

PRODUCING WORKING MOTHERS: MATERNALIST LABOR CONTROL IN A HUNGARIAN FACTORY

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials previously accepted for any other degree in any other institutions and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where the appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the gendered work regimes of a Hungarian factory, a local producer which is integrated into transnational production, using the research method of participant observation. The main aim of the project is to analyze the post-state socialist developments in the world of work in Hungary from a feminist and sociological perspective. I carry out my analysis at multiple levels: that of the company, the local and national-level institutional and ideological context as well as the global production networks. My research highlights the embedded nature of gendered production regimes and seeks not only to examine how globalization influences the local, but also how the decisions and actions of local actors, such as workers and managers shape the multiple processes of globalization.

The analysis draws on and contributes to three, closely connected sets of scholarly literature: the theory of production politics, feminist theories on gender in production, and the literature on work-family balance. I also reflect on relevant arguments from the expanding body of scholarship on post-state socialist societies.

This dissertation is the first analysis that demonstrates the complex relationships between a locally specific work regime and explicitly gendered state policies, thus contributing to the theory of production politics. I argue that the company's management meets the contradictory demands of a skill-dependent labor process and a highly competitive market by constructing a committed yet low-paid blue-collar workforce of 'working mothers' through a labor control strategy based on special work-family practices. I have termed the emerging gendered local factory regime 'maternalist hegemony' and argue that it is shaped by state-level work-family policies. The second contribution the dissertation makes to the theory of production politics is demonstrating how gender and workers' position in the company

hierarchy intersect in shaping labor control, constituting white and blue-collar workers as differently gendered subjects.

The dissertation also addresses feminist theories of how gender shapes production by arguing for local-level, contextual analyses of women's inclusion in and exclusion from paid work, and by demonstrating the advantages of such an approach. It is only by paying attention to local factors that seeming paradoxes around women's labor as expensive/cheap can be explored.

Finally, this dissertation contributes to the scholarly literature on work-family arrangements and aims to politicize it by highlighting how managerial control is embedded in work-family arrangements contributing to the marginalization of women workers in low-paid and low-prestige jobs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I arrived at the company I refer to as KFT in early 2008, after exchanging only two e-mail messages with the company's chief executive officer. We met at a conference on work-family practices, where the CEO was one of the presenters: her company holds several government awards for being a 'family-friendly' workplace. When I asked her at the end of her presentation whether the flexible work – family arrangements she had just described were accessible to blue-collar workers as well, she responded with an enthusiastic 'yes.' This was great news to me, as I planned a comparative study on how blue- and white-collar women and men negotiate their paid work and family responsibilities at work and at home, that is, on the class aspect of families' employment strategies.

The CEO, who manages a successful electronics factory and has a degree in engineering, seemed out of place at the conference where the audience consisted of human relations professionals, feminist activists and labor market experts. First of all, she introduced herself using her husband's name, so the moderator had to ask for her first name before she could address her less formally during the question and answer session. Second, when a feminist economist criticized the Hungarian government for the lack of attention to gender equality in the state level work-family policy framework, the CEO was the only one who defended the government's position. Despite these warning signs, I approached her at the end of the conference, partly out of curiosity but mostly because I needed help.

I needed help, because two months earlier I had to leave the first 'field' of my dissertation research: after a week of conducting participant observation at a large multinational company in Budapest, my permission was withdrawn, even though the research site was chosen carefully and the permission to enter was negotiated. Everything seemed to go well until one of the managers realized that participant observation gave me too much

insight, which he understood as a threat to the company. Unfortunately, he had more power than my supporter, the human resources manager did, and I was left without a site to conduct research. I spent the following weeks approaching other multinationals who claimed that they had a range of work-family policies, or special initiatives for promoting women's inclusion in management, but without success. Thus, the chance meeting with the CEO of a small factory in the country seemed a fantastic opportunity.

Our first proper meeting went very well: in her office she was friendly and forthcoming, gave me her full attention, and after looking at my letters of recommendation and listening to my sad story, she gave me permission to 'enter the field' immediately. Perhaps she wanted to prove that this company was better than the secretive multinationals, perhaps she took pity on me. Either way, she decided to help me, and at the end of the meeting she gave me a tour of the company, introduced me to all the managers and the office workers, walked me through the shop floor, and generally, acted as my fairy godmother.

When I started the field work in earnest, I was struck by the high level of co-operation between blue-collar women and the management. I once spent a day in the factory when all managers and white-collar employees left the premises to attend a training course, leaving only blue-collar workers and me in the factory. As if nothing had happened, the women on the shop floor carried on with their routine, assembling, testing and packaging cable harnesses. I could hardly believe it – a factory where production goes on without the bosses. The only thing out of the ordinary was that most women, but none of the blue-collar men celebrated the special occasion by ordering lunch from a local pizzeria and eating together. I was also included in the fun: they asked me to make the phone call to the restaurant and place the orders they had collected. Despite the festive mood at lunch, they did not even extend the usual 20-minute break but returned to their work stations on time and continued to labor as usual.

What makes this self-imposed discipline that points to hegemonic control puzzling is that blue-collar women, who make up the majority of this co-operative workforce, earn very low wages: they are hired for the national minimum wage, the pay rise that goes with tenure is low, and although they all receive tax-free fringe benefits, the value of these does not exceed the centrally regulated amount that most Hungarian companies pay to their workers. Why were these women so co-operative with the management? Why do they have such long tenure, or in other words, why are they so committed to the factory?

To make the case even more unusual, the better paid office staff seemed less happy with their work than those on the shop floor – they made more critical comments about the company and complained more about their jobs. On the particular Friday that I spent in the factory with the blue-collar workers, the office staff was away on a training session that continued on Saturday as well. Later they said that the training itself was OK, but some of them, especially women with young children were less than enthusiastic about spending half of their weekend locked up in a room with their colleagues. Although some white collar workers also had very long tenure, the turnover among office staff was higher than among manual workers. Thus, the second puzzle that I aim to solve is this counterintuitive difference between the ‘satisfaction’ of office and shop floor workers.

I have approached the case with arguments from three sets of scholarly literature: the theory of gendered production politics, the feminist literature on gender in production, and the literature on work-family balance. These bodies of scholarship partially overlap with each other, and all of them include arguments about (post-) state-socialist societies.

I have formulated the following research questions: What locally specific gendered production regimes emerge at KFT? What are the gendered institutional, ideological and interactional factors that underlie these regimes? How do gender and occupational class intersect in shaping the production regimes? What can these gendered work regimes and the

context they are embedded in tell us about the changing organization of work in post-state socialist Hungary, and the linkages between local and global levels of capitalist production?

Existing theories of gendered production politics, although serve as an important starting point for my analysis, cannot sufficiently explain the emergence of the locally specific gendered production regimes, because most existing research has been carried out in localities where explicitly gendered state policies do not exist (Bank Munoz 2008; Burawoy 1979; Lee 1998; McKay 2006; Salzinger 2003). Although some studies on gendered production regimes focus on post-state socialist settings, explicitly gendered state policies are irrelevant to most of them (Peng 2011; Pun 2005; Pun and Smith 2007), and in the few cases where they are relevant (Dunn 2001, 2004; Lee 1998; 1999), it is the *disappearance*, rather than the reconfiguration of gendered state-level work-family policies that has a strong influence on work regimes.

In Hungary however, such state policies have existed continuously since the 1960s: they influence production directly, through bureaucratic state intervention, and indirectly, through influencing the institutional and ideological context of the factory regime, that is, the labor market, the gender division of labor in the families and the dominant gender ideologies. The first goal of my project is to analyze the mechanisms and the outcome of their influence on gendered work regimes. Thus, I aim to contribute to theories of gendered production politics by including gendered state policies and their contextual effects in the analytical framework, and explore how they may influence factory regimes and their institutional and ideological contexts not only in post-state socialist, but also in other locations.

The feminist literature on gender in production, which is the second set of literature I seek to address, is an extensive field. Arguments about the effect of motherhood on women's inclusion in and exclusion from the world of paid work are highly relevant to my case study. According to existing arguments, mothers may be excluded from or marginalized in paid

work because they do not conform to the ‘ideal worker’ norm (Acker 1990; Hochschild 1997, 2005; Kelly et al 2010) or on the contrary, they may be the preferred choice of employers as ‘cheap labor’ in feminized segments of the labor market (Freeman 2000; Lamphere et al. 1993; Joekes 1987 cited in Safa 1990; Rubery and Wilkinson 1994). My analysis, which focuses on the workers of one company and pays attention to the local institutional and ideological context, can map the conditions of mothers’ inclusion in and exclusion from the workforce. In addition, by focusing on two groups of women workers with childcare responsibilities at one company allows me to compare how reproductive difference intersects with occupational class in shaping women’s inclusion in paid work while holding other elements of the institutional and ideological context constant.

Discussions about mothers’ inclusion in the world of work take me back to the role of the state in influencing women’s employment. State socialist societies included women in paid work on the principle of difference, which led to their limited inclusion, but also to the reshaping of the world of paid employment in a way that adapted to women’s reproductive difference (Fodor 2003). After the post-state socialist transformations reproductive difference has gained new meanings and importance in the labor market (Einhorn 1993; Fodor 2005, 2006; Gal and Kligman 2000a; Glass 2008; Haney 2002; Lee 1999; Verdery 1996). This is true in Hungary as well (Glass and Fodor 2007, 2011; Frey 2002, 2009), even though the state-level work-family policies have remained the same. I aim to contribute to these arguments by analyzing how different subsystems of the state operate in seemingly contradictory ways leading to ambiguities around women’s employment.

The final theoretical strand to which I aim to contribute is work-family research that focuses on company- level arrangements and state policies. Although the feminist segment of this body of scholarship has emphasized the inherent dangers of work-family policies on gender equality in employment (Bergman 1998; Mandel 2009; Misra et al.2007), and argued

that workers tend not to use workplace policies because they are afraid of the negative consequences on their careers (Crompton et al. 2007; Hochschild 1997; Mandel 2009; Maume and Bellas 2001; Milkman 2009; Williams 2000), the conceptual distinction between companies' work-family culture and managerial power and control has been maintained (Crompton 1998; Crompton et al. 2007). At the same time, a pragmatic and rather innocent connection is assumed to exist between work-family policies and positive outcomes for employers, such as "improved organizational morale" (Milkman 2009: 350) and retention of employees (Lewis 2009; Milkman 2009; Williams 2000, 2010).

I seek to contribute to this body of scholarship by conceptualizing company-level work-family arrangements, including the implementation of state-level work-family policies, as part of labor control. In other words, my dissertation's political contribution to feminist scholarship is that work-family arrangements need to be analyzed critically not only in terms of their impact on gender equality, but also in terms of management-worker relations.

I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork at KFT using the research method of participant observation in order to find answers to my research questions. I have also conducted interviews with experts to map the basic labor control practices of other local factories, as the employment decisions of blue-collar mothers who work at KFT can be understood only in the context of the local economy.

My study contributes to the theory of production politics by arguing that the committed workforce of blue-collar women is created through a maternalist managerial rhetoric and special work-family arrangements which allow these women to divide their time and energy between full time paid work and care work at home. Through these methods management successfully incorporates workers' motherhood ideology into shop floor control, which constitutes blue-collar women as working mothers, that is, special workers whose

maternal identity is prioritized over their identities as workers. I have termed the production regime built on this labor control strategy as maternalist hegemony.

Gender and workers' position in the occupational hierarchy are intertwined in shaping labor control: control over white collar workers is not maternalist, but also hegemonic and based on work-family arrangements. This type of control constitutes white-collar workers as implicitly masculine subjects. This argument partially reinstates Burawoy's statement (1985) that work contexts do not depend on the individual people who labor, only on the positions they fill in the labor process. Overall, my arguments about the local work regimes give empirical support to Burawoy's (1985) assertion that in the era of globally mobile capitalism work-life programs may be used by managements to increase profitability. However, I argue that this happens in a highly gendered way, which problematizes the link between women's reproductive difference and profitability.

This dissertation contributes to feminist theories of gender in production by exploring how the explicitly gendered, maternalist state policy framework shapes the factory regimes by contributing to women's vulnerable labor market position and by shaping all elements of the institutional, ideological and interactional context around the work regime. Maternalist state policies and the motherhood ideology embedded in them aim to include women in the workforce on the basis of the principle of women's difference, and contribute to their marginalization in the post-state socialist labor market, which explains why working mothers are selectively hired by the management. At the same time, these policies limit class differences between women's work-family strategies, moderating the inequalities generated by the post-state socialist transformations of the labor market between different groups of women, but exacerbating inequalities between men and women.

The final theoretical contribution is to the work-family literature: highlighting how work-family arrangements are intertwined with managerial control, I have politicized this

field of scholarship. My study demonstrates that work-family arrangements contribute to the marginalization of women workers in a feminized, low-pay segment of the labor market through a variety of mechanisms, which include, but cannot be reduced to discrimination.

1.1 Overview of the dissertation

In the next chapter I discuss the theoretical framework of my analysis and the contribution this study makes to theories of production politics, feminist theorizing on gender in production and to the scholarly literature on work-family policies.

In chapter 3 I provide information that positions the factory within the local economic and political context. I give an overview of the post-state socialist labor market of Hungary and the city where KFT is located, paying special attention to men and women's different position. Then I describe the state policies and provisions designed to help Hungarian parents to reconcile paid work and care work in the family, and conclude the chapter by describing the city's production system, paying special attention to the development of the electronics industry where KFT, the company in my case study, belongs to and summarize the company's history and its connections to global production networks.

In chapter 4 I describe the data sources and the methodologies I have used, and reconstruct the research process in brief. I discuss my position in the company as a site of ethnographic fieldwork and address the ethical and epistemological issues that are relevant to my research as a feminist project.

Next, in chapter 5 I describe the company position in the product market and how this position influences the technical organization of the labor process and in turn the managerial expectations toward blue-collar workers. In the final part of the chapter I compare the labor process, the wages, the work hours and worker commitment in KFT to those in other electronics factories in the local production regime, in order to map the context in which the

blue-collar women in my study make their employment decisions and the management of KFT tries to secure a stable a workforce.

Chapter 6 focuses on the shop floor: I discuss the methods of labor control, focusing on the managerial rhetoric and the formal and informal company practices that serve as a basis for the hegemonic work regime. I show how the labor control strategy incorporates blue-collar women's motherhood ideology, and constructs them as working mothers, and establishes a highly informal maternalistic relationship between the workers and the company's top management.

In chapter 7 I broaden the scope of the analysis and examine the institutional and ideological embeddedness of the maternalist work regime, to explain its emergence and stability. First, I discuss how the state-level work-family policies influence the labor market then I expand the argument made in the previous chapter, and show how state-level work-family policies are implemented on the shop floor. Then I discuss the gender division of paid and unpaid work in blue-collar families, paying special attention to women's motherhood practices and ideology, and finally, I analyze how their male partners influence the work-family strategies of blue-collar women.

The aim of chapter 8 is to draw attention to class differences in the way motherhood shapes the working lives of women in post-state socialist Hungary. First I discuss the managerial control strategies used with office workers, then I contextualize the white-collar work regime by discussing white-collar mothers' work-family strategies, including the division of care work in their households and their gender ideologies.

In chapter 9 I outline my findings in full and conclude the dissertation with my theoretical contributions to the theory of production politics, feminist theories of gender in production and the work-family literature. My conclusions are organized around two overarching issues, the role of the state in and the importance of difference, understood as

women's reproductive difference and as the post-state socialist geopolitical difference, both of which influence how the actions of local workers, their partners and managers contribute to global capitalist production.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Twenty years after the collapse of state socialism Hungary is integrated into global production networks – a process most often discussed by economists using macro level, statistical data. I aim to provide a new perspective on the current state of this integration and the post-socialist development of Hungary by examining the gendered work regime of a local company that engages in export-oriented production.

I have formulated the following research questions: What locally specific gendered production regimes emerge at KFT? What are the gendered institutional, ideological and interactional factors that underlie these regimes? How do gender and occupational class intersect in shaping the production regimes? My goal in this chapter is to explore the answers that have been provided to these questions in three bodies of scholarship: the theory of the labor process, feminist scholarship on gender in work and work-family research. I will also include arguments about state-socialist societies and the post-state socialist transformations within these three fields.

2.1 The theory of production politics

I start the exploration of arguments about gender in labor control by discussing the main arguments of the Marxist theory of labor control: although it does not pay attention to gender, the basic concepts of the theory were established at this stage. The fundamental question of the theory is how the management of the factory achieves that the labor power of workers is translated into actual work on the shop floor and in the office. Marx' answer to the question is that management uses unrestrained coercion to ensure that the work is done (Marx: 1990). Despite the open and often cruel coercion described by Marx, workers did not

have any other alternatives but to go to work every day: they were completely dependent on their wages to reproduce their labor power.

Braverman (1974) argued that in the era of monopoly capitalism the coercion discussed by Marx is "held in reserve" and the main form of capitalist control in the workplace is "manipulation" (1974: 150), which he saw as the product of purely economic forces. The main source of change in labor control in his view was the transformation of the technical side of the labor process: improved technology enabled capital to separate the conception of work from its execution, giving rise to Taylorist scientific management, which deskilled and thus objectified workers.

