acknowledgement of her parents' and husband's stake in her success indicate her collectivism; her gratitude for their support and her commitment to 'responsible motherhood' move her narrative towards the neo-nationalist discourse. Thus her individualism does not position her outside of collective commitments and support structures.

7.5.3 Hema

Hema is 26 years old and has been married for nearly two years. She works as an administrative assistant in a global information technology company and is doing a master's degree in business administration via distance learning. Although she claims that she is working only for the money, her professional ambitions indicate otherwise; she claims that although she would like to be available to her children when they are young she would like to continue in part-time work: *'You don't have to bore yourself sitting at home, you have to occupied and you don't have to waste your education or learnings whatever you have done'.*

At the time of the interview Hema was living alone in a flat that she has recently purchased along with her husband. He had moved Hyderabad on a job assignment and the purchase of the flat meant that neither of them could afford to risk their job and thereby their joint income to be with the other. The arrangement is believed to be a temporary one till he moves back to Bangalore or they migrate

to America where his brothers live. Hema is somewhat ambivalent about her husband's plans to move overseas since she is deeply embedded in family relationships and obligations in Bangalore. She gave up formal education at 18 to support her parents financially, and is grateful for her husband's willingness to let her continue in doing so.

In Hema's narrative, the development of her career is closely bound with two major events in her personal life: her family's financial problems and the sudden death of her fiancé's parents, which also resulted in financial instability for him. Thus circumstances drove her, aged 18, from the seclusion of a lower middle-class, orthodox Brahmin family, where she was rarely allowed out unaccompanied by her parents into the market economy where she worked her way up from the position of a 'fax operator' in a family owned business to administrative assistant in a multinational company.

Her initial position as a young girl from a financially vulnerable family driven into the job market without skills and formal education left her vulnerable to sexual harassment, exploitation and redundancy. She tried to overcome the threat of harassment by avoiding interaction with the opposite sex, however, this was not always possible and she recounts two instances where harassment led her to give up her job. However, her experiences and eagerness to learn new skills helped her grow more confident both in her interactions as well as in her work and has helped create her current self concept as confident and competent professional: *'Today you can check with anybody in my company, any job that is given to Hema will be done.'*

When I responded to the above quote by asking what gave her this sort of confidence she answered:

> *Situation forced me to work. As and when you have an*
> *experience you will have a confidence, that's what I learnt.*
> *Education is not a prime priority in your life without that also*

you can survive, that's what I learnt. Because so many people
who are my friends, who have completed post graduation also,
they are still in their own backlogs. They are struggling to
earn money and survive in the industries. I've already settled
it's a good decision I took not to study. Initially I was back
logging, I didn't have a graduation [degree] all the stuff. It
was little tough but today I'm almost settled.

The oldest of three daughters, Hema's challenges the upper caste gender stereotype that places women exclusively within the home in her narrative of self. While she indicates that her status as a professional woman is viewed with a mixture of admiration and concern (that her example of independence and self-determination may inspire other women to 'rebel') by her extended family, her immediate family was not unaccustomed to women working outside the home. Not only did her mother hold a public sector job, but her father had ambitions of educating Hema as a computer engineer. However, her mother's brush with cancer, resultant loans and fraud committed by her father's brother resulted in serious financial instability which required her to go t work immediately after school. Hema insists that this was her decision rather than that of her parents. *'I'm the eldest daughter, if it was a son it would definitely have been his responsibility to take care (of the parents) right? So I said, "Why can't a daughter?"'* This insistence may be partly motivated by a commitment to maintaining family honour in a culture where a woman taking the bread-winning role is perceived as a misfortune and a last resort (which in this case it probably was). Hema's current identity is one of a woman who has successfully overcome the odds and whose 'bread-winner' identity is no longer to be pitied but admired.

I'm the first person to have bought a car in the family as a girl
and it's been really proud and to be frank my husband also he
encourages me for everything. You know- not only that you are
a housewife you have to sit at home. Even my cousin brother
does that. My sister-in-law [cousin by marriage] she has a
driving license for car but still my brother doesn't allow her to
drive. He will say, 'No, no, no, you just cook'. That's the kind
of an attitude.

Hema's job is a means to support her family and thus reinforce her identity as a caring and dutiful daughter. She is concerned for her parents' health and emotional wellbeing and not just meeting their material needs. She is committed to giving them *'moral supports and emotional supports also '*; calling them thrice a day from the office and visiting them on weekends. Moreover, she is also concerned for her sisters' careers (and has recently helped one of them join her company in an administrative position) and their marriages to suitable men

She is also committed to her husband as a supporter, a companion and a champion. Her identity as a wife is that of an equal, compassionate and independent companion. She speaks of *'hounding him '* to complete his education which he gave up in the face of financial hardships following his parents' death and of her concern for his emotional stability. She understands his tendency to isolate himself from extended family while she herself enjoys social gatherings. She does not shirk from laying down the law against smoking and alcohol but she is willing to accommodate his food preferences (rice rather than chapattis) and allow an annual drinking binge when his brothers come over on holiday. Hema's marriage exemplifies the manner in which she expresses her individualism within collectivist norms. She describes herself as having been 'promised' to her husband from childhood: an arrangement between families, which almost broke down but was honoured because the young couple were committed to each other.

Jyothsna	*But your mother was having second thoughts [after her fiancé's parents died leaving him financially vulnerable]?*
Hema	*Yeah. She was in dilemma, you know, after that incident. She started looking out to other persons because Shekar was not well settled like others. I was very particular [about marrying only Shekar]. I had a fight [with her] I had to give some interviews [meet potential bridegrooms].*
Jyothsna	*She made you?*

Hema	Yeah, I used to go and one interview she was so much groomed that fellow. I was going and telling all the fellows, 'See, I have a love, this was fixed when I was born. I can't change my mind.' I used to go and explain to– For past twenty years [I was committed to Shekar], suddenly if you want me to change how can I change?
Jyothsna	So you stuck to your guns and said no.
Hema	The last and final one [interview] – it was in 2004. It came up to marriage – direct marriage. He [the prospective groom] was in USA – software engineer and he wanted to marry and just fly off – just in fifteen days. He came, saw and he said ok we'll do the marriage in temple and we'll just finish it off. I was so scared. It was happening so fast. I was very particular about this: I don't want to ran and go off and disturb my parents. All I wanted is I want to marry Shekar but in front of my parents with their blessings. So that time I had a little tough time so his brothers flew down [to dissuade her parents]. Shekar's brothers flew down. Because that fellow didn't have a father, only mother who was in US with him – they were very well settled. He's the only son so Mamma wanted something like that [for me so that I could be comfortably settled]. I mean obviously I don't blame her. As a mother she will think in that way. Then finally we fought and... My uncle helped me a lot in this to be frank. So then we just got engaged myself and Shekar... My uncle did one counselling [spoke to my parents on my behalf] – till today I don't know what he said. May be a two-two and half hours discussion with my mother and my father and – [name of the other bridegroom]. Finally they concluded that if I got, get engaged with Shekar, they will not proceed this further.

By Hema's account her marriage confounds the stereotypes of arranged marriages and marriages of choice: she was engaged from her cradle to her husband yet, her decision to marry him was agential or it could be argued that she married by choice but could not do so without the consent of her family and the intervention of her relatives. Her 'arranged' marriage finally became one of choice, but a choice that required considerable negotiation with her parents.

Hema's regional, linguistic and caste identity are very important to her; she asserts that her children will not be allowed to marry non-Brahmins and will learn to speak their mother tongue. However, she considers herself a relatively modern member of an otherwise traditional family. She follows most caste traditions but also avoids what she sees as some of the more onerous and inconvenient practices such as seclusion/avoidance of the kitchen during menstrual periods *'because I'm too lazy and Shekar won't do the cooking instead of me.'* While dressing to visit her parents' home after the interview, she wore her gold *tali* (pendant symbolising marriage) to please them but confided that she avoided wearing (the uncomfortable) toe-rings which are an important sign of marriage by pretending she was allergic to silver. She explains that her behaviour with her husband, her lifestyle and her dress is '*a little modi-fied [modernized]*' as opposed to that of her relatives who are *'more in the back stage [traditional]'*; while conforming to tradition in certain aspects of her life she creates changes in others (Smart and Shipman, 2004).

Hema's identity may to be located within collectivist responsibilities, however, it challenges many traditional stereotypes regarding gender within a partrilineal context. Not only is she strongly committed to her parents but she has continued this commitment after her marriage. Thus her narrative challenges the traditional norm of daughters severing ties with the parental home. Although this is partly due to the cooperation of her husband, Hema's fierce loyalty to her family may have carried this commitment through even in other circumstances. Moreover, she sees no contradiction between her status as a breadwinner (for her parents) and equal contributor along with her husband and her traditional obligations as a homemaker. She fulfils these duties cheerfully and unquestioningly while pursuing her professional goals indicating that her individualism is compatible with collectivist ideals.

7.5.4 Nitya

Nitya is 27 years old and married for seven months. She identifies herself as a south Indian and is married (by choice) to a north Indian;[110] the couple live in a joint household with her husband's parents. A qualified (chartered) accountant, Nitya works as a financial analyst (executive) with a global communication technology firm; her husband holds the same qualification and works with the same company. Her commitment to her work is evident from the animated way in which she speaks of it, taking pains to explain some of the more technical aspects in a non-jargonistic fashion and demonstrating how it is relevant to the future of the company. Nitya's enthusiasm for her work, her pride in being part of a global company and optimism about the future could make her a poster-child for globalization and its benefits for women. Her narrative contains strong elements of 'India shining'.

Jyothsna | *And what were the first few months of being there [in her first job]?*

Nitya | *Oh that experience was too much. I didn't know much about computers or I didn't know how to interact and they had all big clients and you need to go and meet them and have calls with them so I had to do... It was a very good learning experience especially the first six months: how you talk, the confidence and the way you dress. Lot of things I had to learn. I think I had a lot of new joiners with me and lot of seniors I made some of my good friends when I was with --- (name of company)*

Jyothsna | *How did you feel?*

Nitya | *It was great! You know every day there was something! You know when you meet a client or when you analyse everything is in terms-- You've got basics which we have learnt in college and how do you apply it? And when you meet clients-- I had never attended a conference call when you log in and different things. Everything was new – things*

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[110] Although she gives clearer details of her and her husband's linguistic identities, revealing them would make her more identifiable.

like you can get coffee as many times as you wish –
everything was new. You get your own computer
you get your own extension everything was—

Jyothsna   *And all those little things just add up?*

Nitya   *May be I can't remember at that time but that first*
week that first one month everything was different!
They had a very good office in --- actually it was
very new and it was flashy and it was the best thing
that I had ever seen. We had individual cabins so it
was great. It was great that you have a desk at
twenty and then you have a phone and you're
making presentations and meeting the CFOs –
something really nice.

The perks of having her own phone, meeting important clients and making presentations seemed at first to have a magical quality making her feel grown-up and responsible; four years later they have become familiar but haven't lost their appeal. Nitya derives a strong sense of fulfilment from her work and is proud of the level of responsibility she enjoys. She believes that *'this is the time for me to concentrate on my career rather than on cooking, attending weddings and following the traditions'.* It may be argued, following Parekh (2008), that given the potential for self expression that her job affords her, the prestige attached to her occupation and the status associated with working for a famous company, her personal identity is strongly influenced by her social identity as an accountant.

Nitya has also begun to invest in her identity as a wife, daughter-in-law and potential mother. She is keen to win the approval of her parents-in-law who had initially opposed her marriage. She shows no bitterness about this opposition although by her account it was fairly strong: *'it took a good two years to convince them'.* Tactfully refraining from sharing details, she only says, *'they were sceptical about our relationship'.*[111] Her in-laws are described as affectionate,

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[111] Similarly, the tact expected from a guest (the interview took place at their house) prevented me from probing further.

understanding, full of praise for her 'adjustments' to their lifestyle and culture and willing to support her professional success.

> Nitya   I make a conscious effort. Like weekends, I ensure
> that I spend a lot of time at home doing whatever
> they want to and that's mainly because there was
> scepticism about our relationship [before the
> marriage]. I want to please them and make sure they
> don't have any regrets but over the months that I've
> tried doing that I've actually found that I get
> pampered and they treat me like a daughter. That's
> something that I feel I'm getting rewarded.

> Jyothsna   What is the kind of pampering [that they do]?

> Nitya   When they compliment me on - I never used to wear
> saris – They're very impressed that I have taken the
> extra thing to wear a sari and come for a [family]
> function. I can wear anything I want; it's just that
> they compliment [me]. When I help my mother-in-
> law, when I get up in the morning and help, they
> notice that and they say that I am taking an extra
> initiative. So small compliments if I do something.
> Or if I keep my room clean, she notices and says,
> 'You manage everything'. So I know they are
> noticing it and I feel very happy.

Nitya's refusal to show resentment before a stranger (myself) indicates a strong need to protect family honour and preserve a united front. In praising her in-laws, attempting to speak their language and glossing over their refusal to accept her, she performs her identity as a good daughter-in-law and by all indications in her account seems to have won their affection. However, the relationship is delicate and her position as a young bride from another community puts her in a somewhat vulnerable position in her marital home. She needs to continue her performance on a daily basis to strengthen the relationship. However, the two factors in her favour are: her willingness to adapt to their customs and lifestyle and her professional qualifications which exceed those of many young women in her husband's kin-group. These two factors have added to the honour of her in-laws, and their pride in her increases her self-esteem.

When my father-in-law introduces me he says this is my
daughter-in-law, she is a chartered accountant...she is doing the
same job as my son. It feels so good!

Her in-laws' kindness might be influenced by a number of factors such as Nitya's generosity in overlooking their past conduct, the warmth of her affections (which seems evident in the way she speaks of them) and their desire to maintain their relationship with their son. They may also be influenced in their support of her by the desire to augment family honour. By underlining her occupational status in the extended family, where (by her account) there are no other female accountants, her in-laws gain status and esteem and construct an identity as modern family who support their women in the public arena.[112]

While her narrative does not contain strong overtones of either the individual choice discourse or the neo-nationalist discourse in the way that Maya's or Nalini's narratives do, it may be said to contain elements of both. When she performs her identity as a compliant daughter-in-law she is aligning herself with the collectivist values associated with the neo-nationalist discourse, yet, when she engages with the question of when would be the ideal time to have children she in engaging with the discourse of individual choice and responsibility. This debate is ongoing between her husband and herself: do both partners feel 'ready' to take on this responsibility, do they have the financial resources and emotional maturity to do so and how will it affect their careers. She indicates that they would both like children but are 'not ready' for them and believe that it is a decision to be made only when both feel mature enough: *'if one of us is not ready we'll have to wait'.[113]*

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[112] Since I did not speak directly with Nitya's in-laws this interpretation is based on what she reports, however, her participation in creating this family identity is apparent from her remarks.

[113] Being 'newly married' and therefore not facing the pressures/ questions that parents and relatives often ask after the first year of marriage regarding conception they are relatively free to examine these privately and theoretically.

Nitya shares these dilemmas with women across other cultures in late modernity when parenthood is no longer seen as a natural occurrence but as a responsibility that has to be carefully planned into the individual's biography (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). However, her final decision may be influenced by the expectations of a collectivist kinship network where part of her performance as a daughter-in-law requires her to produce a child. Her identity as a compliant daughter-in-law wins her support and emotional strength; it also adds to her sense of self-worth and is therefore balanced carefully with her identity as an individualized worker and ambitious professional.

> *May be I was able to put in any amount of hours before getting married I had no restriction of I didn't have any responsibility. Right now I do have I need to have a cut off I will work nine to five but after that I want time at home, if I am never present and I'm always very involved with my work If I don't make a contribution from my side I can never get into − I can never be the daughter-in-law.*

7.6 Conclusion

The four case studies indicate how individuals draw on the same two discourses to create very different identities. While one participant's identity seems to be positioned firmly within the discourse of individual choice and responsibility a closer examination of her narrative shows traces of collectivism associated with the neo-nationalist discourse. Similarly another participant who is ostensibly firmly rooted in collectivist structures of family and community, who espouses values associated with the neo-nationalist discourse asserts her individualism and makes agential choices within the framework of collectivist norms and values. These apparent inconsistencies in participants' narratives point to the plurality of their identities (Parekh, 2008).