The notion of deskilling is relevant for my research, as the blue-collar women workers in my study engage in routine assembly work and are classified as 'semi-skilled operatives.' At the same time, the labor process at KFT is not automated: workers do not simply feed and oversee machines, neither are they organized along a moving assembly line, performing the same step in the production process over and over again. Rather, they use hand tools and perform a wide variety of tasks on a several types of different and often changing materials in order to produce small and medium volume, highly customized cable assemblies for several clients. Because there is such a strong emphasis on the flexibility of production, the labor process is not entirely led by engineers, as it is argued by Braverman: when a new product is introduced, the feedback of experienced workers based on their hands-on knowledge is necessary to finalize the labor process. In sum, although the workers are far from the independent craftsmen held in high esteem by Braverman, neither are they deskilled machine operators.

Burawoy (1979, 1985, 2009) extended the theoretical framework of labor process research in a number of important ways. While Braverman focused on the economic and technical aspects of labor control, Burawoy, building on Marx's original argument (Marx:

1990), analytically separated three aspects of production: the economic aspect – producing things, the political aspect – producing social relations, and the ideological aspect – the experience of these social relations (Burawoy 1985: 36), and emphasized the importance of the ideological aspect of production. His theory also distinguishes between two elements of the labor process: the technical organization of production, and the political apparatuses of production, that is, the institutions which regulate and also influence the politics of production.

Burawoy problematizes the relationship between workers and capital, assumed to be antagonistic by Marx and Braverman, when he argues that workers ”participated in and strategized [their] own subordination. [They] were active accomplices in [their] own exploitation” (1985: 10). He argues that under monopoly capitalism the interests of workers are not antagonistic to, but co-ordinated with those of capital, and this explains why workers ’consent’ to their exploitation. In the particular factory Burawoy worked in, consent was produced as the ideological effect of a ’game:’ workers tried to produce more and/or faster in order to earn better wages, but also to have fun and experience self-fulfillment. From the point of view of the management the most important outcome was that the game pulled them into the ”pursuit of capitalist profit” (Burawoy 1985: 10).

Burawoy argues that the most important reason why labor control based on consent becomes dominant over control based on coercion is the influence of the state: via direct intervention into workplace relations, for example by regulating a minimum wage, and other labor laws; and via the indirect effects of welfare provisions, such as unemployment benefits, health insurance and pensions. These provisions make workers less dependent on their wages and thus, on the companies for the reproduction of their labor power. The theory also outlines a periodization of factory regime types under capitalism: he terms the factory regime characterized by open coercion despotic, and the regime based on consent hegemonic, but

argues that these two types may coexist (Burawoy 1985). For the era of globally mobile capital he predicted the emergence of the hegemonic despotic regimes – but this part of his theorization cannot be as well developed as the analysis of hegemonic regimes.

Although the theoretical framework developed by Burawoy does not pay attention to gender,¹ and several other aspects of his theory have been reformulated, as I will discuss below, it still provides the basis for my research. Two points are particularly important: first, Burawoy argues that any work context is “independent of the particular people who come to work, of the particular agents of production (1985: 39).” Most arguments that I will discuss below problematize this statement by pointing out that gender, age, race/ethnicity of workers and managers all influence the work context. However, my observations of the managerial control over blue- and white collar women at KFT prompt me to return to this argument by comparing the modes of labor control used with these two groups of women.

Second, Burawoy argues that the factory regime of hegemonic despotism emerges with a “crisis of profitability” and he predicts that under hegemonic despotism employers may use “quality of work-life programmes” in order to increase profitability (1985: 128). The strong rhetoric of work-family balance at the firm in my case study inspires me to use the ethnographic data to examine this prediction. What makes this point even more interesting is the post-state socialist context of my case study: the crisis of profitability and the influence of globally mobile capital take on different meanings here than in developed capitalist economies Burawoy focused on.

¹ To be precise, gender is part of the Marxist theory of labor control: it is the implicitly masculine working subject of the ‘creator’ who is at the centre the theory as Knights and Willmott (1989, quoted in Salzinger 2001) and Salzinger (2001) pointed out. The critics argue that because Burawoy refuses to investigate the gendered meanings that workers make of the production process, and concentrates only on practices, he misses the opportunity to discover the importance of gendered subjectivities on the shop floor. As a side-effect, the gendered labor control practices are not analyzed either, as these would address the workers gendered subjectivities (Salzinger 2001).

Burawoy's analytical framework has been expanded in a number of directions, as I will discuss below. Before I turn to arguments that 'gender' the theory of production politics, I first discuss McKay's argument (2006) that expands to notion of consent to that of commitment.

2.1.1 Commitment

McKay (2006) expands the theoretical framework developed by Burawoy incorporating the notion of worker commitment, bringing together Burawoy's argument about manufacturing consent and management science's insights about commitment.² Mowday et al (1979, cited in McKay 2006: 17) gave the following definition of commitment:

Relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Conceptually, it can be characterized by at least three factors: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (b) willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

McKay terms the three aspects of commitment listed above as loyalty, effort and attachment, respectively. An important element of the notion of commitment is that workers' commitment is that it is influenced by "gender, age, education, work experience and labor market conditions" (McKay 2006: 18). Furthermore, it is particularly important to my study that attachment, the third aspect of commitment in the definition above is shaped by the family responsibilities of workers and the lack or scarcity of alternative employment opportunities (Mueller and Boyer 1994; McKay 2006; Lamphere et al. 1993).³ Using these insights, McKay argues that employers aim to elicit workers' commitment to the factory, not 'only' their consent to take part in production.

²Lee (1998), Freeman (2000), and Salzinger (2003) also use the notion of worker loyalty in their studies but do not incorporate it into their analysis as systematically as McKay.

³ Lamphere et al. argue that "women's appreciation of their jobs followed from their family situation and job histories" (1993: 130).

McKay (2006) expanded the theoretical framework the labor process analysis in the context of high-tech electronics production, but it is highly relevant for my case study as well, because the labor process I analyze requires a high level of specialized, firm-specific knowledge of operators, which can only be acquired through experience on-the-job. Experienced workers are thus essential for the firm's market success, which explains why management has an interest in eliciting the attachment of blue-collar workers. Thus, I adopt the modified framework proposed by McKay (2006).⁴

Although gender is already incorporated into the analytical framework of the theory of production politics through the notion of commitment, the arguments that focus directly on gender will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.2 Gender in production politics

The theoretical framework outlined above provided the starting point for an analysis of labor control that takes gender into account: by emphasizing the role of workers' subjectivity in production, Burawoy (1979) himself opened up the theory to the inclusion of gender, but he did not use this opportunity. The most systematic effort to 'gender' the theoretical framework is Lee's comparative ethnography (1998), in which she analyzes why two different factory regimes emerge in two locations that belong to the same corporation, employ mostly women workers who assemble the same products using the same technology. By holding all these factors constant, the different forms of control cannot be explained within the theoretical framework developed by Burawoy: the only explanation would be the different role of the two states. However, according to Lee (1998), the role of the state was irrelevant in

⁴ McKay makes a second argument that is crucial for my research: human resource practices aimed at building commitment are closely intertwined with aspects of power and control. A similar argument has been made by others, Dunn (2001). I will return to it in more detail when discussing arguments of the work-family literature.

both locations, thus the emergence of different factory regimes can be explained by expanding the theory of production politics.

Lee (1998) incorporates gender into the theoretical framework by adopting feminist arguments about workers' gendered subjectivities, and argues that workers' interests must also be gendered. The second step towards gendering production politics is that Lee points to the importance of gendered structures in the supply and demand of labor in the two locations. She argues that the different notions of appropriate femininity and the different position of women in their families influence their entry into the labor market. On the demand side, given the lack of state policy on industrial relations in Hong Kong, and the lack of their enforcement in mainland China, companies are free to respond to the supply of labor, and shape their labor control practices to the available workers. The third theoretical move in Lee's analysis is proving that the ways in which workers reproduce their labor power are also gendered: while Burawoy's framework includes only the factory and the state as sources for the reproduction of labor power, Lee draws attention to the gendered localistic networks and the families on which women workers also depend in the lack of state support for reproduction.

Salzinger's study (2003) is another important contribution toward gendering the theory of production politics. Compared to Lee's work, the main focus of her research is on the production of gender: she analyzes how different forms of femininity, and to a lesser extent, masculinity are produced on the shop floor in different maquiladoras in Mexico.

After discussing the foundations of the gendered theory of production politics, I will now focus on the issues that are the most relevant to my case study: arguments about managers integrating local gender ideology into labor control and about the importance of managerial subjectivities.

The factory regime Lee termed as 'familial hegemony' serves as an important starting point for the analysis of the gendered labor control at KFT because of its focus on the

maternal status of workers. Lee argued that managers incorporate the locally specific, dominant gender ideologies into their control strategies, and define workers' identities through "representations and images that women themselves recognize as meaningful" (1998: 162). The management of the Hong Kong factory incorporated the ideology of "familialism" into shop floor control: they elicited the consent of "matron workers" through practices which helped the workers to fit together paid work and care responsibilities in the family (1998: 161).

Salzinger (2003) discusses cases when the management does not succeed in addressing workers in gendered terms: workers do not respond to the representations offered to them, and the result is chaos on the shop floor. In Dunn's study (2004)⁵ the management attempted to ignore the gendered identities of workers when a new work regime was introduced: the North-American owners of a recently privatized factory in post-state socialist Poland set out to reshape labor control through discourses of quality and individualism. However, women workers relied on the alternative discourses of the family and motherhood to challenge the new forms of control:

Most ... shop floor workers continually refuse to be considered merely as abstract sources of labor, as "workers," but demand to have their identities as women and mothers recognized as well. They work in the factory explicitly as mothers. [...] Revaluing themselves [...] by bringing ideologies of motherhood into the factory [...] gives them room to maneuver within the new structures of discipline (2004: 143)

Although the new management could not harness the dominant gender ideology to elicit consent from the workers, the result was not chaos either, according to Dunn, the workers tried to take part in shaping the production regime.

In summary, managerial attempts to include the hegemonic gender ideology into their labor control strategies may or may not be successful in terms of eliciting workers' consent. Or, in other words, managers' addressing and at the same time constituting workers as a

⁵ Dunn (2004) does not use the framework of production politics to analyze labor control, but power, control and subject constitution on the shop floor are in the centre of her analysis.

certain type of subject may or may not be successful. I will engage with these arguments when analyzing how the management of KFT addresses women workers in gendered terms, and how the local gender ideology is embedded in company practices.

The second issue I want to focus on is that of managerial subjectivities. Salzinger (2003) traces how managers themselves are addressed by various actors and discourses, and how their “situated visions” influence the gendered local production regimes (34). Salzinger argues that only “by understanding managers’ frameworks – their location within structures of gender, nation and corporation [...] that we begin to account for the [...] gendered meanings we find” (163). I will follow Salzinger’s lead and pay close attention to the experiences and views of the CEO, who is the single most important person making decisions about labor control practices at KFT. I will also analyze the special relationship between the CEO and the workers.

The latest scholarship on production politics has further extended the arguments on gendered factory regimes: locally specific factory regimes have been identified, the role of the state in shaping factory regimes is problematized, and even the despotic- hegemonic binary is complicated.

The locally specific factory regimes are related to axes of inequality among workers, such as family status, race, immigrant/citizenship status and age, intersecting with each other and gender. These differences between groups of workers, where one group is in a more vulnerable labor market position than others, are argued not to be ‘natural,’ but the outcomes of institutional influences. Specifically, the influence of *state policy* can be identified in all the cases discussed in the literature, but the sort of state influence is outside the realm of bureaucratic intervention into production, discussed by Burawoy (1979, 1985).⁶ Thus, these

⁶ Lee (1998) also discusses bureaucratic state regulations into production, and argues that they do not exist in Hong Kong and cannot be enforced in mainland China.

forms of state intervention into factory regimes are argued to be “alternative” (McKay 2006: 10).

Bank Munoz (2008) points to the role of migration policy and border control which create a supply of cheap female labor on the Mexican side of the USA-Mexico border. After their partners have illegally crossed the border to the USA, these women are left alone in the border region, cut off from support networks and have no other resources but their labor power, which makes them vulnerable to employer exploitation. At the same time, there is a supply of undocumented and thus, easily exploitable Mexican men working on the other side of the border, who are also a source of cheap labor. Depending on the main axis of stratification in the local labor markets, the factory in Mexico is characterized by a ‘gender regime,’ while the factory in California is characterized by an ‘immigration regime’ even though both factories belong to the same employer and produce the same thing – tortillas (2008: 13-14).

Managers do not only take advantage of the segmented labor markets through their selective hiring practices, but also contribute to reproducing workers’ vulnerability. The highly despotic ‘dormitory labor regime’ in China (Pun 2005; Pun and Smith 2007) is based on the state regulation of internal migration which produces a constant flow of young migrant workers, most of whom are women, into the economic zones. They are in a vulnerable labor market position because they are undocumented, and this vulnerability is actively reproduced through their housing arrangements and/or through the company organizing their residence permits and thus bounding them to the company (Pun and Smith 2007). A more subtle way of bounding workers to the company is through paternalistic managerial rhetoric: managers refer to their ethnicity and personal experience of immigration as shared with the workers in order to position themselves as protectors and allies against the hostile environment in the USA (Bank Munoz 2008).

The state's involvement in producing worker vulnerability through segmented labor markets can be more direct, as it is demonstrated by the special policies whose aim is to attract foreign direct investment to the Philippines (McKay 2006). These national and local level state policies are implemented to create "industrial peace" in the zones set up by the government (2006:142) and are highly restrictive: before entering the zone, workers are required to register at government agencies, and provide extensive personal data, including information about other working-age members of their families, in an attempt to screen out those with a record of union membership and eradicate union activities in the industrial zones. Special housing arrangements are also forced on workers, to minimize the threat of organized labor activities emerging.

The final direction in which the theory of production politics has been expanded is problematizing the despotic-hegemonic binary. First, McKay (2006) argues that in the era of global production networks and technological change, the labor process and labor relations have changed fundamentally,⁷ leading to the formation of locally specific "work regimes" (2006:20). These work regimes differ from each other in terms of the technological intensity of production, the firm's flexibility and the recruitment strategy; and also in terms of the strength and character of the commitment it aims to elicit from workers.

According to the second argument hegemonic and despotic regimes can co-exist within the same firm and can be used parallel, over different groups of workers Bank Munoz (2008).⁸ In the California- based subsidiary of a tortilla manufacturing company hegemonic control is used with documented, legal migrant men workers, and despotic control is used with undocumented, illegal migrant men, while in the factory on the Mexican side of the border, hegemonic control is used over male workers, and despotic control over women. Bank Munoz terms this complex arrangement a "two-tier structure of labor control" (2008: 14).

⁷ At least in the high tech electronics industry that his research focuses on.

⁸ Burawoy (1979, 1985) argued that elements of coercion and consent are always present in any factory regime, he did not discuss parallel regimes on the same shop floor.

The arguments about different factory regimes point to the importance of location, that is, to the locally specific institutional factors which shape the production regimes, thus extending the theory of production politics to include the spatial aspect of the labor process (McKay 2006; Peng 2011; Pun 2005; Pun and Smith 2007).⁹ McKay uses the term ‘strategic localization,’ while Pun and Smith (2007: 28) suggest the term “transnational labour process” to emphasize the importance of space in transnational production.

The role of the state is also a common thread in these studies: state policies are argued to reduce the bargaining position of some jobseekers even before they meet their future employers, thus ensuring a supply of vulnerable labor. Although the policies themselves are gender neutral, they have gendered effects as they intersect with other, gendered factors: young rural women are more likely to migrate to the industrial centers in China, as they are more marginalized in their families than young men (Lee 1998), Mexican women are left behind by their partners to look after their children, and young women are more likely than young men to pass the rigorous screening and be selected into the labor pool in industrial zones in the Philippines.

While the arguments about the state shaping factory regimes through the labor market are important, arguments about the bureaucratic state regulation of production are also highly relevant for my research, given the state socialist legacy of Hungarian policy making. I start the discussion on the role of the state in shaping production regimes with arguments about state socialist factory regimes, and then turn to those on post-state socialist ones.

2.1.3 Factory regimes under state socialism and in post-state socialist contexts

Although originally developed to analyze labor control under the capitalist mode of production, the concept of factory regime was extended to state-socialism. Based on the

⁹ Other aspects are the economic, political and ideological ones (Burawoy 1979, 1985).

analysis of the historical development of Hungarian factory regimes, it is argued that in the first phase of state-socialism workers were dependent on workplaces not only for their wages but also for certain goods and services, such as childcare, which enabled managements to maintain despotic control. (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992). However, from the 1960s, when goods and services were easier to access outside the workplace and workers became less dependent on the companies, state socialist managers also had to elicit consent from workers, as under monopoly capitalism. This was achieved through financial means such as ” bonus systems and piece rates, the distribution of overtime, or participation in lucrative ‘economic work partnerships’” (1992: 33). This regime, which rests on the shared financial interest of workers and management, is termed bureaucratic hegemony.