I would argue that women's identities are not just plural but are also relational i.e. they are created in relationship with others and incorporate the social gaze (Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). Women's personal sense of self is influenced by the opinions of their parents, in-laws and spouses and their self-worth is either

diminished or enhanced by approval or criticism, especially from this first circle of kin. Because of the relational nature of their identities, their individual achievements enhance family honour as much as their own sense of pride. Their respect for meritocracy does not make them competitive for themselves. Instead they are part of an economy of honour in which individual families are engaged in competing for prestige and respectability. In this competition women's professional achievements and personal successes (marriage to the 'right' man; wealth and children) add to the family's prestige while their demeanour (modest, chaste and compliant) maintains the family's respectability. They carefully construct their identities in a way which enhances the family's prestige and preserves its respectability.

Conclusion

The truths of feminism are smaller, more tailored, more
intensely pointed than the discredited "Truth" of grand theory
and master narratives.
DeVault, 1999a:3

Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated
knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and
object. In this way we might become answerable for what we
learn how to see.
Haraway, 1988: 583

To paraphrase DeVault's (1999) and Haraway's (1988) remarks on feminist methodology, this thesis can be said to have served three purposes. First it attempts to 'excavate' the experiences of contemporary Indian middle class women 'that is, to find what has been ignored, censored, and suppressed, and to reveal both the diversity of actual women's lives and the ideological mechanisms that have made so many of those lives invisible' (DeVault,1999a:31). Secondly, it supports the interests of women by producing research in the hope of assisting social change (DeVault,1999a);[114] it does so with caution, acknowledging that the knowledge produced is partial, positional (Haraway, 1988) and seldom offers straightforward solutions to the challenges faced by women. Thirdly, it endeavours to 'talk back' to conventional Sociology (DeVault,1999a:25) indicating where established theories of modernity, globalization and individualization may need to be reconfigured to understand the experiences of women in non-Western societies. In this conclusion I attempt to extract the partial, 'small truths' that emerge from this thesis, which in some way de-stabilize the taken-for-granted narratives of late modernity, and suggest how these truths can be further examined and developed. Taking my cue from Haraway (1988), I situate my thesis by locating myself as a producer of the knowledge that I offer for critique and development.

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[114] DeVault also discusses the importance of minimizing harm and control of participants, a methodological issue that has been addressed in Chapter 3.

Excavating Small Truths

I began my PhD research by looking, unsuccessfully, for a body of scholarship on contemporary Indian middle class women and their relationship with globalization. While current academic scholarship on the Indian middle classes is increasing, its engagement with the experiences of middle class women at best appears to be sporadic. This gap is filled by popular discourse which follows the celebratory rhetoric on globalization: the notion that India has finally shaken off the shackles of colonialism and taken her rightful place on the world stage. As in the nationalist period, middle class Indian women in contemporary globalizing India have become emblematic of the nation's progress, its engagement with modernity, its ability to hold a position of relative equality with the West and its commitment to upholding its traditions.

The taken for granted identity 'middle class' is ubiquitous in contemporary India, yet the very popularity of this identity, the diversity within the middle class and the various economic and non-economic indicators of 'middleclassness' makes it difficult to pinpoint who constitute the Indian middle class. However, the diversity within the middle classes is important to understanding how the benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed. Women of the old middle class have the cultural capital to realise the opportunities opened up by globalization, while new middle class women are still struggling to accumulate the same: fluency in English, ease in cross cultural interaction and assertiveness before one's social superiors. Thereby the benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed between women of the old and new middle class. The issue of how social hierarchies have been reproduced within the IT industry has been discussed in previous research (see Upadhya (2007), Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006, Krishna and Brihmadesam, 2006) but the way in which cultural capital recreates hierarchies bears closer examination in future research.

The notion that the middle classes represent [whatever is best about] the nation not only to the West but also to itself, that they have the moral legitimacy

to plan the future of the nation further contributes to the aspirational value of this identity. Within this self construction, the women of this class come to represent its outward progressiveness and its ability to engage on an equal footing with the West while maintaining an essential core of tradition. Indian women not only accept this construction of themselves as the representatives of India's unique modernity but take pride in this identity. Conscious of their position as the public face of the nation, the kin-group and the family, they project their traditionalism through their dress, demeanour, behaviour and interactions while engaging with the globalized world. The appearance of conformity has the added advantage of protecting women from the possibility of harassment and enabling them to interact easily with men in the workplace. The traditionalism of Indian women supports rather than hinders their success in transnational companies. They mobilize their traditionalism in a way that gives them certain advantages in dealing with male co-workers; by showing that they have met the obligations associated with their gender (marriage and motherhood), by creating personal boundaries associated with the notion of a 'good (respectable) woman' and by underlining their embeddedness in the family and kin group, they attempt to negotiate the masculinized ethos of the workplace.

The findings of my research have implications for how we understand the consequences of late modernity. The late modernity thesis tends to equate de-traditionalization with globalization and individualization. However my research reveals that the relationship between the three processes is fairly complex. Globalization does not necessarily lead to de-traditionalization, rather traditions may be selectively reinterpreted and reinvented in the face of globalization. Although the participants in my research often express the popular concern with the erosion of tradition in their interviews with me, their description of their lives belies this claim. While carrying the responsibility of upholding tradition within the family and the community, they make agential choices as to which traditions they will follow, which they will discard and what new practices they will adopt from other cultures. Traditions give them a chance to reassert their identities in

the face of changes brought about by globalization and to re-create happy childhood memories in their somewhat hectic and routinized lives. It may be concluded that rather than resulting in de-traditionalization, globalization allows women to take a broader perspective on tradition, choosing to uphold those that are celebratory and inclusive and discarding those that are divisive or bigoted. It also enables them to construct a pan-Indian identity and to re-imagine what it means to be Indian in a globalized world.

Bearing this pan-Indian identity in mind, future research could engage in greater detail with what it means to be Indian in the contemporary globalized world, how ancient traditions and contemporary economic progress are mobilized together to create a sense of pride in being Indian. It would be interesting to examine the new post-colonial identity that seems to be emerging in India after globalization. This thesis has pointed towards the possibility that Indians who are engaged in virtual migration (Aneesh, 2001 in Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006:24) share certain characteristics in common with those who have migrated to other parts of the globe. It would also be interesting to compare the identities of middle class Indians with those of the Indian Diasporas in the West.

Indian women's construction of their self-identities does not indicate the weakening hold of identity markers such as religion, community and state, as Giddens (1991) argues. Instead they engage these social identities within their construction of their self-identities (Parekh, 2008). While all participants celebrate their religious, linguistic and caste identities through dress, festivals, rituals, foods and hospitality, those who belong to the old middle class tend to be more willing to incorporate the customs, rituals and ideas of other castes and regions within their practice. They are more aware of the customs, language and food habits of other communities, usually from having grown up in metropolitan areas (Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad) or moved away from their native towns and villages. This awareness creates the cultural capital that enables them to engage more confidently with international clients and employers than women

from the new middle class. However, even the latter are not fixed to specific identities but make conscious choices as to which identity is relevant to a given context (Parekh, 2008).

My argument that cultural globalization is best understood from the multi-dimensional perspectives proposed by Robertson (1995), Singh (2000), Srinivas (2002) and the later works of Berger (2002) has been borne out by the manner in which participants move between the local and the global. In the workplace they wear Western clothes, allow limited physical displays of affection and conform to an individualistic ethos. However, in the home, they avoid wearing Western clothes before elders, behave with modesty and decorum and conform to collectivist values. Even within the home women modify their behaviour to suit the relationship. They move between more tradition-informed behaviour in front of elders to more progressive behaviours with their own peers. While their relationships with their husbands are becoming increasingly egalitarian, their relationships with their in-laws are characterised by respect for authority and seniority; moreover they may tone down the degree of egalitarianism in the spousal relationship before elders to show deference to traditional patriarchal values. This may seem contradictory, even deceitful to the onlooker, but middle class women and their families do not see any contradiction in this duality. They move between different spaces, different behaviours and different identities, adapting to the demands of each without a sense of alienation or 'inauthenticity'. The decision to allow one identity rather than the other to become dominant is a moral and ontological one (Parekh, 2008): the notion that 'I am this kind of person, with these sorts of principles'.