That is, Burawoy and Lukacs (1992) argue that one of the main factors facilitating the shift from bureaucratic despotism to bureaucratic hegemony in Hungarian workplaces was the emerging second economy, which gave opportunities for workers to earn more. Paid overtime and the second economy however can account only for the consent of those workers who had free time to take on more paid work after the regular work hours, that is, for the consent of workers without reproductive responsibilities. At the same time women, especially mothers, who had to look after children and the household, were less likely to take these new opportunities for earning more than childless workers or married men, who could rely on their wives to look after them (Kovacs and Varadi 2000; Szalai 2000).

Burawoy and Lukacs (1992) ignore the fact that parallel to the state-led development of the second economy special work-family policies aimed at mothers of young children were also introduced. These policies reduced working mothers’ dependence on the company, and increased their dependence on the state: they received cash benefits related to maternity status and the number of children. During state socialism, when the firms were also state-owned, this distinction was unimportant; however, in the post-state socialist period this is likely to be

an important factor impacting on women's position at the intersection of paid work and the family.¹⁰

Indeed, the importance of state socialist work-family policies is clear from arguments about post-state socialist factory regimes (Burawoy et al 2000; Burawoy 2009; Dunn 2001, 2004; Lee 1999). Lee argues that the emergence of the post-state socialist factory regime of 'disorganized despotism' in market socialist China cannot be understood without paying attention to workers' gender, family status, and the division of labor in their households. She finds the impact of the family so strong, that she argues for undoing the analytical separation of the workplace and workers' families. The family has become so important in shaping the factory regime because the welfare provisions previously provided to workers in the state sector of the economy disappeared, and workers either have to pay for services such as childcare and meals or they have to do these tasks themselves. As housework and childcare are mostly women's responsibilities, they would be in a more vulnerable position in the market sector, thus, they tend to remain at state-owned-enterprises, while their partners search for better paid jobs in the market sector. This "multi-sectoral employment strategy" is a form of adapting to market socialism, but it also contributes to the gender-based segmentation of the labor market, and women's increasingly vulnerable position in the state sector (Lee 1999: 52).

According to Lee (1999), family responsibilities lead to a second type of segregation as well, between women workers in the increasingly feminized ghettos of state employment. Local, veteran working women with children and household duties cannot keep up with the work hours, and thus, the wages of young, childless migrant women, and blame them for indirectly raising production quotas:

They don't have families in Guangzhou and no housework, so they do not have to leave after eight hours of work. Normally, we get off at 4.30 pm, but they

¹⁰ The authors note that women workers bore practically sole responsibility for childcare and housework in their families on top of their paid work (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992: 37).

stay working until 8.30 pm. ... Then they go back to the dorm for dinner and then come back to continue working until 10.00 p.m. How can we catch up with their earnings? (Lee 1999: 64)

It is as if ‘matron workers’ and ‘maiden workers,’ discussed in Lee’s earlier work, met on the shop floor at a time when state policies and the labor market are in flux, and matron workers are in a disadvantaged position because of their family responsibilities.¹¹

The household and gender are also in the centre of Burawoy’s work in post-state socialist Russia (Burawoy et al. 2000, Burawoy 2009). However, with the disintegration of the formal economy and increasing unemployment, their research focuses on the household and subsistence production, and does not provide useful arguments about gendered factory regimes.

Dunn (2001, 2004) focuses on gendered labor control in post-state socialist Eastern-Europe, I have already referred to her argument that Polish women workers use the discourse of motherhood to resist the new forms of shop floor control introduced after the privatization of the firm. The argument I want to highlight here is related to the state socialist legacy: workers who challenged new forms of labor control sometimes referred directly to state socialist work-family policies. These provisions, as in the Chinese SOEs, were also reduced in Poland, making women’s working lives more difficult:

In the face of eroding formal benefits to mothers, some women use[d] their status as mothers to demand particular, personal consideration from their managers (Dunn 2004: 146-147).

That is, Polish women workers had to demand personal, informal appreciation for their motherhood and the duties that went with it, in a way that is very similar to managerial favors in the factory regime of ‘familial hegemony’ (Lee 1998: 162).

While the arguments of Dunn and Lee are highly relevant for my case study, there are also very important differences. In Hungary, there are still state regulations and provisions

¹¹ The identity of ‘matron worker’ discussed by Lee (1998) does not fit this context perfectly, but the differences are very small. Lee (1999) refers to women workers in SOEs as ‘veteran workers’: their identity is also produced through hegemonic labor control strategies, as in the case of ‘matron workers.’

targeted at women workers, for example, the Labor Code prescribes special work conditions for pregnant women workers, and new mothers are eligible to take long, paid child care leaves with job guarantees. These regulations are modified forms of the original state socialist ones introduced in the late 1960s. In addition, there are a number of 'equal opportunities' regulations, designed to protect workers from unfair treatment on the basis of gender, age, marital and parental status (Glass and Fodor 2011, Krizkova et al 2010). I will pay attention to these institutional factors when analyzing the factory regime.

Dunn's argument about women workers seeking personal consideration from managers on the basis of their motherhood leads me to the final issue related to the state-socialist legacy, the issue of (post-) state socialist informality.

2.1.4 Informal relationships, the legacy of state-socialist paternalism in the workplace

The final issue to be explored in the literature on post-state socialist factory regimes is informality in the workplaces, which is closely linked to the legacy of state socialist paternalism.¹² Although practices in a work organization are regulated by formal rules, production is facilitated by the informal efforts of workers (Borocz 2000). Out of the several aspects of informality in state-socialist workplaces the most relevant ones to my study are the (1) informal relationships between management and workers, which played an important role in redistribution, and thus, in eliciting workers' consent (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992), and (2) informal networks among workers themselves.

Informal hierarchical relationships based on loyalty have been termed as 'vassalage' (Kennedy and Bialecki 1989¹³) or patron-client networks (Walder 1986, 1994) or simply as

¹² The concept of informality can be applied to a vast array of social phenomena, even in the limited context of (post-) state socialist Hungary. I will only discuss informal company practices that are closely intertwined with labor control.

¹³ Kennedy, M. and I. Bialecki. 1989. "Power and the logic of distribution in Poland," *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, (2): 3, 300-328

informality (Borocz 2000) in the (post-) state socialist context.¹⁴ It has been argued that patron-client relationships, which are instrumental and, at the same time personal, are an integral part of shop floor organization as well: they ‘lubricate’ the formal labor-management nexus (Walder 1986, 1994 and Dunn 2001, 2004). According to Walder, the consent of workers was elicited through these informal patron-client networks in the “neo-traditional” production regime, still characteristic of Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the early 1990s, despite market reforms (1994: 300). Unfortunately, Walder ignores the potential gender-specific forms of informality.

Lee (1999) on the other hand argues that market reform has broken down the old patron-client ties between management and workers, leading to the emergence of a despotic regime in place of neo-traditionalism in SOEs. The remaining hierarchical informal relationships are gendered: men are more likely to hold second jobs in the market sector, and still keep their stable, although less well-paid jobs through informal arrangements with management, as their skills are valued. Workers experience the loss of informal networks as a loss and express their problems in paternalistic terms when they argue that life on the shop floor is more difficult without the informal connections with the management. Nostalgia for paternalism is clear from workers’ use of a kin metaphor: without the old management the shop floor is like “an orphan ‘without parents’” (Lee 1999:66).

Verdery (1994, 1996) points out that paternalistic informal relationships between managers and workers are a derivative of the relationship between the socialist state and its subjects. Under state socialism the leaders of the party state made decisions about redistribution, constructing the state as a “wise” parent, and socialist subjects as “grateful recipients – like small children in a family – of benefits their rulers decided upon for them” (Verdery 1996: 64). The redistributive power of state socialist managers resembled the

¹⁴ Instead of ‘hierarchical’, the term ‘vertical’ is also used. Informal networks were first described between the political and economic elites (Kennedy and Bialecki 1989)

paternal role of the state: companies distributed housing, loans, cut-price products to their employees *formally*, and workers continued to expect the material and occasionally symbolic 'caring' relationship from the managements after the collapse of state socialism (Dunn 2001, 2004; Kovacs and Varadi 2000; Verdery 1994, 1996). The expectation of quasi-parental 'care' beyond the cash nexus employees is also supported by the experience of a long-term connection between workers and the firm (Dunn 2004).

Dunn (2001, 2004) argues that workers' reliance on the remains of informal networks, their use of kin metaphors with reference to supervisors and their attempts to establish informal relationships with their new superiors through offering gifts and favors are ways of challenging the new forms of labor control in the privatized Polish firm. As the Chinese worker quoted above by Lee (1999), the Polish ones feel at a loss, because the new control techniques, such as audit and process-centred quality control constitute them as atomized individuals – it is this atomization they resented and tried to challenge by 'embedding' themselves in informal networks. Being dependent on a patron – a superior at work – is based on reciprocity, which leaves workers more room to maneuver than the purely formal relationship (Borocz 2000; Dunn 2001, 2004; Kennedy and Bialecki 1989).

As for managers' involvement in clientalism, the North-American leadership of the company in Dunn's study believed that leaders who gained work experience under state socialism would be inefficient in the market economy exactly because of their embeddedness in informal relationships. Newly appointed young managers are seen as more rational and efficient, again, partly because they are not attached to workers (Dunn 2004: 71). Yet, Dunn argues that managers at lower levels of the company hierarchy continued to rely on informal relationships with workers, and this influenced their hiring and firing practices, and the way employee evaluation was carried out, leading to a 'hybrid' form of labor control made up of elements of the new and the old practices (Dunn 2004: 93).

Could other managements find such hybrid forms of control beneficial for their companies, and if so, under what conditions? Embracing informal relationships would make sense not only because it comes ‘naturally,’ and seems impossible to avoid in any formal organization,¹⁵ but also because the values associated with informality, such as a long-term relationship based on loyalty are often the desired goals of human resource management (McKay 2006). In addition, Dunn’s study was conducted in Poland, at a time of high unemployment, when there was an ample supply of labor, and the labor process in her study was based on deskilling. Under different circumstances a management may develop a different attitude to informality, or at least to hybrid forms of shop floor control. Finally, several new companies were established by local capitalists, who had managerial experience under state socialism, and their preferences are likely to differ from those of foreign managements. The characteristics of the company in my case study allow me to examine the effect of these differences on labor control.

Informal horizontal networks between workers are also relevant for labor control. While the literature on state-socialist production regimes emphasizes how workers’ informal cooperation and connections outside the factory helped production under the conditions of the shortage economy (Dunn 2001, 2004; , other studies (Lee 1997; McKay 2006; Peng 2011; Pun 2005; Pun and Smith 2007) discuss that such networks are often incorporated into labor control strategies in order to reduce the cost of recruitment and to enhance their efficiency of managerial control: workers feel responsible for their protégées, and vice versa, those who are grateful to a fellow worker for their jobs are likely to be better, or at least more obedient workers. Also, referring back to arguments about employers actively selecting a certain type of worker – vulnerable ones -, relying on the social networks of existing employees is likely to yield applicants who meet employer expectations (Granovetter 1973, 1985).

¹⁵ See Borocz (2000) about the historical development of formal and informal relations

In summary, the Marxist theory of production politics has been extended 1) to take into account the impact of gender on production regimes and 2) to include the spatial/geographical aspect of global production. These two points are closely related, as the search for ideal workers is an important motivation behind the globalization of production. I will now turn to the feminist scholarship on production that does not follow the labor process tradition, but the arguments about gender and different localities are also highly relevant for my study.

2.2 Feminist scholarship on gender in production

Women's position in paid labor was one of the main issues of feminist scholarship from the 1960s, with theoretical discussions focusing on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. It has been argued that women's unpaid work in the household reproduces the labor force on a daily and on a generational basis, and explains their status as secondary workers in the paid labor force (Hartmann 1981; Milkman 1987). Thus, women's subordination to and dependence on their male partners indirectly benefits capitalists as well, not only their partners.

Feminist scholars explained women's inferior position - compared to men's - in work hierarchies by pointing to the gendered assumptions embedded in our notions of the workplace, the ideal worker, and the career track, as well as in organizational practices (Acker 1990; Hochschild 1997, 2003; Kelly et al 2010). The most relevant assumption for my research is that the only or most important responsibility of the 'ideal worker' is to their workplace, and they are free from care concerns.¹⁶ As most women, especially mothers are unable to meet the expectation of becoming a completely 'unencumbered' or 'zero drag' employee (Hochschild 1997: xix), they tend to be segregated within the workplace and in the

¹⁶This assumption also underlies the notion of 'work-family conflict'

workforce.¹⁷ However, in these feminized segments of the labor market women are often seen as ideal employees, and even their maternal responsibilities are tolerated, as Rubery and Wilkinson argue:

Segmented labor markets with comparable labor available at different terms and conditions provide the opportunity to employers to tailor their labor market strategies to their needs without necessarily sacrificing the benefits of an established and committed workforce. [...] Thus employers have the best of several worlds: the domestic circumstances of married women, for example provide the basis for a flexible, committed but cheap labor force: primary workers at secondary prices (1994: 31-32).

The authors refer to the ‘domestic circumstances’ of married British women to explain their strong commitment to low-paid, and not particularly secure part-time jobs: such jobs were popular because they fitted in with the women’s care responsibilities.

The arguments I have discussed in this section so far, are formulated about ‘women’ in general, yet, they only pertain to women workers in industrialized Western countries, where the dominant gender ideology constituted men and women as belonging to ‘separate spheres,’ and there was a strong tradition of trade union activism in the workplaces.¹⁸ These universalizing arguments were first problematized by ethnographic analyses of women workers in developed countries (Fernandez Kelly and Sassen 1991; Lamphere 1985; Lamphere et al. 1993; Pollert 1981; Ruiz 1992; Lamphere and Zavella 1997). The main focus of these studies is on the specificities of female dominated workplaces and they reveal a ‘feminine’ shop floor culture and forms of resistance that were missing from the labor process tradition, and also draw attention to the many ways in which women’s actions in the workplace are influenced by their reproductive responsibilities. These studies started to break down the universal character of the ‘woman worker,’ and pointed to differences among

¹⁷ There is of course a great variety in the level of gender segregation among countries, industries, or even occupations.

¹⁸ Even within this group of countries, there are important differences between married women’s inclusion in formal paid labor (see Pedersen 1993 for a comparison between France and Britain).

working women along the lines of ethnicity, geographical location within a given country, as well as family and occupational status.

Particularly relevant for my research is the study of Lamphere et al. (1993), which focuses on feminized workplaces in the USA and discusses an ‘anomaly:’ the blue-collar working mothers do not meet the ideal worker norm, but neither are they low-paid, informally employed home workers identified in earlier studies on flexible, customized electronics production (Fernandez Kelly and Sassen 1991). The companies in the study increase productivity by paying better, but still not high wages, and in addition, they create a special company culture, which has two main elements. First, high levels of work effort are achieved through incentives such as competitions and awards for the best workers, and second, loyalty is created through management-sponsored workplace events, such as picnics, dances and family days, which can be conceptualized as non-pecuniary benefits to workers. In summary, Lamphere et al. argue that a company culture, actively created by the management, can create employee commitment while keeping wages at a low, but not “exploitative” level (1993: 11).¹⁹ In unionized factories on the other hand, the wages are higher as a result of collective bargaining, and management does not invest in special events aimed at eliciting loyalty.

The other body of research that takes issue with universalizing arguments about women’s paid work emerged with the trend of industrial production moving to ‘developing’ countries. The scholarship on women in global production (Elson and Pearson 1981; Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Freeman 2000; Ong 1987, 1991; Safa 1990; Strichter and Parpart 1990; Wright 2006) focuses on local differences in women’s inclusion into industrial production but also pay attention to how these women are positioned at the intersection of

¹⁹ Let me contrast this with McKay’s (2006) arguments about companies eliciting commitment: in the Philippine factories of multinational electronic firms workers’ commitment is also elicited by human resource management methods, however, those workers are selectively recruited based on age, marital status, and ‘screened’ for union sympathies. In addition, labor unions are practically banned in the industrial zones. Thus, commitment is built on highly repressive foundations, which is not the case in the factories studied by Lamphere et al. (1993)

production and reproduction. From this body of literature I discuss only those arguments that focus on the relationship between women workers' family responsibilities and labor control.

The majority of studies documents employers' preference for young, childless women (Fernandez Kelly 1983, Tiano 1987 cited in Freeman 2000; Wright 2006) and the use of coercive methods, such as pregnancy tests at work to maintain a workforce of girls, as more mature women, especially mothers are often thought to be less productive, as a maquiladora manager quoted by Tiano (1987, cited in Freeman 2000) explains: "lack of concentration, absenteeism, and frequent resignations ... are common among wives and mothers who put their family's welfare above their job-related responsibilities."

Yet, in other locations managers choose mothers for the same or similar jobs in export-processing factories. Joeke (1987, cited in Safa 1990) argues that in the Dominican Republic employers prefer to hire mothers because they are thought to be more in need of an income, and thus more committed to their jobs than childless women. Mothers are also preferred in the data processing service industry in Barbados (Freeman 2000), as they are believed to be more 'mature' persons, and thus, more likely to stay with the company for a long time. Managers in Freeman's study emphasize the "reliability, seriousness and work ethics" of mothers (2000: 125) – in sharp contrast with the manager quoted by Tiano (1987). Freeman explains the preference for mothers by referring to the Barbados' colonial past, when all women were forced to work outside their household, shaping local culture in a way that mothers' paid work is now the norm.

Reviewing the feminist literature on women's position in production, Ong (1991) identifies the following factors shaping the situation of women workers: "In each locale, different modes of industrial and social domination promote certain cultural forms and identities, while undermining and suppressing others. In each case, the particular mix of production systems, state policies, and cultural forces both limit and enable workers'

struggles” (1991: 295). Lee criticizes this “heuristic framework of analysis” (1998:26) and argues that only comparative ethnographies can provide theoretically sound explanations for – as opposed to descriptions of - the local variations in control over women workers. While I agree with Lee’s emphasis on the need for theorizing, I also believe that due to the scarcity of ethnographic research in the post-state socialist region that pays attention to gender, my case study of one company that pays attention to the local context is an important contribution to feminist labor studies.

2.2.1 Gender in work in state socialist countries

Women’s participation in paid work was the norm in state-socialist countries: it was an important element of the Marxist-Leninist project of women’s emancipation, and was also motivated by the state’s commitment to full employment and the increased labor need of reconstruction and industrialization after WWII (Fodor 2003; Molyneux 1981; Zimmermann 2010). Even though the socialization of domestic work and childcare was named as a condition of women’s emancipation and declared as a goal of the state, these services never reached a level that could have replaced women’s unpaid care work in the household. No attempts were made to include men in care work either, thus women continued to be responsible for care work as well as taking part in paid work, which led to the infamous ‘double burden’ of women under state socialism (Adamik 2000; Corrin 1994, Einhorn 1993; Fodor 2003; Funk and Mueller 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000b; Jancar 1978; Molyneux 1981).

In addition to the slowly improving public care services, there was a contradiction at the centre of the state socialist ideology of women’s emancipation: while emphasizing the social roots of women’s subordination and aiming to end it by including women in the sphere of paid work, state propaganda also focused on the importance of motherhood, together with essentialist arguments about women being suited to domestic tasks (Molyneux 1981: 66).

This inherent contradiction had important consequences for state policies on women's employment in Hungary: after a brief period of including women in paid work as similarly situated to men, from the second half of the 1960s state policy on women's employment underwent significant changes (Fodor 2003; Haney 2002). Protective labor regulations were introduced which excluded women from jobs deemed to be dangerous for them, (Fodor 2003; Grad 1979; Haney 2002) and employed mothers became entitled to a long paid maternity leave with a job guarantee.²⁰

Fodor argues that these policies were innovative at the time: although they were based on the principle of women's *difference* to men, both in a biological and in a socially constructed sense of the word, their goal was to integrate women into paid labor rather than exclude them (Fodor 2003). Indeed, not only the Labor Code, but the Constitution itself was modified to accommodate the notion of women's difference: while the first state socialist constitution guaranteed men and women 'equal' conditions of work, the modified constitution promised 'appropriate' conditions of work for women and men (Fodor 2003; Haney 2002: 104). Although the state's commitment to women's full employment was maintained until the end of the state socialist period, these policies valued, and at the same time constructed women as 'worker-mothers' rather than 'workers' (Einhorn 1993: 40). Because of their focus on motherhood, the policies have been termed 'maternalist' (Haney 2002).²¹

2.2.2 State socialist maternalism

As maternalism is a central concept of my dissertation, I discuss it in some detail, including its state socialist origins, which shed light on the motivations of policy makers and the ideologies embedded in the policies that cannot be separated from their actual content

²⁰ Women on maternity leave were classified as 'economically active' in state-socialist statistics.

²¹ Haney (2002) terms the historical period the socialist Hungarian welfare state between 1968-1985 as 'maternalist.'

(Haskova 2010; Orloff 2006, 2009; Pedersen 1993). These intentions are crucial when analyzing the role of the state on production regimes.

Haney conceptualizes maternalism as an assumption of policy makers that “women have special needs as – potential - mothers and thus have to be protected” in paid employment (2002: 104). Another important element of state-socialist maternalism is that it de-emphasizes men’s responsibilities to their partners and their children, and focuses on the mother-child unit (Haney 2002). Further, the psychological aspects of this relationship were highlighted, as opposed to the tasks involved in simply looking after a child: the policies were embedded into a strong, psychological discourse on children’s needs (Adamik 2000; Goven 2000; Haney 2002).

The final point is directly related to labor control: maternalist policies, including decisions about employment-related eligibility criteria and the amount of benefits were created centrally, without input from working women or workplaces, and the benefits were also distributed centrally. Workplaces were legally obliged to adhere to the regulations, that is, to allow women to take leaves and return to their jobs after the long leaves, but managements only implemented these regulations, which meant a strong gender-specific intervention into the relationship between workers and management.

At the same time, the policies constituted ‘mothers’ as a social group by giving them a wide range of maternal entitlements which, over time, solidified into ‘social rights’ of all mothers, regardless of socio-economic situation, occupation or ethnicity. In addition, women could use their special status as mothers to try and satisfy different needs, they “strategized with their maternal resources to defend their interests as wives, workers, and women” (Haney 2002: 133).

In summary, the maternalism of state socialist policies is somewhat different from the definition of maternalism by Koven and Michel that is often quoted in discussions about

Western welfare states: “ideologies and discourses which exalted women’s capacity to mother and [emphasized] the values [...] attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality” (1993: 4). It was not so much emphasizing the values of maternal care, but emphasizing women’s special responsibilities as mothers and granting rights to mothers to be better able to carry out their duties.

2.2.3 The effects of maternalist state policies

Maternalist state policies influenced women’s position in workplaces, in the labor market and in the households in complex ways. As for workplaces, Fodor argues that “[u]nlike in capitalist societies, the workplace experience and even the career track were no longer based *exclusively* on the male experience” (2003: 26). That is, it became routine practice that women dropped out of work for extended periods of maternity leave and then returned, or that children became ill and their mothers stayed at home to look after them, while colleagues had to do her share of the work.

At the same time, the policies contributed to women’s inferior labor market position compared to men’s in terms of pay, prestige and access to managerial authority (Einhorn 1993; Ferree 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000b, Molyneux 1981; about Hungary: Fodor 2003, Haney 2002). In her analysis of women’s position in the state socialist labor force Fodor uses the term ‘limited inclusion’ (2003: 108), and argues that as a result of the special measures that supported their participation women were segregated in the workforce.²²

Finally, it has been argued that state socialist maternalist policies reinforced the unequal gender division of labor in the family/household (Adamik 2000; Gal and Kligman 2000b; Fodor 2003; Haney 2002; Szalai 2000; Zimmermann 2010), and thus, played an

²² Indeed, women with higher levels of education and higher earnings, or in other words, those who worked in more prestigious jobs, tended to take shorter parental leaves (Fodor 2003; Haney 1997, 2002) even though the maternalist system was universal.

important role in the emergence of the state socialist family model of ‘one male earner – one female earner and unpaid housekeeper – one family income’ (Zimmermann 2010).²³

2.2.4 Gender in the post-state socialist transformations

Several feminist scholars predicted that women will be among the losers of the post-state socialist transformations, because the dismantling of maternalist welfare will put them in a more vulnerable position than men in the emerging capitalist labor markets (Funk and Mueller 1993; Einhorn 1993; Watson 1993). Others argued that the gender segregated state socialist labor markets and the gender-based differences in human capital, intertwined with the segregation, will protect women from massive unemployment (Fodor 1997).

By the 2000s it has become clear that post-state socialist Eastern-European countries are characterized by distinct national patterns of gender inequality in the labor markets, and these patterns are strongly influenced by maternalist policies or by their lack (Fultz and Steinhilber 2003; Fodor 2005, 2006; Pascal and Kwak 2005). Social and economic inequalities among women have increased: in Hungary, these inequalities are also related to the differentiation of maternalist policies and the emergence of different 'maternal tracks' (Fodor et al. 2002; Szikra 2010). That is, women of different socioeconomic status and with employment histories have unequal access to maternalist welfare provisions, which in turn shapes their chances in the labor market creating a cascade effect: those with a history of previous employment and better jobs tend to have access to higher level of provisions, which reinforces their better position in the labor market after the parental leave.

²³ At first, only mothers could take the three-year childcare leave. In 1981 it became available to fathers, but only after the child's first birthday. However, according to statistical data, very few men actually took the leave.

As I am interested primarily in gendered factory regimes, when discussing the feminist literature on post-state socialism in more detail I will highlight arguments about company-level processes and pay special attention to the effect of maternalist policies.

The privatization of previously state-owned companies created a strong managerial interest in making profits by increasing productivity and by saving labor costs. Care responsibilities, and maternalist policies which linked these responsibilities to mothers only, constructed mothers of small children, and to some extent all women of reproductive age as 'less productive' employees (Ashwin and Bowers 1997; Einhorn 1993; Fodor 2003, 2005, 2006; Glass 2008; Glass and Fodor 2011; Lee 1999). The claim that mothers are less productive workers was made even more compelling by the trend of expanding work hours in the post-state socialist Eastern Europe (Glass 2008) and market socialist China (Lee 1999).

In countries where the maternalist policies are still in effect, they are often linked to discrimination against women, especially mothers of young children (Blasko 2009, Glass 2008; Glass and Fodor 2011). However, most of these arguments are formulated on the basis of national-level statistical data, and cannot distinguish between the effects of discrimination and women's self-selection out of paid work – in other words, they do not reveal the mechanisms of women's inclusion in and exclusion from paid work at the company level.

Glass and Fodor argue that managers of multinational finance institutions in Hungary use specific strategies to "shed, demote and marginalize mothers" in professional positions, because they are seen as more expensive and less committed or flexible employees (2011: 12). Managers referred directly to the maternalist state policies as a justification for discrimination against mothers of young children in these prestigious positions. At the same time, women are also seen as a source of cheap labor: interviewing managers in Russia, Ashwin and Bowers (1997) has found that women are chosen over men because they are more willing to work for low wages. Further, these Russian managers also claim that women

are more reliable and conscientious at work than men, thus, despite the ‘problems’ related to their family responsibilities, women are still an important source of labor in certain industries and occupations.

The seeming paradoxes of women’s labor being perceived as expensive/cheap, and women workers themselves being claimed reliable/unreliable workers can only be explored within the local contexts of individual countries and companies: the managerial decisions about employing women, especially mothers of young children ‘make sense’ only in these discreet locations. This is one of the advantages of my study: focusing on one company, I can analyze the managerial decision making in the context of the specific labor process and the local labor market. The managerial decisions and the responses of women workers in my case study seem irregular: mothers of young children are not discriminated, on the contrary, they are actively recruited, and the maternalist state regulations are followed, despite the costs involved. At the same time, women workers are highly committed to the company despite the low wages.

Other scholars focused on women workers’ experiences of the post-state socialist transformations: perhaps not surprisingly, it has been argued that in countries where the provisions were reduced, the conflict between paid work and family responsibilities deepened (Dunn 2001, 2004; Rudd 2000, 2003; Weiner 2005). The new conditions of paid work went against the ‘moral mapping’ of some employed mothers who felt that if they remained employed, they could not give their children the care they considered good enough (Rudd 2003). At the same time, because of rising unemployment and prices, workers became more dependent on their wages than they were before the transformations, and for other women this increased their commitment to their jobs (Dunn 2004; Rudd 2000, 2003; Weiner 2005). That is, not only the decisions of managers, but also of women workers are shaped by contextual factors which can only be assessed if the characteristics of workplaces and households are

taken into account. That is why I focus on the factory regime at KFT as embedded in the labor market and closely linked to the workers' households.

Although the state-socialist project of including women in the paid labor force based on the principle of difference was unique in the 1960s, similar policies have been introduced in an increasing number of countries. These policies and their gendered outcomes are usually analyzed within the framework of gendered welfare state research²⁴ or that of work-family research.²⁵ Now I turn to work-family research, feminist and otherwise, for further arguments about 1) how state and company-level work-family policies are related to managerial control over workers and 2) how work-life policies are used by women in different socioeconomic groups, and how the effects of the policies differ in these groups. The literature on work-family research also allows me to integrate arguments about post-socialist maternalist state policies into 'global' scholarly debates.

2.3 Work-family research

As more and more middle-class women entered paid employment in developed Western countries, public and academic debates emerged about the difficulties of women, especially mothers of young children in trying to meet the demands of paid work and family, and about the proposed solutions to the 'work-family conflict.' Company- and state- level policies emerged with the goal of helping working mothers to achieve 'work-family balance.'

The terms used in discussing work-family policies have been shifting: the concept of work-family balance (Hobson and Fahlen 2009, Crompton et al. 2007; Lewis 2009) was replaced by the gender neutral terms of work-life balance, and most recently by that of

²⁴ I adopt Orloff's (2006) definition of the welfare state: "modern systems of social provision and regulation"

²⁵ State-level work-family policies include parental leave policies and day care provision, whereas welfare state research also focuses on pensions, health care and unemployment provisions.

'quality of work life' (Brummelhuis and Lippe 2010; McDowell 2001; Moen 2011).²⁶ In the official documents of the European Union yet another term is used to refer to policies such as parental leaves and flexible work hours: 'reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.'²⁷ I will use the term work-family balance, because this is the term adopted by the management of the company in my case study, and because it emphasizes the idea of combining paid work and unpaid care work in the family. When exploring the existing arguments in this chapter, I will follow the terminology of the authors whose work I refer to.

2.3.1 Maternalism East and West

By drawing on the work-family literature I can expand the concept of maternalism beyond the (post-) state-socialist context. As I discussed before, in the literature on (post-) state socialist policies the term 'maternalism' is used to describe work-family policies aimed at the reconciliation of mothers' paid work and their care for young children in the family, such as paid parental leaves and protective labor market regulations. In the context of Western welfare states maternalist state policies, which originate from the early 20th century, were designed to help reconciliation for certain groups of women, while for other women the state supported 'stay at home' mothering either directly or through their wage earning husbands (Orloff 2006, 2009).

Arguments about the 'end of maternalism' in Western welfare states refer to the decline of state support to stay-home-mothers, and the state's active involvement in increasing the labor force participation of women (Mandel and Semyonov 2006; Orloff

²⁶ There are other terms in use, for a discussion on the arguments behind the different terms, see Lewis (2009:15)

²⁷ Despite the European level priority, the policies aimed at working families differ widely in member states (Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Orloff 2006).

2006).²⁸ Thus, certainly in the countries of the European Union, there is a convergent trend towards reconciliation-oriented work-family policies, which are gender neutral, but used overwhelmingly by mothers. I will continue to use the term 'maternalist' work-family policies, as my analysis focuses on the Hungarian case study and this term fits the historical context.

2.3.2 Maternalist work-family policies and women's labor market vulnerability

Although there is considerable national variation in work-family policies in affluent Western countries,²⁹ recent research on their gendered labor market outcomes has revealed the general trend that while the policies promote women's inclusion in paid work, not on equal terms with men. Gender inequality is indicated by the gender wage gap, the gendered occupational segregation and women's limited presence in the highest level managerial positions (Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Gornick, Meyers and Ross 1998; van der Lippe and van Dijk 2002; Mandel and Semyonov 2005, 2006; Misra, Budig and Moller 2007, 2010; Orloff 2006; Uunk, Kalmijn and Muffels 2005).

In other words, women's position in the labor markets of these Western countries is argued to be strikingly similar to women's inferior position in the state socialist labor force (Einhorn 1993; Fodor 2003; Molyneux 1981), and can be characterized as 'limited inclusion,' a term originally devised for state-socialist societies (Fodor 2003, 2006). State-level work-family policies work in a rather similar way to maternalist state socialist policies: they help mothers to combine paid work and care work in the family, but at the same time they also

²⁸ The state acts as a legislator and implementer of work-family policies, a provider of public care services and as an employer (Mandel and Semyonov 2006; Orloff 2006). The state's involvement in encouraging mothers to take up paid work is similar to the efforts of socialist states a few decades earlier.

²⁹ For example, in Scandinavian countries work-family policies were introduced at the state level as early as the 1960s, while in the UK the state's involvement was reduced to trying to convince businesses to introduce work-family policies, and only in the 1990s were state-level policies introduced (McDowell 2001). In the USA, work-family initiatives are typically introduced at companies (Milkman and Appelbaum 2004, Milkman 2009).

reinforce women's larger share in care work, and limit their labor market chances, especially in the competitive sector where the policies contribute to a 'maternal wall' (Baxter and Wright 2000; Mandel and Semyonov 2006; Orloff 2006; Wright, Baxter and Birkeland 1995).

Thus, state-level work-family policies contribute to the vulnerable labor market position of women, especially mothers of young children. Keeping in mind the arguments about companies taking advantage of the vulnerability of certain groups of workers (Bank Munoz 2008; McKay 2006, Pun 2005; Pun and Smith 2007), it is clear that mothers of young children are a potential source of cheapened labor *because of* the maternalist work-family policies.³⁰ The mechanisms through which managements secure the supply of these mothers as workers and keep them committed to the company can be analyzed only at the level of the firm, that is why I will now turn to arguments about firm-level work-family practices.