Contemporary Indian women advocate the value of individualism which is a product of the individualization that they experience in the transnational IT industry and the cultural values associated with globalization and late modernity. However, this individualism is qualitatively different from the individualism that the late modernity theorists describe. It is an individualism wherein personal

satisfaction results from the fulfilment of collectivist responsibilities, where individual achievements augment the financial security and the social prestige of the family and where the approval of the family and kin group boosts individual self-worth. Due to its exposure to the West, the vocabulary of individualism is popular amongst the contemporary middle class, especially the old middle class. Women speak of the need to have a life of their own outside the family, fulfil personal desires and express their talents and capabilities through their jobs. Whilst all of these needs are real, they are balanced with women's commitments to their families, especially their children; the fulfilment of these commitments is equally a means of self-expression and satisfaction.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) argue that the individualization of women is 'incomplete' i.e. that they caught between living for others and living a life of one's own. This implies that women are moving along a continuum from incomplete to complete individualization but I would argue that Indian women are both individualized and embedded in collective structures. To function as individualized workers in the transnational workplace, they mobilize collective networks. These networks are mobilized by invoking the reciprocal obligations of the moral economy to provide substitute care for their children. However, the principle of reciprocity also demands that women fulfil their collectivist responsibilities as daughters, daughters-in-law, wives and mothers and conform to the demands of their roles as the custodians of tradition and of family honour. To enable their continued performance in the transnational economy, women fulfil these responsibilities.

Their success in the transnational economy is strongly influenced by the support and encouragement they receive in the family. This research has found that the women who are most successful in the transnational economy are usually those whose parents made a significant emotional and monetary investment in their education in their early life. This engenders a deep sense of obligation and a commitment to realising parental aspirations. Many of these women continue to

receive support and encouragement in their families. The pride of parents, children, in-laws and spouses keeps them within the workplace in spite of the frustration of managing multiple responsibilities. Their individualistic pursuit of success in the workplace is a means of meeting collectivist obligations. Given the tension between the high prestige associated with individualism in the late-modern period and the continued influence of collectivist positions and associated responsibilities, contemporary Indian women seem to have found collectivist ways of being individualistic.

While women do engage in what may be described as individualistic behaviours: choosing their own partners, making career choices or resisting the strictures that are laid down for their behaviour in patriarchal families, they also seek approval and acceptance either by attempting to win their families over to their point of view or by showing through other means that they continue to respect tradition. This contextualization of behaviour and thereby of identity is explained as a choice that women make with an understanding of the rewards that ensue: social approval, acceptance, security and personal satisfaction. The experiences of Indian women in individualizing indicates that individualization is neither liberation from the collective (as implied by Giddens, 1991) nor alienation from the collective (as implied by Bauman, 1998) but negotiating with the collective to create a space for individual aspirations, desires and values.

In Chapter 2 I discussed Giddens's notion that the individual in late modernity as engaged in the creating a self-identity through a series of decisions not only about 'how to act but who to be' (Giddens, 1991). In this research it has emerged that while Indian women are engaged in creating a self through a series of choices, these choices are mediated by cultural and structural factors. The notion that the individual is responsible for her/ his fate is a powerful discourse that women draw on in creating their narratives of self-identity, a discourse that sometimes masks the structural and normative constraints under which identities are created. It is as much a part of the culture of contemporary globalized India as

the neo-nationalist discourse that positions women as the bearers of tradition. It is incorporated as a cultural feature into the reflexive construction of self-identity. The individual Indian middle class woman does not create her self-identity independent from the social markers of identity available to her in society. Rather she engages in reflexively constructing a shifting and relational self-identity by using significant others (Mead,1934): family, friends, colleagues and members of the kin group as mirrors in which she sees her 'self'. Her reflexivity is socially constituted (Jackson, 2008; Adams, 2003) rather than individualistic and her self is created within the social gaze (Tokita-Tanabe, 2003). The project of self becomes a collective project in which others are active participants and the first circle of kin (see Chapter 4) has a particularly strong stake.

By labelling the self-reflexivity of Indian women as socially constituted I do not deny their agency in negotiating with their families, kin-group, communities and their employers. 'They seem to be negotiating their positions through both reflexive self-liberation and embedded/ embodied self-fulfilment. Here the agency of women is achieved not by liberating individuals from the community as is often assumed. Rather there is an opening of new possibilities of action precisely through shaking and loosening conceptual dichotomies such as individual : community' (Tanabe and Tokita-Tanabe, 2003:8).

While the experience of Indian women suggests that Giddens and other late modernity theories may have exaggerated the pervasiveness of individualism, it may be agreed that women do experiment with individualistic choices. Some women are successful in their negotiations within the family/kin-group and are able to create a space for their individualism within collective norms and obligations: they may choose who they marry, where they will live and work, how they will socialize and the extent to which they will prioritise their careers. When such experiments with individualism are successful, usually with the deployment of tact, diplomacy and through mutual give and take, it results in personal happiness and continued protection within the kin group.

If individualistic choices do not pan out, women may be left vulnerable and exposed without the protection of the kin group. They may then have to contend with the threat of harassment, financial insecurity and emotional despair. Such women attempt to re-establish the patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988) by conforming to traditional behavioural norms, thereby regaining the protection of their natal families or seeking protection within their marital families. However it must additionally be noted that seeking protection within the family is only possible if the family is in a position to protect the individual: the most poignant stories in this research are those of women whose natal families are unable to protect them usually because of the death or ineffectuality of the father; depending on the patriarchal bargain assumes the existence of a strong patriarch.

So far I have discussed the conclusions which may be drawn in relation to women's negotiation of continuity and change in their families, however, the question arises, 'how do they negotiate the conditions of work in the transnational IT industry and what is the impact of their integration into the transnational economy?' Integration into the transnational economy has created bigger opportunities and also bigger risks: the penetration of global brands into the Indian market, increase in hire purchase facilities and easy availability of credit seduce consumers into living beyond their immediate means. In the meantime the dismantling of protectionist policies renders the economy more vulnerable to fluctuations in the global markets. Women's incomes are necessary both to the realisation of the opportunities and to the mitigation of the risks of engaging in the transnational economy.

Globalization has fulfilled the promise of transnational experiences, hi-tech workplaces and unprecedented salaries. IT companies are committed to increasing the number of women in their workforce through human resource policies and practices intended to create a conducive environment for women to work in and through a variety of work-life balance strategies. Whether the

industry genuinely supports the cause of women's emancipation or whether it is merely acting upon a need for qualified labour, contemporary Indian women have accessed opportunities that were beyond the reach of previous generations. However, the demands of the transnational work environment contradict the industry's commitment to work-life balance. As some participants in the research point out, the Indian IT industry's success is dependent on its ability to provide labour at competitive costs and a quick turn around time to its Western clients. This is the darker side of Gidden's (1991) time space distanciation: communication technologies may have increased the possibilities for creating relationships across space and time but these relationships are embedded in relations of power that bear remarkable similarities to those of colonial period. Given the unequal relationship between IT workers and their Western clients and employers, work-life balance options may be offered but are disincentivized by the need for profit.

It is useful to recall Bauman's (1998) notion of 'liquid capitalism' in understanding the unequal relationship between Indian IT workers and their Western employers or clients. The integration of the world's economies and time space distanciation have increased the capacity of transnational corporations to move from one region to another in search of conducive labour markets; while they bring professional and economic opportunities to non-Western, developing economies, their ability to move at short notice can make them somewhat indifferent employers; they have little incentive to build a lasting relationship with the labour they hire. At present Indian workers are valued due to their knowledge of English, their perceived capacity for hard work and ability to engage with the West. Moreover, the shortage of skilled labour has masked the potential for inequality within the relationship. However as new markets develop across the world, these assets might cease to be unique. Even though my research did not set out directly to engage with this issue, the responses of my participants and the realities of their lives indicate the unequal relationship between transnational corporations and their employees. Previous research (see Upadhya and Vasavi,

2006) supports my conclusion that IT workers tend to be highly overworked and rarely achieve work-life balance, however new research can take up the issue of job security. Upadhya and Vasavi (2006) found that those who are employed in the offshore development centres of multinational companies feel less secure about their jobs than those in major Indian companies with transnational links; the later are believed to be more paternalistic and hence more likely to keep employees on rolls during an economic downturn. While my research indicates that most women are fairly secure about their jobs, it must be noted that my fieldwork took place before the economic downturn – the perception could be different now.