2.3.3 Company-level work-family arrangements as a form of labor control

Company-level work-family initiatives include a variety of arrangements, such as flexible work hours, individual work-time accounts, working from home, as well as the company-level care leaves (Den Dulk 1999, 2007; Lewis 2009; Williams 2000, 2010). They are often consciously designed for employed mothers, but even if access to them is gender-neutral, such practices are overwhelmingly used by mothers (Dex and Scheibl 2002; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Hook 2006, 2010; Milkman 2009; Williams 2000, 2010), which means that such arrangements are almost by definition gendered practices. The implementation of state-level policies at individual companies can also be interpreted as a local practice: the use of state policies can be sabotaged or encouraged at the local level (Fodor 2006). Although work-

³⁰ Mandel (2009) argues that the vulnerability-generating effect of such policies can be hidden, as the countries with the most extensive work-family policies, such as Sweden and Denmark deploy other policies that minimize inequalities in the labor market. Thus, only the gender-segregation of the labor market is visible, the wage gap caused by work-family policies is hidden. The state can limit labor market inequalities by limiting wage differentials, by effectively enforcing protective legislation; and by employing women in public services, limiting the potential exploitation of mothers in the market sector.

family initiatives are often argued to be win-win arrangements (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Williams 2001, 2010) other scholars have problematized this optimistic position.

They argue that work-family balance cannot be achieved without a change in organizational cultures (Lewis 1996; Crompton 1998; Crompton et al. 2007), while others point out that management strategies based on ‘high commitment’ and the ‘culture of excellence’ are in conflict with a work-family culture, as well as the trends of work intensification and the culture of long work hours (Crompton et al. 2007; Hochschild 1997). This conflict is also demonstrated by employees’ use of work-family arrangements: employees often do not make full use of the existing work-family arrangements, even in countries where the work-family culture is considered to be strong, such as Norway and Denmark (Crompton and Birkelund 2000; Hojgaard 1997). Although Hochschild (1997) argued that the main reason work-family policies were not used at a large company in the USA is that employees choose ‘work’ over ‘family’ because they feel more appreciated and more relaxed at work than at home, others pointed to the fear of long-term negative consequences on one’s career and financial considerations as the main reasons (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002; Crompton et al. 2007; Mandel 2009; Maume and Bellas 2001; Milkman 2009; Williams 2000).

With all these conflicts in mind, Crompton et al. state that “a positive change of organizational cultures in a more ‘family-friendly’ direction will also have to involve a change in managerial practices of employee control” (2007: 10). I, on the other hand argue that organizational culture cannot be separated from ‘employee control.’ Thus, following McKay (2006), who conceptualized human resource practices as techniques of labor control, I conceptualize company-level work-family practices, including the implementation of state work-family policies, as an element of the managerial labor control strategy.

The link between work-family practices and managerial control is implied, but not emphasized in the arguments of organizational psychology, as it is clear from the following discussion. Thompson et al. (1999) identify the dimensions of work-family culture as managerial time expectations, employees' perceptions of how using WLB policies will affect their careers, and employees' perceptions of managerial support for WLB practices. I argue that the role of managerial control is obvious in all three dimensions. The same can be argued about the further two dimensions added by Bailyn et al. (1997): employee control over the flexibility of work hours and over the conditions of work.

Second, company-level work-family policies have also been argued to reduce turnover among workers (Brummelhuis and van der Lippe 2010; Perlow and Porter 2009; Dex and Scheibl 2002; Webber et al. 2010), in other words, such arrangements may be used consciously to improve worker commitment, which is the basis of stable production. Finally, Dex and Scheibl (2002) argued that at small- and medium sized companies, such as the one in my case study, managers' work-family attitudes and personal experiences of work-family issues are crucial in shaping company practices. In addition, at small companies work-family arrangements are often informal arrangements, which are equally effective in eliciting motivation and flexibility from employees (Dex and Scheibl 2002), however, I add that because of the informality, managers have full discretion in the cases of individual workers, making the control aspect of work-family arrangements even stronger.

My case study of a Hungarian workplace reveals that managerial control is closely intertwined with formal and informal work-family practices. To my knowledge, such managerial strategy has not been discussed in the literature – my study is the first that demonstrates and analyzes a factory regime that rests on 'maternalist' work-family

arrangements.³¹ Although it is not the main aim of my study, by emphasizing the link between labor control and work-family arrangements, my case study ‘politicizes’ the human resource literature on work-family culture.³²

Dex and Scheibl (2002) also argue that informal work-family arrangements can reflect, and at the same time create hierarchies among employees: if only a selected group of ‘elite’ employees are allowed to adapt their work routines to their family responsibilities, and this hierarchy based on ‘trust’ between management and workers may not coincide with the official company hierarchy. This argument takes me to the final research question of the dissertation: I will analyze how work-family arrangements – a crucial element of labor control in my case study – are deployed in different ways by the management to elicit the commitment of different groups of workers, in other words, how labor control is shaped by women workers’ position within the organizational hierarchy.

2.3.4 Differences among women workers: labor control and position in the company hierarchy

As work-family arrangements form an essential part of the managerial labor control strategy at the company in my case study, by comparing the ways in which these arrangements are deployed to control women in different positions in the company hierarchy I can highlight how class³³ and gender/femininity are intertwined in shaping labor control. These arguments are not unique to the work-family literature: research on gendered labor

³¹ There is research which argues that the *lack* of work-family policies creates vulnerability – I will discuss these later. Other research has focused on women’s concentration in ‘sheltered’ public employment in countries with developed public services sectors, such as Sweden and Denmark (Mandel and Semyonov 2006; Orloff 2006).

³² This move is inspired by McKay’s work (2006) which politicizes human resource practices.

³³ I will follow Hochschild’s lead and compare the practices and attitudes of blue- and white-collar women workers. The first group includes women working on the shop floor, the second one those working in the offices – the second group is further divided into administrative support workers and professionals/managers.

control has also highlighted differences among women workers,³⁴ but the labor control strategies used with women workers on the shop floor and in the offices are rarely compared systematically.

Although the role of workers' families and motherhood ideologies in shaping labor control has also been highlighted in the literature on gendered production regimes (for the most important arguments see Bank-Munoz 2008; Dunn 2001, 2004; Freeman 2000; Lee 1998, 1999), it is still important to incorporate the arguments of the work-family literature into the analytical framework of my study, as this body of research focuses on women's work-family decisions and the factors which influence their decisions in a more in-depth manner, and also emphasizes the effect of class differences. I will discuss arguments about the class differences in women's access to and use of work-family policies, and in their attitudes to such policies.

Focusing on company practices in the USA and the UK, where state-level policies are very limited, scholars have argued that women in professional and managerial positions are more likely to take advantage of work-family arrangements than working-class mothers – first, because their jobs more often entitle them for such benefits, and second, as leave arrangements are often unpaid, women with higher salaries can afford to take a leave more easily than those with lower earnings (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Guthrie and Roth 1999; Mandel 2009; Milkman 2009; Warren 2000; Williams 2000, 2010). Hochschild (1997) also points to financial reasons when explaining why blue-collar mothers take short leaves and work long hours even when their children are little, even though she maintains the argument about the workplace environment being more attractive than the families of workers.

³⁴ Differences among women on the shop floor were discussed along the lines of ethnicity (Lamphere and Zavella 1997; Zavella 1991), their belonging to localistic kinship networks (Lee 1998) and family status (Lee 1999). Weigt and Solomon (2008) compared the work-family management of working-class and middle-class women, but they used the method of interviewing, and the women did not work within the same organization.

In countries with more extensive state involvement access to work-family policies is universal, but the use of arrangements correlates with mothers' occupational class position: those in higher-level positions take shorter parental leaves, which is likely to be related to employers' expectations and practices. It has been argued that in the market sector employers are more likely to exclude women from the highest ranking positions through statistical discrimination, and longer work hours and a higher level of devotion to one's job are expected of employees than in the public sector (see for example Mandel 2009).

At first, the company in my case study seems an irregularity, as several of the professional employees and managers are women, some of them with young children. Aside from the irregularity, due to its focus on one company, my study highlights the role of state policies in shaping the work-family decisions of different occupational groups of women, while keeping several other contextual factors – industry, local labor market, managerial attitudes – constant.

2.3.5 Differences in work-family attitudes

Work-family arrangements can only elicit workers' commitment if they successfully address working mothers, thus women's work-family attitudes are crucial to a control strategy based on these arrangements.

Hakim's preference theory (1991, 1998, 2006) emphasizes individual factors over social structure in shaping women's work or family orientation, and divides women into three 'preference groups,' home-centred, work-centred and adaptive. However, she then goes on to argue that as many as 40-80% of all women are in the adaptive group, and their work-family decisions are indeed influenced by economic and other institutional factors, including state policies and workplace initiatives.

Other scholars argue more emphatically that women's work-family orientation is influenced by a host of structural and interactional factors, and their decisions are necessarily constrained. To account for the analytical difference, but also for the interaction between women's work-family values and contextual factors, Hochschild (1989) distinguishes between an individual's gender ideology and gender strategy, Rudd (2000, 2003) defines mothers' 'moral mapping,' while Duncan and Edwards (1997) and Duncan et al. (2003) develop the concept of mothers' 'gendered moral rationality' to emphasize that work-family decisions that involve care work cannot be discussed within the framework of either economic rationality or individualized preferences. When discussing the different work-family decisions of blue- and white-collar mothers in the firm I studied, I will refer to the 'ideologies of motherhood' and aim to show how these ideologies are shaped by women's position in the company hierarchy and vice versa.

Although it is impossible to give justice to the complexity of arguments about how occupational class influences women's work-family attitudes and decisions, I will highlight only a few key points of the arguments. First, it is argued that white-collar women tend to be more career-oriented, and blue-collar women are more family-oriented (Crompton 2005; Crompton and Harris 1998; Crompton and Lyonette 2010; Fagnani 2007; Gerson 1985; Ginn et al 1996; Hochschild 1989; Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Lewis and Giullari 2005; Lewis 2009; Risman 1998; Risman et al. 1999; Walzer 1997; Warren 2000, 2003; Williams 2000, 2010). The real value of these discussions for my study is that they focus on how different contexts influence mothers' work-family decisions. The specificity of the post- state socialist context lies in the influence of state socialist maternalism embedded not only in current state policies, but also in the motherhood ideologies of individuals – this is how my study contributes to this body of scholarship.

Particularly important elements of the context around mothers' work-family decisions are their male partners' gender ideology and behavior. It has been argued that attitudes to women's employment are becoming more positive overall (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Brewster and Padavic 2000; Crompton and Harris 1997; Treas and Widmer 2000). At the same time, men's attitudes about the gender division of paid and unpaid work are generally more conservative than women's (Baxter and Kane 1995; Brewster and Padavic 2000; Panayotova and Brayfield 1997; Treas and Widmer 2000).

Baxter and Kane (1995) have demonstrated that in countries where women are more dependent on their male partners economically, both men and women tend to have less egalitarian attitudes about the gender division of labor. They argue that in these countries men possess higher levels of social and material resources than women, which makes men interested in preserving the existing gender inequality. Takacs et al. (2011) have also found a positive correlation between gender inequalities and traditional attitudes of both men and women to the gender division of labor. These arguments explain how the maternalist factory regime shapes attitudes by reproducing women's vulnerable labor market position and their dependence on their partners. Again, the research design of my study enables me to examine attitudes of both women and men workers and their partners at a micro level.

Men's behavior, such as sharing of housework or the amount of overwork they do often have a constraining influence on women's decisions, and these practices are related to men's class status (Cha and Thebaud 2009; Hochschild 1989; Lewis 2009; Pyke 1996; Shows and Gerstel 2009; Walzer 1997; Williams 2010). Couples with young children often rely on biologizing arguments and treat mothers' responsibilities towards the child as more important, and their jobs as more flexible and even less important than those of the fathers (Singley and Heynes 2005; Walzer 1997). Although these arguments are not surprising, research that focuses on fathers' influence has not been published about Hungarian couples. As my

research design includes interviews with the partners of women workers and some ethnographic analysis of workers' households, I can focus on partners' influence on mothers' work-family decisions, and the class aspect of this influence.

In this chapter I have explored the arguments that are the most relevant to my research questions from three bodies of scholarship: the feminist theory of production politics, feminist scholarship on gender in production, including the literature on post-state socialist societies, and work-family research. My conceptual framework is based on the feminist theory of production politics (Lee 1998), with two important modifications: instead of focusing on workers' consent as a basis of a hegemonic production regime, I adopt the expanded notion of workers' commitment (McKay 2006), and incorporate the concepts of the work-family literature into the theoretical framework as through conceptualizing company-level work-family arrangements as techniques of labor control.

CHAPTER 3: THE LOCAL LABOR MARKET

The aim of this chapter is to provide background information that is useful for the reader to follow my analysis of the work regimes of KFT: I set out to position the factory within the economic and political context that has produced it in the first place. I start by giving an overview of the post-state socialist labor market of Hungary and the city where KFT is located, paying special attention to men and women's different position and referring to how the current situation is different from the state socialist context. Although two decades have passed since the beginning of the post-state socialist transformations, the developments of the labor market cannot be understood without pointing out the ruptures and continuities with the previous era. By pointing out the historical roots of the local economic development I aim to emphasize the changing, dynamic nature of the political and economic context, as opposed to presenting it as a static backdrop to the shop floor.

In the second part of the chapter I describe the state policies and provisions designed to help Hungarian parents to reconcile paid work and care work in the family. These policies used almost exclusively by mothers, and they are crucial to any discussion on women's working lives, company practices or the developments on the local and national level labor market. The policies are also part of the state-socialist legacy and have been shaping the work-family context in Hungary for over forty years.

In the final part of the chapter I turn to the local production system and describe the main industries of the city, paying special attention to the development of the electronics industry where KFT, the company in my case study, belongs to. I outline KFT's history and its current organization, focusing on how it is embedded in global production networks while also keeping its distinctly post-state socialist character.

3.1 Employment in post-state socialist Hungary

Participation in paid work was compulsory for all able-bodied adults in state socialist Hungary, in line with the policy of full employment, and unemployment did not officially exist. Women's economic activity rate was high: 76 % of those aged 15-64 were employed in 1990. By 2001 women's activity rate fell to 52.4 %, and unemployment appeared, and in 2008 the female activity rate is only 50.6 %. Unemployment rates among women stayed at a low level, which signals the general trend of the Hungarian post-state socialist transformations: women who dropped out of the labor market mostly became economically inactive, and did not return to paid work. Many of those who left the labor force took advantage of early retirement schemes, supported by the government as a way of reducing the social tensions associated with high levels of unemployment (Lukacs and Frey 2003).

Table 1. Activity and unemployment rates as percentage of the active population (aged 15-64) in Hungary

	Activity rate		Unemployment	Long term (over 12 months) unemployment rates as % of unemployed
	1990	2008	2008	2008
Male	83.8	63.0	7.6	47.5
Female	75.9	50.6	8.1	45.3
Total	80	56.7	7.8	46.5

Source: Fodor 2005; Hungarian Labor Force Survey, accessed through the Eurostat online database

The female activity rate in Hungary is very low in international comparison: the EU-27 average was 58.3 % in 2008. However, if the work hours of employed women are also taken into account, the country fares better compared to other member states of the European Union. In Hungary only 5.7 % of employed women work part-time, whereas the EU-27 average is 31.4% (EC, 2008: 10). Thus, if women's employment rate is converted into 'full time equivalent,' we find that the Hungarian employment rate reaches the EU-27 average

(Bukodi 2006; Frey 2009). In other words, relatively few Hungarian women are employed, but they work long hours, while in several EU countries the work hours of women are distributed more evenly: more women work shorter hours.

3.1.1 Horizontal job segregation and the gender pay gap

Men and women are concentrated in different economic sectors to a large extent: women dominate in both public and market services, men dominate in industries (Frey 2009; Bukodi 2006) as it is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of employed men and women in economic sectors in 2007 (%)

	Agriculture	Industries	Services	Total
Men	6.6	42.0	51.4	100
women	2.4	21.3	76.3	100

Source: Frey 2009

The gender job segregation is somewhat stronger in post-state socialist countries than in most developed Western countries (Bukodi 2006). In Hungary, the extent of occupational segregation, measured by the dissimilarity index, has declined since the end of the state socialist period: in 1992 the occupational structure of employed women and men showed a 65% difference, this dropped slightly to 60% by 2001 (Bukodi 2006).

As KFT is a manufacturing employer, I discuss gender segregation within manufacturing in more detail. In 2007 the majority of women employed in the manufacturing industry, 32.9%, worked in machinery and equipment production, and so did the majority of men: 35.8 % of them concentrated here (Frey 2009). As a result, the machinery industry, where KFT belongs is not strongly gender segregated, or rather, at this macro level of analysis

segregation cannot be detected, as 37% of all employees are women and 63 % of them are men.

The pay gap between men and women in Hungary in 2008 is at the same level as the European Union average (EU-27) at 17.5 % (Borbely 2011), and alternative methods of sampling (discussed in more detail by Borbely 2011 and Sik et al. 2011) have also yielded similar figures. As the gender pay gap is linked to the occupational segregation, it is worth looking at the details which are relevant to my case study.