In Chapter 2 I also discussed Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) notion of institutionalized individualism: the claim that in late modernity individuals are increasingly been thrown on their own resources and expected to generate individual 'biographical solutions to systemic contradictions' (Beck, 1992:137 in Bauman, 2000:34). Institutionalized individualism helps explain how IT workers are encouraged to conceptualize their careers and personal lives. While some of my participants indicate their awareness of the systemic issues behind the 'time famine' (Hochschild, 1997: 199) that they face (the need to lower the costs of production and services for instance) most of them conceptualise this as an individual problem or inability to create a proper work-life balance. They do not question the normative standards of the ideal worker, the spillover of work to home or the family-unfriendly hours that they work. While they show a tremendous capacity for multi-tasking, for organizing themselves to get the job done, for diplomatically handling the expectations and annoyances of family members and colleagues, for deploying the nurturing skills acquired at home in the workplace, and the project management skills acquired in the workplace to run the home efficiently, they do so at the cost of exhausting themselves and suffering from a persistent sense of guilt and frustration.

While they are not alienated in the Marxist sense of being alienated from their work (on the contrary many of them derive a deep sense of accomplishment from their work) they are alienated from each other: women in managerial positions (primarily from the old middle class) do not seem to appreciate the challenges faced by administrative staff (primarily from the new middle class); employees negotiate their work-hours individually with their managers rather than identifying a collective problem and taking a collective stand; women remain the outsiders within a culture and a work ethic that continues to operate around the industrial notion of the organisational man whose wife takes care of the domestic and caring responsibilities. The institutionalization of individualism, which encourages individuals to view themselves as responsible for their fate and not as a puppet of circumstances, could prevent women from fully recognising the structural and normative constraints that they face and therefore from finding collective solutions to shared problems. Those who are most able to articulate their 'worth' to the company or who are fortunate enough to have empathetic managers are most successful in negotiating work-life balance strategies, but even they do so at some cost to their careers.

Negotiating with the workplace is more problematic than negotiating with the family and does not lead to visible changes in the way work is organised in transnational companies. Here women are contending with the forces of globalization which are trans-cultural and transnational and are therefore less easy to pin down. Another reason for their lack of success could be that while the negotiations with family have been taking place for generations, the relationship with transnational employers is fairly new. Since their presence in transnational companies contributes to individual and family prestige and ironically empowers women within their families, they are probably less willing to jeopardise their positions as employees of these companies. Whatever the reasons it may be concluded that contemporary Indian women's agency is most successful within the family rather than creating change in the market although they may individually be highly successful within the market.

Poor work-life balance has specific consequences for the individual worker and society at large. When individuals do not achieve work-life balance, when they are unable to catch up with the basic tasks of their professional and personal lives and their family responsibilities, there is little time left to reflect on the long term effects of their lifestyles, let alone communitarian and civic engagement. Although my research reveals that Indian women are closely involved in collectivist structures, this communitarian feeling seems to stop at one's own family, kin and caste group or perhaps at one's close circle of friends and colleagues. Given the increasing urbanisation in and around Bangalore, the migration into the city and the breakdown and reconfiguration of traditional communities, problems such as traffic congestion, road accidents, increasing water and power shortages, pollution and poor waste disposal are not surprising. However, the lack of civic engagement with these problems is striking. Increasing privatization of public amenities allows the middle class to cut itself off from the problems facing the rest of the nation and even turn a blind eye to those of the city in which it resides. By duplicating the architectural and landscaping designs of cash rich economies in West Asia and East Asia, the middle class can congratulate itself on having arrived in the new millennium along with other developed nations while ignoring the stark contrasts between its own lifestyle and that of its less privileged fellow citizens.

Asking Ourselves Some Pointed Questions

As I write this conclusion to the thesis, two very different events have overtaken in the Indian and British media and public imagination: the global economic downturn and the terrorist attacks in Mumbai on 26/11. The crash of the markets in America, the global credit crunch and the recession in Britain and the USA have exposed the vulnerability within contemporary capitalist economies and the hazards of unfettered consumerism. It has underscored the risks inherent in dismantling government regulations and raised challenging questions about India's eagerness to be fully integrated into the global free market economy. At an individual level it has brought IT workers face to face with the possibility of

redundancy or at least a temporary drop in incomes. In Bangalore, the real estate market, one of the popular investment options of IT workers is said to have fallen badly. However, such ups and downs in the economy are not new to the IT industry and to some extent the lower costs of labour and infrastructure in India as compared to the West may even protect it from the full effects of the recession.

Closer to home, and much closer to the bone, the devastating attacks on two symbols of middle and upper class prosperity, the Taj and Oberoi hotels in Mumbai, have shown us how vulnerable we are as a nation and as a class to the threat of terrorism. These attacks are the latest and the bloodiest in a series of extremist attacks over the past two years in metropolitan cities including Bangalore. While the country has long been fighting terrorism and insurgency on its borders and in the outlying states of Assam and Kashmir, the metropolitan middle classes have largely been able to ignore these issues. Even communal violence in urban areas has been largely restricted to poorer neighbourhoods, usually those of minority communities (an exception being the violence against Sikhs in Delhi following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in 1984 when the shops and homes of several prosperous Sikh families were burnt down). While any form of violence is to be universally condemned it is hoped that the public outrage against the security and intelligence lapses that are said to have enabled the attacks will alert the middle classes to the dangers of evading engagement with the government and narrowly focusing on its own self-interest.

Though these two events are very different in their nature and scope, they both offer an opportunity for the middle class, especially the Strivers and Globals to engage in some genuine introspection at an individual, industrial and national level. At an individual level the questions the middle class need to ask themselves are: What does 'quality of life' connote? Does it mean a relatively predictable length of time spent at work and at home and a fairly clear compartmentalization of each? Does it mean being able to estimate how long the commute to the office and back will take and how one will get there? Does it

mean ownership of global brands in cars, apparel and electronic equipment? Does it connote time to spend with one's elderly and one's children relatively free from guilt and without the anxiety that the mobile phone will ring or the email must be checked? Does it mean being able to save for the future or invest for one's children in a relatively predictable economy even if that means an incremental rather than an exponential growth in one's income?

At the level of the industry as a whole the questions to raise include: Is it possible to create a more equitable relationship between the Indian IT workforce and its Western clients and employers? Can there be a genuine debate around its long-hours culture, un-obscured by the rhetoric of work-life balance? Can genuine work-life balance be extended to all employees irrespective of gender and marital/ parental position so that men and women, whether single or married, with or without children can spend quality time with their families, their children, their parents, thereby releasing married women with young children from the second, third and overlapping shifts?

As a class we need to ask ourselves: When families and individuals are freed from the time famine, can the middle class engage with civic issues in its neighbourhoods and cities so that the gap between the middle classes and the poor is reduced and so that the quality of life for all citizens is enhanced? Secondly, can it engage with some of the larger issues facing the nation such as the threat of transnational terrorism on the one hand and internal violence on the other resulting from years of conflict between the nation and its neighbours, mistrust between communities within and uneven development across the nation? Can it employ the highly valuable cultural capital that it has acquired through its knowledge of the English language, its close association with the West, the esteem that its workforce commands in developed economies to create a more equitable relationship between employers in the First World and employees in developing economies, perhaps even to influence the debates around the sustainability of free market economic models?

And what of the role of middle class women within these debates? An investigation of the Indian nationalist movement reveals that middle class women resisted the limits of the role defined for them within the movement and sought greater participation in the fight for independence. When the promise of greater equality within an independent nation was not fully met, it resulted in the autonomous women's movement which sought to bring to light issues that were exclusive to women and thereby create greater legal, socio-cultural and economic equality for women. However, the main criticism levelled against the nationalist movement and the autonomous women's movement, that of elitism, should caution us that any new debate should avoid the same mistakes.

Today, given the direction the nation is taking, economically, and the threats to the nation's unity and security, middle class women have two options: they could either unreflexively participate in the pursuit of a better lifestyle and professional growth, buying into the values of consumerism and careerism (Posner, 1992) supported by post industrial capitalism and suffer the anxiety, guilt and stress that results or, as relatively new entrants into the transnational workplace, they could bring an outsider's perspective to the manner in which work is organised within their companies. They have the opportunity to debate what it means to be an ideal worker and what work-life balance connotes. Outside of the workplace, as wage earners, investors and contributors to the family's income they are in a position to question consumerism and set limits on taking economic risks. At a broader level they could then engage with the question of what sort of community and nation they wish to build for their children. They could discuss how best to capitalise on India's integration into the world economy and without exposing the next generation to the risks of unfettered consumerism or of a nation divided in economic, developmental and communal terms. If they successfully free themselves from the tyranny of the time famine they can set the example of civic engagement for their children.