KFT belongs to the market sector of the economy, and most blue-collar workers are employed in the lowest occupational category of unskilled workers. In the occupational category of machine operators and assembly workers the pay gap is 14% (in 2007), compared to the national average of 17.5 %, which fits the general trend that lower labor market status goes with lower gender pay gap (Borbely 2011). As for the industry effect, the subsector of ‘electrical machinery and equipment production’ where KFT belongs to is characterized by one of the largest pay gaps in the industrial sector at 20.9 % (Borbely 2011). Among white-collar but not managerial workers the pay gap is higher at 26% (Borbely 2011).

Another strong influence on the gender pay gap is the number of children, or the ‘wage penalty for motherhood’ (Budig and England 2001), which in my case study is particularly relevant for white-collar workers.³⁵ The pay gap between men and women in Hungary is the lowest among childless workers at 8 %, while among workers with two or more children it is 25% (Borbely 2011 data from 2007).

³⁵ At KFT the shop floor workers are all women and almost all of them are mothers, whereas in the offices men and women work together in similar positions, and there is also a mix of workers with and without children.

3.1.2 Women's human capital

Due to the expansion of schooling under state socialism, in Hungary the educational attainment of women is very similar to, or higher than that of men. Szelenyi (1998) argues that by the early 1980s women and men's participation in post-secondary education was equal, and by the late 1990s 58 per cent of employees with degrees were women. However, as a result of gender segregation in education, women with secondary level education are less likely to have vocational qualifications than men. There is no gender gap in on the job training, which, according to Fodor (2005) is a sign that managements treat women as long-term employees, and consider it worthwhile to invest in their human capital.

After this brief overview of the national employment context, I turn to the local labor market of the city where KFT is located.

3.1.3 Women's employment in the city³⁶

The labor market of the city where KFT is based has 'recovered' from the post-state socialist decline in employment to a larger degree than the national average, as it is clear from the data presented in Table 3: in 2001 the employment rates of both men and women were higher in the city than in the country, although they did not reach the 1990 levels.³⁷

Table 3. Employment rates in the city and in Hungary in 1990 and 2001 (%)

	Employment rate	
	City	Hungary
2001		
Male	69.5	58.3
Female	56.2	47.3
1990		
Male	75.4	74.5
Female	64.4	57.3

Source: FLOWS, WP 2

³⁶ Most of the statistical data used in in this chapter have been collected in the comparative research project titled 'FLOWS: Impact of Local Welfare Systems on Female Labour Force Participation and Social Cohesion', supported by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme. I worked on the project as a member of the Hungarian team. <http://www.flows-eu.eu/research-content/>

³⁷ The main source of urban level statistics is the census, that is why most of the data in this section come from 2001.

Focusing on women, we find that in this city they are better integrated in the labor market than the national average: the employment rate of women aged 15-64 has been higher in the city than the national average at every census since 1970. During the post-state socialist transformations women's economic activity rate dropped from 72 % (1980) to 65.3 % (1990), and even further to 59.4 % by 2001. However, this figure is still much higher than the corresponding national rate at 52.4 % in 2001. Unemployment among women in the city stayed at a low level at 3.3 %, while inactivity was rather high at 40.61% in 2001 – in this respect the city fits in the national trend.

3.1.4 Horizontal gender segregation in the local labor market

As Table 4 shows, the labor market of the city is highly gender segregated: women are employed in all three economic sectors, although they dominate in public services such as education or health care, whereas men are 'missing' from public services. What is most relevant for my analysis of the work regime at KFT is that women and men's participation in manufacturing is relatively similar.³⁸

Table 4. Distribution of employed men and women in economic sectors in the city in 2001 and 2009 (% of all employed men and women)

	Manufacturing		Market services		Public services	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
2001	34.54	26.21	35.72	33.20	15.49	36.38
2009	40.89	24.96	34.23	29.61	14.08	44.19

Source: FLOWS, WP 2

³⁸ I focus on manufacturing rather than 'industries' as this is by far the dominant industry in our city.

3.1.5 Human capital and employment in the city

The educational attainment of men and women in the city is very similar, as it is shown in Table 5. The contrast between women's general secondary education and men's vocational-type secondary education is also clear: this means that men are more likely to hold skilled blue-collar jobs while women, even with a nominally higher level of education will be classified as unskilled workers.

Table 5. Population aged 15-64 by gender and the highest level of education completed in the city in 2001 (% of all employed men and women)

	Primary school or lower	Vocational secondary education	General secondary education	College or university
Male	23.1	26.7	31.0	19.2
Female	29.2	13.0	40.9	16.9

Source: FLOWS, WP 2

How do these different educational backgrounds influence the employment of men and women? Table 6 contains data on the economic activity rates of men and women with different educational attainments. According to these figures, people with primary and vocational secondary-level education are almost equally integrated into the labor force, regardless of gender – which again shows that there is a demand for unskilled labor in the city. Although there is a gender gap in activity rates in every educational group, this gap is fairly stable in all educational categories, indicating that men and women who have the same educational background are included in the labor market to very similar degrees. In this respect the local labor market is similar to the national one (see Frey 2009).

Table 6. Activity rates by gender and educational attainment in the active population (15-64) in 2001 in the city (%)

	Incomplete primary education	Completed primary school	Vocational secondary education	General secondary education	College or university
Male	43.4	87.7	84.2	71.4	89.8
Female	36.6	73.2	71.9	61.5	80.9

Source: FLOWS, WP 2

After describing the basic characteristics of the national and urban labor market I turn to state policies that enable mothers to leave the labor market for shorter or longer periods when raising young children. Although access to these policies is gender neutral, it is almost always mothers who make use of them and thus their impact contributes to gender differences in employment. Apart from the policies, I also describe the day care services that are available in the city where KFT is based.

3.2 De-commodification of mother's paid work: state policies on maternity and parental leaves

The state-level work-family policies I describe in this section are designed to de-commodify women's paid work, enabling them to temporarily leave the workforce and look after their children. Maternity leaves and cash benefits to families were first established in Hungary before the Second World War, however, these policies were later redesigned to fit the changing economic, political and social goals of the state socialist regime. As the post-war reconstruction of the country was accomplished and the most intensive phase of post-state socialist industrialization came to an end in the 1960s, and worries about the declining birth rate emerged together with the threat of unemployment among unskilled women (Fodor 2003; Haney 2002), special policies were introduced to withdraw women from the labor force. At first, new labor rules were introduced to 'protect' working women. These rules excluded them from jobs deemed to be dangerous or too strenuous for them, or rather, for their reproductive capabilities (Fodor 2003; Grad 1979; Haney 2002). In the next step, the existing maternity leave was extended, and finally, in 1967 a completely new system of work-family policies was introduced, which entitled employed mothers to take a child care leave with a flat-rate benefit until the child's third birthday.

Similar policies were introduced in most Eastern-European state socialist countries, however, the Hungarian system was considered to be especially comprehensive and generous. At the introduction the leave was available only to mothers, since the 1980s fathers can also take parental leaves – but they rarely do. In the mid-1980s a second layer was added to the system – an earnings related leave with a replacement value of 70%, available until the child's second birthday. It has been argued that these policies were targeted at professional women, who tended to take shorter leaves because the flat-rated benefit meant a serious drop in their income (Fodor 2003; Haney 2002).

The parental leave system was left intact in the first phase of the post-state socialist transformations, despite suggestions, or even demands from international organization such as the IMF and the OECD to reduce the provisions (Fodor 2003; Goven 2000; Haney 2002). What is more, an additional leave was introduced with a flat rate benefit with the declared aim to encourage mothers with three or more children to leave the labor force until their children are young. Thus, the 'maternalist' framework of state policies and provisions (Haney 2002) in Hungary is practically the same in the 2000s as it was in the late 1980s (Glass and Fodor 2007; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Szikra 2010), although the real value of the benefits declined at different rates under different governments. I summarize the leaves and the main rules of eligibility and the replacement values in Table 7.

When I conducted my fieldwork, the rules allowed parents to work for pay and continue to receive the flat rated benefit,³⁹ and a few women at KFT did so, but parental leaves are generally understood by all parties involved as time spent 'not working.'

³⁹ Women who came back to work after the two-year insurance -based leave ended, were eligible to the universally available leave with a flat-rated benefit. This meant additional income to them.

Table 7. Parental leaves in Hungary in 2010

	Name	Eligibility	Description	Replacement value
Insurance-based ⁴⁰	Maternity leave	Mothers only Insured for at least 1 year before birth	24 weeks	70% of former pay
	Parental leave with income related benefit	Either parent Insured for at least a year before birth	Until the child's 2nd birthday	70% of former pay ceiling of 330 euros (100 000 HUF) month taxable
Universally available ⁴¹	Parental leave with flat rate benefit	Either parent ⁴² Hungarian citizens	Until the child's 3rd birthday ⁴³	100 euros/month (28500 HUF)
	Parental leave for large families with flat rate benefit	Hungarian citizens with at least 3 children under the age of 18	Between the 3rd and 8th birthday of the youngest child	100 euros /month (28500 HUF)

Parental leaves come with job protection: according to the Labor Code parents/mothers have the right to take the leaves and employers are obliged to guarantee the jobs for the duration of the leave and for further 30 days. Furthermore, time spent on parental leave is taken into account when the eligibility for old-age pension is calculated – by taking long parental leaves women do not risk their eligibility to state pensions. In addition, employed parents are entitled to special paid care leaves to stay at home when their children are sick, and they receive the same benefit as if they were on sick leave. Finally, parents also have the right to take additional, unpaid care leaves, with job protection – these leaves are taken by parents whose children suffer from long-term health problems. In sum, welfare and labor legislation construct mothers as a group of employees with special 'maternal' rights.

Most new mothers take parental leaves that are considered long in international comparison: the average parental leave in Hungary is as long as 4.7 years (Balint and Kollo

⁴⁰ Act LXXX of 1997 on Social Security and Private Pensions, and Act LXXXIII of 1997 on The benefits related to compulsory Social Insurance

⁴¹ Act LXXXIV of 1998 on Support to Families

⁴² With special rules grandparents and adoptive parents are also eligible.

⁴³ In some cases the leave can be longer: with twins, the leave is available up to the child's sixth birthday (or until they start school). If the child suffers from a serious health condition, such as diabetes or severe asthma, the universal parental leave is available up to the child's 10th birthday.

2007). According to the latest ‘Work and Care Responsibilities’ survey, 29% of women whose youngest child was under the age of 8 have been out of the labor market for 9 years⁴⁴ (HCSO 2011b). Although the parental leave benefits are generally too low to allow women to maintain an independent household, they are argued to be high enough to serve as an alternative of low-wage employment, and especially of unemployment (Balint and Kollo 2007).

While the time Hungarian mothers spend on child care leaves is rather long, there is a trend that more and more mothers would like to return to paid work once the leave expires: in 1999 65% of mothers, in 2002 70%, and in 2005 75% of them planned to work for pay again (Frey 2009). However, about one third of mothers on leave would like to return to their old jobs but their employers do not want to take them back (1999: 33%, 2002: 33%, 2005: 26%), despite the job guarantee included in the Labor Code.

Day care services for children are an alternative of long parental leaves, and they are also widely used by families after the parental leaves expire – I will now turn to these provisions.

3.2.1 Childcare provision in the city

In this section I focus on the public and private day care options in our city.⁴⁵ The system of public day care provision is made up of crèches, for children under the age of 3, kindergartens, for the 3-6 age group, and there are school-based afternoon care services provided by individual primary schools. I will also discuss the availability of formal and informal private services, including accessibility and flexibility of all forms of provision.

The social right of children to day care and for financial support has existed since the state socialist era, but the current legislation on day care services dates back to the early

⁴⁴ Including those women who had another or more children in this nine-year period

⁴⁵ My discussion is based on two documents of the local authority, the “Strategic Plan for Social Services in Sz. 2010-2015” and the “Strategic Plan for Education Services in Sz. 2007-2012,” both of which include detailed information on the current service provision. In addition, I have conducted interviews with representatives of the local council, a manager of a local crèche and the leader of a local NGO which focuses on the problems of ‘large’ families, that is, families with three or more children.

1990s. The current wording of the law about the right to be accepted into creches goes like this: "Places in creches must be provided to children whose parents/caregivers cannot look after them because of their work, participation in work-related programs and training courses, or for other reasons." Certain children/parents are given priority: single parents, parents with more than three children, parents in poor health, children from poor households, as well children recommended by the child protection agency. The child whose parent receives a parental leave benefit is not entitled to a place in a crèche.⁴⁶

Participation in the final year of kindergarten education (pre-school) is compulsory in Hungary, so even those children are entitled to a place whose parents are not employed, though in some locations they can only take part in the special sessions that prepare them for school, but cannot stay there for the rest of the day.⁴⁷

The lack of childcare places is discussed widely in the local and national press, and also in policy analyses. The ombudsperson called for the more efficient implementation and enforcement of the national-level regulation at local level in 2010.⁴⁸ In the interviews with local experts children's and parents' right to daycare was not mentioned – in practice the places in crèches are given to parents who can prove that they have a job – but those who are searching for a job face difficulties in placing their children under 3 in public day care.

Table 8 and 9 provide data on the use of public day care places in the city and in Hungary, and show that a much higher proportion of children are in crèches than the national average. This can be explained by the availability of places and also by the availability of jobs. The use of after school care is also higher in our city than the national average, which at

⁴⁶ If a parent is on leave with a child, the older sibling is entitled to kindergarten or after school care. However, in practice these children are often refused the service because of the shortage of places.

⁴⁷ The most recent version of the Act on Education makes kindergarten education compulsory for all children above the age of 3. The law has not entered into force yet, but it has been accepted in Parliament.

⁴⁸ http://www.eloszto.hu/cikkek/munka/2010/08/18/jog_van_hely_nincs_az_ombudsman_a_bolcsodei_ferohe_lyekrol

least partly can be explained by the fact that more parents work for pay, and thus cannot collect their children at lunchtime when classes end.

Table 8. Children aged 0-12 in public day care in the city, 2010 (as % of the age group)

Forms of formal care	0-2	3-6	7-12
Collective crèche	6.9	8.2	0.0
Family day care centre	0.5	1.0	0.0
Kindergarten	0.0	86.6	0.5
Afternoon care in primary schools	0.0	0.0	65.5
Formal care total	7.4	95.7	66.0

Source: FLOWS, WP 3

Table 9. Children aged 0-12 in public day care in Hungary, 2010 (% of the age group)

Forms of formal care	0-2	3-6	7-12
Collective crèche	1.3	8.2	0.0
Family day care centre	0.2	0.9	0.0
Kindergarten	2.2	84.2	0.6
Afternoon care in primary schools	0.0	0.0	49.5
Formal care total	3.7	93.2	50.1

Source: FLOWS, WP 3

3.2.2 Crèches

Although the number of places for children under three puts the city in a good position in a national comparison, there are significantly fewer places now than there were under state socialism. There are eight public crèches in our city (in 2010), offering 620 places, and all they run at 124 % percent of their official capacity. There are also long waiting lists, an issue that prompts parents to demand action from local politicians and that is often discussed in the local press.⁴⁹ In crèches run by the local authority parents only pay for the food, but not for

⁴⁹ http://www.fmh.hu/cimlapon/20110216_listazott_ferohelyek

the actual care of children, thus the sum is rather low at 380 forints/day (1.5 euros/day), which in an average month is appr 32 Euros (8000 forints). Although parents have to pay in advance every month, if the child misses time, the fee of those days is paid back at the end of the month.

There is very little information available private crèches, but according to my own research there are only one or two private crèches in the city. The monthly fee is 160 Euros.

3.2.3 Kindergartens and after school day care services

There are twenty-three kindergartens owned and managed by the local government offering places to 3547 children – the difference in the number of places in creches and kindergartens reflects that most children under 3 are cared for in their homes, and that there are serious shortages in public day care for children under 3. The fees are very similar to those paid in crèches, and parents only pay for the meals. However, special contributions are regularly asked from parents to cover the cost of educational supplies, such as paper, pens, or arts and crafts kits.

Day care services are also provided to school-age children. In this city, 90% of primary school children in the first four years (aged 6-10) stay in the school in the afternoon: they are supervised by teachers and assisted with their homework.

3.2.4 Family daycare centres

These centres cater for children aged 20 weeks to 14 years, and they are the main alternative to creches in our city. However, the sixteen local centres only cater for 51 children, which is only 10% of the number of children in creches. The service is usually provided in the home of the caregiver, and thus one centre can cater for a maximum of five children. Family

day care institutions can be privately run, or run by a not-for-profit organization or church. Their work is regulated by national level legislation, and they are also entitled to normative grants from the national budget.

The fees in family day care centres are much higher than in crèches or kindergartens run by the local government. In a non-profit family day care centre in the city the monthly fee is 120 Euros (30 thousand forints), excluding the cost of meals. In a private day care centre in the city the fee is 240 Euros/month (60 thousand forints).⁵⁰

3.2.5 Accessibility and flexibility of services

As I have mentioned above, there are not enough places, especially in crèches, which means that there are long waiting lists. The problem is present in the whole country: the ombudsperson argues that although children/parents have the right to formal day care services, the right often cannot be fulfilled due to the lack of places.⁵¹ In an interview I conducted at the local authority, it was mentioned that parents use 'tricks' to have access to childcare services in the city: some parents get an address in the city, for example by moving in with friends or family, at least on paper, even if they do not actually live here, because in our city there are childcare places, while in they are completely lacking in nearby villages.

There is a lot of variation in the opening hours of crèches in our city: some open as early as 5.30 am, while others open only at 7 am and they close at 5 or 5.30 pm. The hours of kindergartens are shorter, from 7 am, or 7.30 am to 5 pm, and parents often complain that these hours are not flexible enough, and that 'working parents' are always the last to pick up their children. As for children in primary schools, the practice of different schools varies a great deal, but most after-school care services close at 4 pm, 4.30 pm.

⁵⁰ I do not have information about the fees of all local day care centres, these two figures are only examples.

⁵¹

http://www.eloszto.hu/cikkek/munka/2010/08/18/jog_van_hely_nincs_az_ombudsman_a_bolcsodei_ferohelyekrol

Most children start kindergartens in September, and there is very little flexibility in this respect, ‘late’ admissions are only possible if someone drops out or does not take up a place. Crèches are more flexible in this respect, but given the long waiting lists, this flexibility does not improve accessibility a great deal. The short and inflexible opening hours and inflexible enrolment dates do not correspond to the reality of the labor market, and parents may miss out on job opportunities because of the inflexible system.

In summary, the parental leaves and the available day care facilities influence mothers’ work-family decisions in complex ways, even in this city, where the availability of services is far above the national average. Data in Table 10 show that most women stay out of the labor force until the parental leave expires both in the city and in Hungary, but mothers of older children are better integrated into the local labor market than the national average.

Table 10. Economic activity rates of mothers (aged 15-64) in the city and in Hungary in 2001 by the age of the youngest child (%)

Age of the youngest child	City	Hungary
0-1	4.9	4.6
1-2	8.1	6.9
2-3	24.9	19.3
3-5	73.9	65.1
6-9	83.9	75.5
10-15	89.2	80.8

Source: FLOWS, WP 1

3.3 The local production system - post-state socialist development

In the final section of the chapter I first describe the economy of the city, focusing on the post-state socialist development of the electronics industry where the company in my case study belongs to. Then I summarize the company history and its current organization and links to production networks. I also describe the technical organization of the labor process, to highlight how this is related to the company’s niche position in the product market.

KFT is located in Fejer county, one of the most developed industrial areas of Hungary where the GDP/inhabitant value is 9900 thousand Euros (current prices, 2008), compared to the national figure of 10600 thousand Euros, which means that the county is the third most productive areas of Hungary (Eurostat online database 2011). As data in Table 11 show, the local production system is characterized by the dominance of industrial production, while at the national level services dominate.

Table 11. Economic production by economic sectors at county and national levels in 2005 (%)

	County	Hungary
Industries	40.4	25.3
Services	49.1	65.5

Source: FLOWS, WP 2

The industrial character of the county and the city is also reflected in the employment profile: in the city 43.5 per cent of full-time employees work in the industries, as opposed to 32.2 per cent nationally, in 2006 (Table 12).

Table 12. Distribution of full-time employees in macroeconomic sectors at urban, county and national level in 2006 (%)

	City	County	Hungary
Employed in agriculture	1.6	4.5	4.9
Employed in industries	43.5	43.2	32.2
Employed in services	54.5	52.2	62.8

Source: FLOWS, WP 2

The most important segment of industries is manufacturing: in 2009, 43 % of employees in the city worked in manufacturing. Within manufacturing the three most dominant subsectors are machinery, metal and electronics. The dominance of these subsectors can be traced back to the state socialist era, when three large factories were located in the city, and had a major influence on the economy of the city and the region. One of the factories

produced aluminium products, such as plates, sheets and foil. The second company manufactured buses and coaches used in public transport, and the third one specialized in electronic products, such as televisions, radios, videos, and also had a section producing electronic items used by the military. Links to the military made the electronic plant an important site of not only production, but also research and development.

3.3.1 Post-state socialist development through Foreign Direct Investment

Although these state socialist companies were privatized in the 1990s, their legacy is still important, and explains the employment structure of the city. In the early 1990s employment in the industrial sector, especially in manufacturing declined less here than nationally. This can be explained by the fact that the trained work force and the existing infrastructure for metal and electronics production attracted multinational companies to the city in the 1990s (IBM, Philips), and smaller, locally owned companies, such as KFT were also founded on the basis of the existing trained workforce and infrastructure.

The local government encouraged this trend and attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) into the industries by establishing special ‘industrial zones’, of which there are five on the outskirts of our city. Indeed, most foreign investment went to the industrial sector: 82.6 % of all foreign investments in 2000. Other sectors were influenced by foreign investment to a much smaller degree: 10.7 % of FDI went to transport, telecommunications and postal services, and only 3.6 % to wholesale and retail (HCSO 2003b). The local government was motivated in attracting investment under the pressure of the high unemployment after the disintegration of the state socialist firms. The national government was also highly motivated

to attract foreign investment, a form of fast and market-conform privatization, which was thought to be the best method for reducing the country's large external debt (Inotai 2011).⁵²

As a result, production in the county is export oriented: in 2002 76.3 % of industrial products were sold abroad (HCSO 2007). Because of the high level of foreign ownership in the local economy and the export orientation of production, fluctuations on the global electronics market have an immediate effect locally: most recently, this area was first affected by the global industrial crisis within Hungary (HCSO 2010).

The majority of companies based in the city are micro-businesses which employ fewer than 10 people and there are only a few large employers (Table 13).

Table 13. The number of companies in the city according to the number of employees (2005)

	0-9 employees	10-19 employees	20-49 employees	50-249 employees	250 or more employees	Total
City	12409	484	247	143	36	13319

Source: 3K Consens 2008

However, it is the large companies, most of which are owned by multinational corporations that employ the majority of workers in the city: Table 14 shows that 36% of employees work for large companies.

Table 14. The distribution of employees in the city according to the size of their employer (2005)

	0-9 employees	10-19 employees	20-49 employees	50-249 employees	250 or more employees	Total
City	27.6	8.6	10.4	17.6	35.9	100.0

Source: 3K Consens 2008

⁵² In contrast, Czechoslovakia was not under pressure by external debt, and chose a slower path of privatization (voucher-type) and even kept state-owned companies (Inotai 2011).

There is another aspect of centralization: 80% of industrial production at the county level is contributed by companies that employ more than 300 employees (HCSO 2007).

KFT, the company I analyse in my dissertation employs 69 people (in 2008), and thus belongs to the groups of small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

3.4 Hungary and KFT in global electronics production

Hungary is the main electronics producer among Central-Eastern European countries with 30% of the regional production (Reed Electronics Research 2011).⁵³ This leading role is due to the presence of companies such as Nokia, Philips, Samsung and Electrolux. These companies have established their local subsidiaries because of the low local wages, the trade regulations related to the EU-member state of the country, that is, low duties and low taxes, and finally, the geographical location, that is, the relative proximity of Hungary to Western-Europe (Galgoczy 2011). When I conducted my field work, electronics was a developing subsector of the manufacturing industry in the city, employing 22% of the urban workforce (3K Concens 2008).

The factories owned by multinational companies in the region specialize in large scale electronics assembly, whether it is mobile phones, DVD players or complex electronic parts, and organize the labor process along automated assembly lines. They employ unskilled or semi-skilled workers, thus, they attract workers from a large pool –not only school leavers, but also workers who have previous work experience, and perhaps other qualifications which are not related to the actual position. Jobs are often filled through agencies recruiting workers from outside the county (this is also supported by Timar 2012).

These large companies tend to use the strategy of ‘numerical flexibility’ (Frenkel 2003), that is, they adapt to changes in the demand for their products by hiring and dismissing

⁵³ This ranking is likely to have changed significantly as a result of the recent economic crisis

several workers at a time. These ‘flexible’ employees are often hired on short-term contracts, through employment agencies. Indeed, three of the five large companies whose representatives I interviewed also use this strategy, and up to half of their workforce is made up by agency employees.

Smaller, locally owned electronics companies, such as KFT are linked to these multinational companies as suppliers or subcontractors, providing or at times also developing electronic parts used in production (3K Consens 2008). However, Inotai (2011) argues that multinationals in the region acquire only a small segment of the raw materials from local suppliers. Subcontracting is also based on the cost of labor, but, especially with more complex parts, the specialized labor and knowledge of engineers, technicians and skilled blue-collar workers may also become important (3K Consens 2008; McKay 2006).

The need for such specialized subcontractors in the global production chain is the *raison d’être* of KFT, which is integrated into global production networks via its clients. The client companies, several of which are multinationals, located in Hungary, Western Europe and North America.

3.5 KFT’s history⁵⁴

The company was founded by a couple who worked as middle-managers at a large state-owned electronics company until 1991, when they lost their jobs during the company’s reorganization and downsizing.⁵⁵ Both of them are engineers who used to work in the confidential section of the company that specialized in military communication. The start up capital and the business contacts to potential clients came from a family member of the

⁵⁴ The discussion in this section is based on information that I collected during my fieldwork through being present in meetings and client audits, from company documents and interviews with the CEO as well as participant observation in the offices and on the shop floor.

⁵⁵ In 1988 the state socialist company had 20 000 employees, which was reduced to 10 thousand in 1991, and by 1993 only 5000 employees remained employed. The company still exists under the same name.

husband's family who left Hungary and became a German citizen. He owns 49 % of the company, while the managing couple own 51 percent. At the beginning there were three employees altogether, and in the first year of the business the annual turnover was five million forints (20 thousand Euros at current prices). The company was at its largest in 2001, with 100 employees. In 2008 there were 69 employees, 15 white-collar ones and 54 blue-collar ones, and the annual turnover was 700 million forints (280 thousand Euros). After starting up in a detached house in the city, the company is now located in one of the industrial zones just outside the city in a purpose built production facility of 1250 square meters.

In the first six years the company produced exclusively to the German market, and 80% of their orders came from only companies in Germany. This period is characterized by 'made to print' production, which meant that the client supplied raw materials, specialized tools and the know-how, the staff at KFT only executed the order. Thus, the client who ordered the product carried significant responsibilities, such as buying and transporting raw materials and the finished product, production design, etc. According to the CEO, the company succeeded because of its proximity to the German markets, the low production costs and their flexibility: "In those days the German workers did not like doing overtime – so the work was given to us." Ehrke (2011) on the other hand argues that it was not the flexibility of the Hungarian workers that mattered, but a new division of industrial labor between Western Europe, especially Germany and Central Eastern Europe emerged in the 1990s. The more labor and less knowledge intensive production in the care and electronics industries was relocated to the periphery, such as Hungary, while technology dependent production remained in the centre.

In 1996 the company started to produce for the Hungarian market, a move that was facilitated by their first bank loan – until then their loan applications were refused by the bank. After the Germany economic crisis in the early 2000s the company lost its stable market

and had to look for new markets - at the moment it produces for the Hungarian subsidiaries of several multinational companies, as well as for clients in Switzerland, Denmark and the USA.

As the company developed, the management had to face new client expectations: subcontracting⁵⁶ in 2008 is completely different from what it was in 1991, that is, Western European companies developed a new strategy to benefit from the opportunities presented by the new localities and integrate the local economy to their networks in novel ways. In the new division of labor more responsibilities are shifted to the subcontractor, that is, to KFT. Although each subcontracting agreement is different, the following elements are usually included among the responsibilities of KFT as a local producer in the late 2000s:

- Designing the entire production process based on either technical drawings and specifications or only a sample product, and the subcontractor has to submit the plans (production, control, final quality control) to the client and negotiate until an agreement is reached;
- Logistics: the local producer orders the raw materials, pays for them and warehouses them. Clients often have specific requests about this, such as keeping a separate area only for the materials used for their order;
- Production;
- Shipping the completed order to the client - KFT uses shipping agencies.
- Pricing: in return for long term, such as a three-year contract, the prices are reduced every year by a few percent, which potentially reduces the profit margin of the subcontractor.
- Language issues: not only does the negotiation takes place in English or German, but all documents, such as production instructions, quality control plans, lists of necessary items for each product, have to be prepared in a foreign language. This means a lot of

⁵⁶ The relationship between a client and a supplier may be very simple, for example ordering parts from a catalogue, that the supplier may be able to provide from stock, or produce after the order. Subcontracting on the other hand is always based on a customized order and a contract, it is more than a simply purchasing goods.

extra work for the local producer: translations take time, which in turn reduces the ‘flexibility’ of client service.⁵⁷

– Secrecy: even though the production takes place in Hungary, some clients do not allow the business relationship to become public knowledge – they do not give references to the subcontractor, and the final buyers of the product may never know that production took place in Hungary, and not in Switzerland, for example.

Thus, in the 2000s the strategy of Western European companies is not simply relocating certain elements of their production to the periphery, as it was the case in the 1990s (Ehrke 2011), but selecting and including existing local companies in their international networks. Frenkel argues that in the manufacturing industry multinational companies are more likely to rely on a network of independent subcontractors and keeping tasks related to design, marketing and distribution centralized. In order to ensure stability of production these multinational companies tend to build a stable network of subcontractors, “while constantly encouraging improvements in manufacturing performance” (2003: 140).

Examining the issue of subcontracting from the point of view of the local companies, Radosevic and Yoruk (2004) argue that Eastern-European electronics firms can now only be successful on the global market if they manage to avoid low value-added subcontracting and dependence on clients. Although for the management of KFT sounds nostalgic about the ‘old day’s when clients bore more responsibility for production, they were forced to adapt to the new strategy and find a niche position on the market after their stable orders from Germany disappeared. This shift is openly discussed in company documents, and newspaper interviews with the CEO, and this period of the company’s history is labeled as “crisis and looking for new directions.”

⁵⁷ This is my entry point into the story: it is because of my knowledge of English that I had access to documents.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

I conducted the ethnographic field research for the dissertation between February 2008 and December 2009 at a Hungarian electronics company which holds national awards as a ‘family-friendly workplace.’ I gained access to the company through the CEO: as I explained in the Introduction, I met her at a conference on work-life balance practices, and she claimed that at her company a variety of flexible work – family arrangements were accessible to both white- and blue-collar workers. The company seemed an appropriate location to study my research question, as in this phase of the project I was interested in how blue- and white-collar workers negotiate their paid work and family responsibilities at work and at home.

I had permission to come and go any time and participate in the life of the company as fully as I wished. In return, I offered to help with English-Hungarian translation, proofreading and teaching, and they soon started to give me translation work, but I only had a few language classes with some office workers. After a while it became obvious that the strong work-family culture and the management-worker relationship that seemed exceptionally harmonious are closely intertwined, thus my attention turned towards the gendered factory regime, and I was adding new research questions to the existing ones and focusing on the work regime as well on comparing blue- and white-collar women’s work-family practices.

In the meantime I became immersed in the everyday life the company: I found myself sitting in front of a computer in one of the offices two or three days a week and working hard on the translation of highly technical documents. As I commuted from another city, I soon became a flexible worker myself: I arrived later than the 7 o’clock start and left late in the afternoon, when the factory hall was already empty, and only a few people were still at work in the main office. I also started to take work home and work there in the evening, and at times I would receive a phone call from a ‘colleague’ and I ended up doing some really urgent

translation without leaving my flat in Budapest: the documents arrived in an e-mail and I promptly returned the completed work.

I did not have my own computer, and did not have access to the company's data network, but translated e-mails addressed to logistics officers and took part in a client audit where I worked as an interpreter. I also participated in the preparatory meetings before the audit was carried out by a famous automotive company, and these experiences were crucial for developing my sociologically informed view on the power relations between KFT's management and the clients, or at a more general level about the power relations within global production networks.

As I became more proficient in the details of quality control plans and wire harnesses, and felt the pressure of deadlines and client audits, I was a participant observer, but immersed deeply only in one area of the factory, in the offices. My interactions were mostly limited to office workers: I spent my lunch breaks with white-collar workers, and visited some of them in their homes, and I had only superficial contact with blue-collar workers in the first months. Luckily, by this time some of the women on the shop floor became intrigued by my presence, and they started to ask me questions during the breaks and in the bus stop after work. When I told them about my research topic of work-family balance, their stories about children, kindergartens and parental leaves came easily.

By this time it seemed impossible to work on the shop floor – not only was I considered an office worker, but I was fully aware that I was not skilled enough for much of the work they did. However, as neither the women workers nor the managers seemed to mind my presence on the shop floor, I developed a routine that allowed me to spend more time there: when I arrived, I checked in at the office, then divided my time the computer and the shop floor, where I would sit on an a free chair and chat to the workers: sometimes with one person, sometimes with a small group.

Although the production manager was probably not always happy about this, she did not object to it either, and I tried to be present on the shop floor but not overdo it, exactly as the women who occasionally broke the rules but not too blatantly. Once I became part of the scene on the shop floor, some of the workers and even the production manager took a pragmatic stance to my presence, and when there was a simple and urgent task, they asked me to help, and I also offered help to people who seemed overwhelmed, or carried a heavy box alone. I did not talk to everyone, but several of the blue-collar women were happy to talk to me and I could observe the whole shop floor.