These are not easy questions to face, when the needs of the family and the external economic realities demand a second income, when the hopes and the hard-earned incomes of one's parents are invested in one's success and when there are few avenues that allow for self-actualization, fulfilment and economic security with genuine work-life balance. Nor can women engage with these questions without external support. Unless the IT industry provides forums for transparent discussion of these issues without the hype of diversity and inclusivity there is a danger of these discussions being watered down to the level of public relations on the part of companies or piecemeal initiatives however well-intentioned these may be. It is also important that companies encourage women at all levels in the hierarchy to debate these questions to prevent the most articulate individuals from dominating the discussion. These debates cannot be meaningful within industry unless they simultaneously occur within families. In addition to the theoretical contributions that it has attempted to make in an academic context, it is hoped that this thesis has created a space for these questions to be discussed at a personal, social, organisational, industrial and national level.

Stepping across the Migrant's Minefield

In making these arguments and asking these uncomfortable questions I am acutely aware that I ask them from a safe distance, yet how safe is this distance? Throughout the writing of this thesis, in fact through my entire doctoral experience I have been acutely aware of my position as a migrant research scholar. The realisation that I am a migrant came on the one hand from day-to-day practical difficulties and on the other hand through a series of difficult questions: being asked at a conference to represent the Indian point of view ('Impossible,' I reply, 'I can't hope to represent one billion people.'); being questioned at length about a subject that is deeply embarrassing to all middle class Indians: caste (Do I quote the Indian constitution which claims that all citizens are equal or various Indian sociologists who argue that caste is alive and well across the country?); being asked, possibly for the first time in my life, if I am a Hindu

(Am I? And if so do I risk being identified with the Hinduism that is responsible for the carnage at Godra, the destruction of the Babri mosque and men who kill seven year olds because their parents are missionaries? The answer to that one is still uncertain.).

Alongside the compulsion to account for the Indian view from within British academia and there is a simultaneous pressure from within my home culture to provide an authentic (read: positive) account of Indian women to people abroad.[115] Whilst disseminating this thesis in the British academic environment, I hope to have avoided the positions of native informant and ambassador, which both presume a certain expertise on 'the field'. Both positions are ethically suspect as I can neither claim to represent every class, caste, regional or linguistic group within India nor does my insider status directly translate into superior knowledge about my culture. Yet paradoxically I am an insider though my knowledge is partial, positional (Haraway, 1988) and representative a certain perspective on India or amongst Indian feminists, a small truth (DeVault, 1999).

In addition to these risks, I have also faced a minefield of other ethically loaded possibilities: That of reinscribing 'the researched into prevailing representations' of victimhood or deviance (Bhavnani, 1994:30). Given the prevailing representations of Third World women, it would have been easy to fall into the trap of constructing my participants as victims (Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 2000) of their culture, their patriarchal families and global capitalism. Such a position would deny their agency in negotiating with their families, their capacity to challenge power structures and their sense of control over their lives. The reverse has been to construct 'heroine stories' celebrating the success and empowerment of Third World women in First World spaces. Both positions would have disguised the ways in which power is exchanged, bartered, exercised, withheld and deployed in various social interactions.

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[115] Nowhere was this more evident than in some of my participants questioning me, 'Do you understand what I am saying?' or instructing 'This is what you have to say about Indian women.'

There is also the temptation of presenting an over-essentialised picture of my culture in the face of myths and fallacies about 'Third World cultures' which I encounter from time to time in my academic and social environment. The danger of essentialism is exacerbated by the binary terms East-West (or the more popular Western- non-Western), developed-developing, First World-Third World which are part of the day-to-day vocabulary of British academia. While they may be useful shorthand for a set of cultural characteristics, economic conditions or political positions they can be dangerous in becoming representative of essentialized notions about the cultures that they subsume within them. Although I use them in my thesis, I would like to reiterate that the terms are only useful shorthand and I use them with an understanding that they somewhat haphazardly blend the experiences of a very diverse set of cultures.

Stepping away from over-essentialization I encounter the danger of uncritically using theories and frameworks which have been developed in the context of Britain, Europe and America to understand the situation of Indian women. Women's relationships with their families and to paid employment are informed by the cultural and historical context in which they live. Therefore it is important that the theories developed in one cultural context are not applied to another without careful thought. Fortunately, feminism as a discipline recognises the diversity of women's experiences of oppression as a result of different ethnic, racial or class origins and differences in sexual preference, age or occupational category (Maynard, 1994). The feminist notion of difference recognises that oppression of and discrimination against women is culturally specific and different for women of different classes, races, ethnicities, ages and sexual orientations. It allows for the theorization of privilege (Maynard, 1994), the privilege of white, middle class or upper caste women which can be masked by the too easy equation of the terms 'oppression' and 'women'. Thereby it helps create 'situated knowledges' which are limited in location, which are by necessity partial but can be used to make broader theoretical arguments (Haraway,

1988). The experiences of contemporary middle class women Indian women have been analysed in their specific cultural and historical context, taking their own interpretations of their experiences as the starting point for broader generalizations about modernity and globalization.

The concept of difference is most useful if it alerts us not only to diversity between ethnic and national communities but to the internal diversity within the communities themselves. So for instance when this thesis speaks of 'Indian women' it is addressing the experiences of a very specific group of Indian women: middle class, English speaking, urban based, aged between 24 and 37 years and employed in transnational companies i.e. women who are on the frontlines of globalization. It would be misleading to generalize uncritically from this category to 'all Indian women'. Mohanty (2003:38) argues that labels such as 'Indian women' 'Arab women' or 'women of Africa' mask the ethnic and class differences within these categories and also construct the relationship between all men and all women of these societies as *always* exploitative and conflict-ridden. The very diversity within India makes it problematic to identify any specific practice, value or norm as representative of Indian culture, even though nationalist discourses have resulted in claims regarding a uniform 'Indian culture' and the formation of an Indian identity.

Yet the uncritical use of difference can lead to another pitfall – that of obliterating the similarities between cultures that are located in different geographical areas, especially those that confronted each other in unequal relations of colonialism. The tendency of each power to create an identity in opposition to the other can obliterate the 'Profound *similarities* between Western culture and many of its Others, such as hierarchical social systems, huge economic disparities between members, and the mistreatment and inequality of women' (Narayan, 2003:84; italics in original). The concept of difference is most effective when used alongside that of similarity. Cautious and limited comparisons with other cultures have helped me to understand the experiences of

my participants better and to recognise the similarities in women's experiences of work-life collision, motherhood and individualization across different cultures.

With all its pitfalls, being a doctoral student in an international research environment has been of immense value. Sharing experiences in an international Women's Studies classroom is exciting and invigorating because it brings insights that not only help me understand my own experiences (and those of my participants) more completely but creates a sense of kinship and solidarity with women with whom I would have imagined having very little in common. The delight, the amazement, the sense of discovery with which students exclaim, 'That's almost exactly like what happens in *my* country (or home, or culture)!' in response to each others' stories is difficult to describe yet instantly recognizable to any student of Women's Studies. It is the sense of resonance (Wikan, 1993) which the '*almost* exactliness' of another's story invokes in us that allows to meet beyond cultural differences in a spirit of human kinship. It is in this spirit of resonance that I offer this thesis to other scholars.

Appendix A
Biographies of Participants

Interviewees

Anita, 32, has an MBA and is married with two children aged six years and six months respectively and works in a middle management position in Human Resources in a large Indian transnational company. She lives in a simple household with her husband who is in a senior management position and her children but his grandmother has temporarily moved in to supervise childcare.

Anjana, aged 33, has an eight year old child lives in a joint household with her husband, mother-in-law and parents. She has a degree in engineering and 11 years' work experience. She has an engineering degree and is currently a manager in the technical writing division of a medium sized transnational company.

Cristina, 29, is married to a lecturer in a college. She has two children aged five and one. She has a BSc in Computer Science and works at the administrative level in a reputed transnational company and has nine years' work experience. She lives in a nuclear household but her mother has temporarily moved in to help with the childcare.

Deepika, 27, a financial analyst, has six years' work experience and works for the offshore development centre of a well known transnational company. She has a bachelor's degree in commerce and is currently completing her MBA. She is married and lives in a joint household with her husband who is in a similar line of work.

Geetika, aged, 32, has two children aged five and one. She has a Bachelor's degree in catering and eight years' work experience. She has recently taken up a (junior level) operations management role in a large transnational company after a career break. Her husband is in a senior management position. They live in a nuclear household.

Hema, 26, is married to a software engineer. She works as an administrator in an established transnational company and has 8 years' work experience. She completed her BSc degree via distance learning while working and is currently doing an MBA programme also via distance learning. She currently lives in a single person household as her husband's job has taken him to another city.

Jaya, 33, is married with a child aged five. She has a Master's degree in Computer Application and works as the manager of a software maintenance team for a large transnational company. She is currently pursuing an executive MBA programme. Her husband has a similar role in another transnational company. They live in a joint household which includes her grandmother.

Kanti is 35 years old and has a Bachelor of Arts degree. She has seven years' work experience and is currently in an administrative position in well known transnational company. She lives in a joint household with her husband who is unemployed, her child and her in-laws.

Lathika is 33 years old and single. She currently heads recruitment in the Offshore division of a medium size transnational company and has 10 years' experience in the industry. Lathika has a Master's Degree in Social Work is currently pursuing an MBA programme via distance learning. She lives with her parents.

Malini, 33, has a three year old child. She has an MBA in Human Resources and had about 7 years' experience working with a large Indian transnational company

when she took a career break to bring up her child. She currently lives in a nuclear household with her husband, a software engineer.

Maya, 37, is married with a two year old child. She has a Master's degree in Social Work and 13 years' work experience. She heads the human resources division in the offshore development centre of a large transnational company. She lives in a nuclear household with her husband, who holds a senior position in the banking and financial sector, and her child.

Meenakshi is 24 years old and has recently separated from her husband. She has about two years' work experience in the IT industry and a Bachelor of Arts degree. Harassment as a result of her ambiguous marital position caused her to give up her job as an executive in the human resource division of a medium sized transnational IT company and choose similar role in the fitness industry. She lives in a working women's hostel.

Nalini is 37 and has one child aged twelve. Her husband is a lecturer in a college and also has a part-time real estate business. With degrees in Social Work and Law and twelve years' experience, she is currently working as a junior manager in the legal division of the offshore development centre of an established transnational company.

Nitya, 27, is an executive financial analyst with a well known transnational company. She is a qualified (chartered) accountant and has about three years' work experience. Her husband works in a similar area. She lives in a joint household wit her husband and his parents.

Rupa, 28, has been married for three years. The human resource manager for a division of a large Indian transnational company with 6 years' experience, Rupa has an MBA. Rupa was born in Bangalore but her father's job as an employee of

a public sector firm took the family to different parts of the country. She currently lives in a nuclear household with her husband, a software engineer.

Savita, 32, has a four year old child. She has a degree in engineering and 11 years' work experience. She currently works in a senior management position in a large Indian transnational company, heading a team of over 150 people. Savita lives in a joint household which consists of her husband a businessman, her mother-in-law and her child.

Shreela, aged 29, is a software engineer and works in a junior management position with a well known transnational company. She has an engineering degree and nine years' work experience. She lives in a nuclear household with her husband who is also a software engineer.

Sumiaya, aged 29, has a two year old child and lives in a nuclear household with her husband who works with a charity. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree and works as a human resource executive in a large transnational company. She has about 5 years' work experience.

Swati, 34, has one child aged eight. She has a PhD in Computer Science and 8 years' experience in IT. She heads a software development team of about 45 people for the offshore development centre of a transnational company. She currently lives with her daughter in Bangalore; her husband, a government employee whose job keeps him elsewhere, visits often as do her in-laws.

Participants in Focus Groups

Anjali is 30 years old and has eight years work experience. She is currently working as a human resources manager in a large Indian transnational company. She lives in a nuclear household with her husband and child aged two.

Beena, 30, has seven years' experience works in marketing at a junior managerial level with a medium sized Indian transnational company. She is married and lives in a nuclear household.

Jyoti, 29, is married with a one year old child. She works as a business development executive in a well established transnational company. She currently lives in a nuclear household with her husband and child but her mother or mother-in-law often visit to help with childcare.

Punita, 37, is married and lives in a nuclear household with her husband and two children aged 11 and 8. She works in as a marketing executive in a well established transnational company.

Sarah, 36, is married and has 11 years work experience. She works in a middle managerial level in business operations in an established transnational company. She is married and currently lives in a single person household as her husband works elsewhere.

Swarna, 31, is married and lives in a joint household with her husband, her parents-in-law, her husband's grandmother and her child aged one. She works at a junior managerial level in the research and development section of a large transnational Indian Company.

Upasna is 28 years old and married. She works in an executive level in product development with a well known transnational company. She lives in a nuclear household with her husband.

Appendix B

Invitations Sent to Potential Participants

1. Email Invitations Regarding Blogs Sent to Friends and Personal Contacts

I intend to start a blog with regard to my research on the lives of professional women in India. The blog would be a forum for participants to collaborate in the research process through all stages of the research, and not just in the interviews.

The blog will be a sort of ongoing conversation about the questions that I am addressing in my research about what it is to be an Indian woman in corporate 'globalised' India, the challenge of managing personal and professional life or in the case of young mothers – what it means to juggle priorities of motherhood and work– the emotional issues, the stress, and also some of the funnier aspects.

The reasons I want to do this that I don't want to research from an ivory tower – I would like to know from the women who the research is about what they think is important – what are the issues I need to look at and whether my interpretations are correct. Since it is a research project about professional women' identities- I would like their inputs in the direction the project should take.

This is how I see the blog working: I will put down some thoughts in the form of brief posts for people to comment on - the address of the blog will be shared with a few women (5-6) who are currently in the IT industry in Bangalore and they will be requested to comment on the ideas posted from their experiences and viewpoint. Unless they wish to, they will not

be required to reveal who they are and where they work on the blog. One of the advantages of a blog is that because of the brief nature of posts and comments it does not require much time and effort from participants The participants would need to commit to write-in at least once each week (more often if they wish) commenting on the posts –

After the research, if all the participants agree the blog can then be used to disseminate the ideas that emerge from the research including myself- but this is would be a joint decision only if all of us feel it necessary/ are comfortable with it.

I see it as a sort of conversation in text - participants may comment on my posts or react to each other comments jokes, rants and grumbles will be welcome.

It is not something intellectual or cerebral - the best was to describe it would be A CHAT.

I am looking for women preferably but not necessarily in IT companies in Bangalore They could be in any function and at any level. They need to be between the ages of 28 -35, married/ single, with/without children. These criteria are not sacrosanct – for instance if you know a woman who does not meet these criteria but is someone who has interesting views on the issue let me know.

Regards
Jyothsna

2. Email Invitations to Participants who Offered to Respond on the Blog

Hello All

We're all set to go! The blog is called The Coffee Circle. URL: http://thecoffeecircle.blogspot.com/ You can start writing any time this week. I will post ideas and questions 2-3 times a week. You are all requested to respond at least once a week although hopefully some of you will enjoy it enough to do so more often.

Just a couple of reminders:
This blog will be kept 'low-profile' i.e. it will not be advertised and linking with other blogs will be kept to a minimum. Please minimise links in your comments unless you want to link to an article or a website that you think is relevant. There are two reasons for this: firstly the conversations on this blog are part of the PhD I would not like other research ers to see it before I have done my analysis. Secondly, all of you will be commenting from personal experience and while I am sure you will not reveal names of people and organisations, please remember that you are sharing on the World Wide Web which is accessible across the world.

Do share your ideas/ experiences frankly (that is very important for the research) but also protect your own identity, that of family/friends and colleagues (if you mention them on the blog) and that of the organisations you work for. As experienced professionals you already are aware of this, but I need to say it anyway since it is part of my professional code.

With this in mind I would urge you to use a pseudonym under which you comment (once you have chosen it please stick to it so that people can identify you with that name). Please avoid discussing the contents of the blog with other

people and respect the confidentiality of other blog members. Please do not share the URL with other people.

That said, you need not worry. I have been keeping a personal blog for several months and have found that if you maintain a low profile, do not list your blog on the 'blog lists and minimise links you hardly get any traffic (viewers) other than those to whom you have personally given the URL as I have done in this mail.

For my records I would need you to fill in the attached questionnaire (it's very brief) and email it back to me by the end of the week.

Warm regards and gratitude,
I hope this will prove the beginning of an exciting and rewarding journey for all of us.

Jyothsna

3. Email Invitation to Focus Groups Discussion

Subject: You are invited to a group discussion.

I am an independent researcher working on a PhD at the University of York in Britain. I am running two focus groups for professional women in Bangalore as part of my PhD research on the multiple identities of professional women in India. My research addresses issues such as how globalization has affected women and the opportunities it has given rise to, how women perceive the changes in their lives, the manner in which they address tradition and modernity and the sorts of issues they deal with in fulfilling the demands of their professional and personal lives. The focus group discussion will be aimed at women in the age group of 28 to 35 years.

The groups are scheduled as follows:

Single/ married women without children: 10 a.m. Saturday 1st April 2006

Women with children: 2 p.m. Saturday 1st April 2006

Both groups will last 2 - 2.5 hours and take place at the following venue:

R & M Associates, Number 587(ground floor below Vijayshree Diagnostics),

1st Cross, 3rd Block Sarjapur Road, Koramangala, Bangalore

I request you to please make time to attend.

Directions: If you come from Jaynagar or Brigade Road you need to pass The Forum at Koramangala and get on to Sarjapur Road. Continue straight on Sarjapur Road till you pass St. John's Hospital followed by a traffic light junction. R-M associates is the fifth building on the left after the lights (on the service road) Look out for Vijayshree Diagnostics. If you come from Indiranagar take the Ring Road to the BDA complex which is followed by a traffic light

junction. R-M associates is the fifth building on the left after the lights (on the service road) Look out for Vijayshree Diagonistics.

Please make allowances for traffic congestion when estimating the time taken to reach the venue. There is usually parking space available on the service road.

Please revert to me at the phone number or email address below to confirm your participation. I will also be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thanking you

Jyothsna Belliappa

RSVP: jbelliappa@gmail.com or 9886043490 (Please do confirm your participation by Thursday the 30th of March)

4. Request for Interview

I am a research scholar working on a PhD at the University of York in Britain. My PhD research investigates the experiences of professional Indian women working in multi-national IT companies in India. It addresses issues such as how globalization has affected women and the opportunities it has given rise to, how women perceive the changes in their lives, the manner in which they address tradition and modernity and the sorts of issues they deal with in fulfilling the demands of their professional and personal lives. (more details are available at the following link: http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/cws/gsp/resstud.htm#Jyothsna)

I am currently in India for fieldwork and would like to interview women in the age group of 28 to 35 who are currently employed in IT companies in Bangalore (in any function). These interviews would be conducted at any time or place convenient to you and your responses and your identity will be kept confidential. My only request is that you set aside about 2 to 2 and 1/2 hours of uninterrupted time for the interviews.

I hope you will agree to contribute to a research project that has potential in bringing to light some of the issues that women face in the workplace and wider society. I believe you will find the experience interesting and rewarding.

Thanks and regards

Jyothsna Belliappa

Telephone: 98860-43490
Email: j.belliappa@gmail.com

Appendix C

Participant Profile and Consent Form

Please fill out the following form which indicates your profile and your consent to the terms and conditions under which your responses will be used in the research.

1. Name of Participant

2. Nature of participation

3. Age

4. Marital Status

5. Number of children (and their ages) if applicable

6. Nature of organisation I am currently working for (e.g. Transnational Company employing over 1000 people)

7. Nature of work and designation

8. Number of years of work experience

Please read the following statements carefully and indicate your consent. These are the terms and conditions under which the research will take place:

a) Your name and identity will be kept confidential and will not be used in any publications based on the research.

b) Your responses within the interview/ focus group will be audio taped; these audio tapes will be heard by me, the researcher, and other people involved in the research such as supervisors and examiners. They will not be share with anyone outside the above mentioned research team.

c) Any quotes of your responses within the interview/ focus group will be made non- attributable

I have read and am agreeable to the above terms and conditions. Yes/ No

Signature   Date

Thank you for your participation in my PhD research
Jyothsna Belliappa

Appendix D

Interview and Focus Group Guides

Interview Guide

1. Tell me a little about yourself- *[this question is open- ended – I use it to allow the interviewee's priority area to emerge and then allow that to dictate the sequence of questions]*

2. Describe a typical workday/ weekend
   - Daily routine
   - Interests, pastimes; favourite books, TV programmes, films
   - Weekend – what would you do – how do you spend your time
   - Travel – places you have visited or would like to visit

3. Life changes due to globalization

   - Effect of technology boom/ entry of transnational companies on Bangalore; on your own life
   - Cultural changes as a result of globalization in India: what changes do you see
   - Has life turned out the way you imagined as a child: personal life; professional life – probe how it is different from what was imagined

4. When you compare your life to that of your mother: what is different and what has remained the same
   - Relationship to spouse
   - Relationship with in-laws
   - Relationships with extended family

- Manner of parenting; educational choices for children
- Manner of housekeeping
- People who are important to you/ whose point of view influences you
- Priorities, hopes for future
- Choices in personal life/ professional life
- Manner of handling pregnancy
- Dress, styles
- Celebrations, rituals

5. Childhood Memories
   - Best childhood memories
   - Is there anything from your childhood that you would like to preserve in your adult life/ your children's lives
   - Is there anything from your childhood that you would not want in your children's lives

6. Priorities/ Decision Making Process
   - What are your priorities today
   - Have priorities changed from past – how why
   - Will they change in future – how why
   - When you take a decision about your career – who do you consult? what do you discuss?
   - Decisions about children – people involved; factors considered e.g. decisions about which school

7. Importance of work
   - What motivates you to go to work / why do you work
   - Good things about your job
   - Major challenges/ how do you cope
   - Sources of support for your work

o Within workplace

o Within home

8. Work-life balance

- Difficulties faced

- Coping Strategies

- How effective

- What's your organisation doing to help

- How do individual bosses and colleagues help/ hinder

- How do you manage the rest of your life to fit with work

- Compromises on work/ career front – have you made any' do you expect to make any

9. Being a woman in your company

- Sort of image which works best to succeed

- How do you project this image

- Being a woman constrain you in any way – how? How do you cope

- Examples of discrimination:

  o faced by self/ others

  o ways of dealing: personal; company strategies; how effective are these

10. Sources of Satisfaction/ Pride/ Concern

- What in your life gives you the greatest satisfaction? Why?

- What aspect of your life gives you the most stress/ anxiety

- How do you cope?

- If you could change your life in any way how would you do so?

Focus Group Guide

1. **Introduction**

   Appreciation for coming

   Purpose of my research

   a. address how women in India have responded to globalization, what sorts of changes have come about in their professional and personal lives. How they respond to the cultural changes that have resulted from globalization. Bangalore is venue – forefront of globalization

   b. Also looking at issues of gender and the workplace and work-life balance

   Confidentiality

   Globalization

2. When we think about globalization – what comes to mind? From when would you date globalization in India? How has life changed after globalization? How has it stayed the same?

   How do you think globalization has affected your own personal life... examples

   Life Changes

3. If we were to think of our lives and those of our mothers what is the difference between the two:

   - What has remained the same?
   - Relationships between spouses
   - Relationships with parents, in-laws and siblings
   - Manner of parenting
   - Manner of housekeeping
   - Priorities
   - Choices in personal and professional lives
   - Hopes and dreams

- Fears and Concerns
- Attitude to money, investments etc.

5. Collage: can you create a collage of the professional Indian woman today

Work/ Professional Life

6. How important a role does work play in our lives... Why?

7. Imagine a scenario where you were not working... how would you feel? Why?

8. What is it that motivates you to go to work? Is there more than one motivation?

9. What are the good things about your job? The not so good things?

10. If you had to design the ideal job what would it be like ...

16. Is professional life different for men and for women? In what way? What are the things that help women in their professional lives...? What are the problems they face?

17. How do they deal with these problems?

18. What are the major sources of support in your professional life ... at work ...at home?

19. How do you manage to maintain a balance between your personal and professional life? What sorts of difficulties do you face?

20. What are the various things that your organization has done to help you in this area? How successful have these measures been? What more can be done?

21. In what way can individual colleagues or bosses help/ What sort of behaviour can be a hindrance? Could you give examples from your or others' experiences (without mentioning names)....

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