Apart from participating in the everyday work of the factory, I also started to conduct longer, in-depth interviews. First with three white-collar workers, two women and a man, who invited me into their homes, so I could meet and spend time with their children and in two cases, with their partners. The recorded interviews are about two hours long, but I stayed there the whole afternoons after work. As for spending time with blue-collar workers outside the factory, things did not go as well as I hoped: even though by this time it was early summer, I could accompany only four of them after work to go home, and spend the afternoon with them. As for their partners, only two of them participated in the interviews, the other two had minimal contact with me: they worked in the garden or went to play football. Thus, I have recorded two couple interviews and two interviews with the women only, again, the recordings are about one and half – two hours long.

I cannot tell whether they kept their distance because they saw me as one of the office people, or it was unrealistic to expect to get close to them so soon. Although it is possible that some of them thought I was reporting to the management, and avoided talking to me because of this, most blue-collar workers that I spoke to, men and women alike, felt free to criticize their superiors when talking to me at work, but I still did not get close enough to them. The women who worked on the shop floor tended not to meet each other outside work either,

some of them with very long tenure talked nostalgically about the good old days when the company was like family to them, but now they had their own families waiting for them at home. Luckily, I could spend time with the husbands and children without any problems at the family day that was organized by the company in 2008, so I resigned myself to the fact that they were more protective of their homes than I expected.

Another part of the explanation is my embodiment and biography (Burawoy 2009) relative to the different groups of workers: I am a woman, and middle-aged as many of the blue-collar women, but I am also highly educated and more middle class than I was aware of at the beginning of the field work. As I come from a working class family and grew up in another industrial city not far from the city where KFT is based, I was confident that I would have no serious problems fitting in with the workers. With hindsight, I know that I overestimated my familiarity with factory women.

There was one particular conversation that convinced me about my unwittingly acquired middle-class status: Timi⁵⁸ was telling me about the problems she faced as her son was leaving kindergarten and starting primary school: she could not take him to school in the morning, as she had to take the bus to work much too early. Over the years I have heard several of my friends and colleagues discussing the pros and cons of different schools and with this routine I asked her how they had chosen the school. I expected an answer about different teaching methods, or the school having a large playground, or that another friend had very good experiences. Instead, Timi replied with a hint of exasperation: “Oh, he goes to the one that opens early in the morning.” I felt terrible, and this memory stayed with me, although later I realized that many blue-collar workers chose primary schools exactly in the same way as my university-educated friends in Budapest.

⁵⁸ All names and biographical data have been changed to protect the identity of my informants.

After six months of spending three days a week in the factory, I decided to go less often and as I received less work from the company I could concentrate more on my notes, until my ideas about the maternalist work regime started to take shape. When I was in the factory, I concentrated on conducting mini-interviews with blue-collar women and men focusing on their lives at home: asking them about how they spent the afternoons and evenings, when they did the housework, what extra jobs they had, and how much their partners earned. When I was not in the factory, I kept in touch with two of the office workers, so I knew about the main events. During the field work I also participated in the family day I have already mentioned, a Christmas dinner – in an expensive restaurant with the white collar workers – where I received a special gift for my hard work, and several name day celebrations at the company with the blue-collar women.

My location in the field first as an office worker, and later as an office worker/observer, influenced not only my relationship to the workers, but also what I saw: it was ‘natural’ for me to observe the everyday life of the company from the vantage point of the office. The view from the standpoint of blue-collar workers, men and women, opened up to me through more passive observation and through talking to them. Additionally, I was also observing a third group, the top management of the company,⁵⁹ including the CEO: I knew how much time they spent at work, how much they traveled and how they managed their ‘work-family interface.’ I met the CEO almost every time I was at work, and we also had a number of longer conversations that were planned and to which I arrived with a list of questions, as well as a long and personal recorded interview in her home, followed by a family lunch to which I was invited.

⁵⁹ The ‘top management’ of KFT is hard to define, given the very flat organizational hierarchy at KFT. There are only two people who have their own offices: the CEO and the technical manager. The administrative and finance manager is also in a somewhat higher position than the other white-collar workers, even if some of them are also managers. While all office workers are included in the preparation of the annual business plans, and long-term strategies, decisions were made by the CEO.

The CEO only asked me how my work was going, but I was never asked any questions about what I saw at the company or what arguments I have reached during my research neither by her, nor by other managers. The hegemonic work regime made this aspect of the field work very easy: the commitment of blue-collar workers was genuine and strong, and any criticism toward the managers was rare. People did get angry and frustrated at work, but mostly with their immediate colleagues or the production manager, who was the least popular figure at the company.

Studying three groups at the same time did not seem difficult in the field, but when I was it was analyzing my notes and formulating arguments it became difficult to move between their points of view. The CEO's voice is very strong in the analysis, as she was the main source of information on the company's history, as well as her management philosophy, which underlies the work regimes I identified. Because of the hegemonic character of the work regime, the view from the workers' standpoint is actually very similar to the CEO's – there is very little criticism directed at the management.

Criticism among blue-collar workers was most often directed at the production manager and one of the engineers, and at certain aspects of their work, such as working on a particularly boring piece, or the lack of specialized tools, or the lack of air conditioning in some areas of the shop floor. I have never come across criticism towards the owner-managers of the company, except a case when the CEO was the acting production manager (I will discuss the case in chapter six). The main challenge of my analysis was in showing how this 'harmony' is created on a daily basis.

I used ethnography as the main research method drawing on Burawoy's extended case method, which emphasizes the importance of the theoretical underpinnings throughout the research process (Burawoy 1998; Lee 1998). I approached the micro-processes of the factory and workers' households with theoretical arguments about gendered production regime and

feminist theories of women's position at the intersection of production and reproduction. As for the broader structures that the factory and the households are embedded in, I analyze the local labor market and the global production networks the company is linked to. A particularly important element of the context is the maternalist state policy, which I conceptualize as a complex system of labor and welfare regulations, paid maternity and parental leaves and day care services that are funded by the central and the local level of the state. A final, 'umbrella' element of the context is the post-state socialist transformations: I point out how elements of the current situation can be traced back to the state-socialist past.

A variety of methods were necessary to map the context: first, I relied on information that I collected from workers – as they told me about their previous jobs I started to explore the local labor market from below. I also interviewed two representatives of the city's largest trade union, one of whom had decades of experience, and later provided me with contacts to the trade unions of large factories in the city and the county. These people gave me information about basic company practices of the large multinational companies in the region, such as work hours and shifts, which I used as a basis for comparison. I had to rely on trade union representatives, who are also employed in the factories they told me about, because the HR departments of did not respond to my queries, with one exception.

The statistical data about the local and national context were gathered in the comparative research project titled 'FLOWS: Impact of Local Welfare Systems on Female Labour Force Participation and Social Cohesion', which is supported by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme and compares eleven cities in eleven countries.⁶⁰ I worked as a member of the Hungarian research team, and not only did the project benefit from my familiarity with the city, but my dissertation research also benefited from the data I gathered about the urban, regional and national levels of the economy and the

⁶⁰ <http://www.flows-eu.eu/research-content/>

different patterns in the provision and use of maternity leaves and day care. Although the national-level labor market is an abstraction, these comparisons highlighted the special character of the urban production and welfare system – exactly those irregularities⁶¹ (Kalb 1997) that are relevant to explaining the emergence of the locally specific factory regime.

In this phase of mapping the context I interviewed the manager of the local employment office, representatives of the local authority who are in decision making positions about child care institutions and financial support for families, as well as the manager of a crèche, and the leaders of two local NGOs whose aim is to help mothers' inclusion in paid work.

As I am writing a feminist ethnography, I need to address the question what I believe makes my research efforts feminist. De Vault (1996) defines feminist research broadly as that which incorporates or develops the insights of feminism. Elegant as this definition may be, it does not suffice for this study, at least not for my ambition. That is why I turn to Hartsock's formulation of the feminist standpoint. First, Hartsock (1987) argues that the sexual division of labor, together with the social structures underpinning it, can be the starting point for constructing a materialist feminist epistemology, because women's lived experience creates a specific understanding of social relations. Second, she conceptualizes the sexual division of labor in a way that emphasizes motherhood as biological and social, that is, as an embodied experience and at the same time as an institution: "women as a sex are institutionally responsible for producing both goods and human beings, and all women are forced to become the kinds of people who can do both" (1987: 164).

I have designed and carried out my dissertation research in a way that keeps the sexual division of labor and particularly motherhood – as an institution, as a source of managerial rhetoric, and especially as social practice - in the centre. The focus on mothering means that I

⁶¹ Just as the extended case method relies on an 'anomalous case' as the first step towards modifying, refining theory, Kalb uses the irregular case of North Brabant as a starting point for his historical analysis of working class formation.

have excluded some other aspects of women's experiences from the analysis, or even from my observations in the field. Indeed, my observations and my analysis are partial: the dissertation focuses on women and role of motherhood in shaping their lives and the factory regimes.

Hartsock (1987) focused on commonalities among women when formulating her argument about women's standpoint only for the sake of analytical clarity. I follow Smith (1987) and DeVault (1999) who are committed to the epistemological tool of women's standpoint, but also take into account differences among women: I compare how femininity and class intersect in shaping the work regime at KFT, and how the mothering practices and ideologies of blue- and white-collar mothers fit in with the two distinct work regimes. Thus, as DeVault (1999: 82) argues, my analysis is also fraught with tension "between an insistence on the importance of gender and recognition of cross-cutting differences among women."

A variety of relationships developed between me and the people I met during the research process. There is one expectation I had before entering the field that did eventually come: I was able to have meaningful conversations and listen to most women and some of the men. I had a relatively easy task of course, as I asked them about themselves, their families and their work. While it is clear that I and my research benefited from these conversations more than they did – there were times when just my listening to them was helpful. I did not develop intimate relationships and thus my withdrawal from the field did not cause difficulties, and I still have a relationship with two women workers, thus I am confident that I have managed to avoid the dangers inherent in the method of feminist ethnography (Stacey 1988).

As for the final product, the written ethnography, indeed, it is structured along my aims and narrated by me, which may be interpreted as the exploitation of the people in my research (Stacey 1988). I have made efforts to offer not only my own but my subjects'

alternative interpretations of events and decisions, and tried as hard as I could to let their voices be heard. Not only have I included several quotes, but it was my specific goal to translate the original Hungarian sentences to English in a way that does justice to the speaker's style and register.

CHAPTER 5: NICHE POSITION IN THE MARKET: COMPARING KFT TO OTHER LOCAL ELECTRONICS PRODUCERS

In this chapter I describe the company's position in the global market of electronics products and discuss how this position influences the labor process both in terms of its technical organization and in terms of the managerial expectations towards labor in terms of skills and stability. Then I discuss the human resource practices at KFT and explain how they are linked to the labor process. In the second part of the chapter I compare KFT and a number of other local electronics companies, in order to map the context in which the managerial labor control strategy is established and workers make their employment decision. The comparison includes the work conditions, such as work hours and pay levels, the level of employee turnover and the gender composition of the workforce. I conclude the chapter by discussing the empirical puzzle that has motivated my analysis of the work regimes: the contrast between blue-collar women's strong commitment to KFT and their low pay.

5.1 The company's position in the product market

The main products of KFT are cable harnesses that are then built into a variety of machines, such as cars, bowling machines or automatic garage doors.⁶² The products are customized, often very complex, and typically ordered in small and medium volumes – this is the niche the management has found in the market in electronics products. To illustrate the niche position, the CEO usually gives the following example:

If you want to wash a pair of tights, you do not switch on the washing machine, you just quickly wash them in the washbasin. That's our company. If you switch on the washing machine, that's a large factory.

⁶² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cable_harness

Indeed, hand wash is quick and efficient, but it is still labor intensive, which means that the labor costs are higher here than in a large factory that uses automatic equipment.⁶³ One way of reducing production costs is through keeping wages as low as possible.

Two other companies in the region specializing in cable harnesses try to keep wages low by moving their production facilities further East, to the border of the EU. The first company, Videoton Holding, a Hungarian-owned business has moved its cable harness assembly and testing section to its Ukrainian subsidiary, where wages are lower than in Hungary.⁶⁴ The second company, USA-based Delphi Automotive, opened a wiring harness assembly plant in Romania, on the Eastern border of the European Union, in search of lower wages and a higher level of profitability. As the local manager explains, in the new factory aims to fill the same niche on the market as KFT: “we will focus on manufacturing a range of [...] customized modules, removing complexity from our other manufacturing operations and allowing for better overall efficiency.”⁶⁵

The management of KFT is not considering relocation, but the competition from other countries in the region is often discussed in meetings: it is argued that production costs in Romania and the Ukraine are ultimately lower than in Hungary, because the Hungarian minimum wage is ‘too high’, and thus, there is only one way to success, through flexible and high quality production. Thus, the local management is also under pressure because of the mobility of capital.

⁶³ The entry costs for such small firms are lower of course: there is no complex machinery, and there is no need for special locations. Still, for a small electronics firm the entry costs are higher than for an apparel firm (Frenkel 2003).

⁶⁴ <http://www.videoton.hu/?page=mukachevo.html>

⁶⁵ <http://europeanmotornews.com/2011/06/09/delphi-opens-wiring-harness-assembly-plant-in-romania/>

5.2 Flexibility and quality

Flexibility is necessary because KFT does not have a few stable clients, but takes orders from different clients and usually works on several different orders at a time. Although there are some long-term partnerships, the volume and the regularity of their orders are also unpredictable. The products themselves also change over time, even if they are produced for the same client. As a result of these factors, several products are manufactured almost simultaneously: there were 800 ‘live’ products in 2008.

Because of the small volumes and the wide range of products, operators are not organized in fixed production lines, instead they work in small teams, or even individually to complete a given order. Individual tasks performed by the operators also differ a great deal, from complex ones, such as soldering components onto a printed circuit board or assembling a connector based on a technical drawing to the simple task of fitting shrink tubes on a cable. Operators are often moved from one team to another, from one product to another for short periods of time when a new and urgent order comes in. Thus, the classic image of the assembly worker who repeats the same movement for months and years does not fit this factory: workers are more likely to work on a particular product for a few weeks or months, before they are given a new task. But sometimes the changes are even more frequent: Kinga told me once that she worked on three different products in one day, and had to concentrate really hard not to mix them up.

Due to these constantly changing factors, workers have to be able to manufacture several different, complex products quickly and in good quality, and switch from one product to another frequently. That is why skilled workers are important not only for the success but even the survival of the company, as the CEO summarized it precisely when she said: “As we haven’t got our own products, we should never say that we produce cable harnesses. We are

only suppliers: our real products are the knowledge we have and the ability to work fast.” The CEO emphasizes that the company depends on the speed and the skills of its workers.

What is more, experience in ‘general’ electronics assembly that can be gained at other companies is not enough, it is workers’ firm-specific knowledge that is needed. Although according to their job descriptions, workers at KFT perform semi-skilled assembly work, operatives do a number of different production steps, and they swap work within the groups when they get bored, rather than repeating the same movements until the line starts producing a different model, as in more typical assembly jobs. This form of flexibility is called ‘functional flexibility’ and indeed, it is argued to enable a smoother workflow and improved co-operation among specialized teams (Frenkel 2003).

Functional flexibility is achieved through training: according to the CEO, it takes about twelve weeks and a mentor – an experienced worker - to sufficiently train a new recruit, while in a ‘classic’ assembly job the training is a couple of days. For example in company FC, a large electronics factory in the region, the initial training for operators takes three days. Even this period can be reduced further: Eper, who now works at KFT but used to assemble DVD players in a local subsidiary of a multinational company, learned to use a computer program in a few hours’ time, and used it for years to test the finished product. She didn’t get or need further training, and neither did she perform any other task until she left the company.

The long training process at KFT makes it even more important for the management to try and keep existing workers, as the CEO puts it:

It is simple at [the multinational companies in the city], because their workers do a very limited number of tasks, so when they hire a new employee, it is like replacing a cogwheel in the machine. They do not spend on training. [But here] it takes a long time for someone to master 200 harnesses out of the 800. So after ten years it is very expensive to let a worker go.

It is very important to point out that the CEO talks about blue-collar workers, and not professional or managerial employees – it is the firm-specific knowledge of semi-skilled operatives that she holds in such high esteem.

Although the workers on the shop floor are classified as semi-skilled operatives, there is continuous on-the-job training for them, first by their mentors, later by more experienced workers, instructor. There is also a lot of peer-training – workers on one team teach the others how to produce the products they specialize in – this way the ‘substitutability’ of workers is increased (Dex and Scheibl 2002). On-the-job training includes skills such as reading technical drawings, but especially practical skills, such as learning new work processes.

Intensive training takes place in periods when there are few orders, such as at the beginning of the economic crisis in early 2009. There are written records even of these training sessions, which include the content of the training, such as the name of product and the production steps, the length of the training and is signed by both the trainee and the trainer, who may be a more experienced colleague working at the next station. The evaluation of shop-floor workers is also based on their proficiency of performing different work processes, broken down into categories such as the ability to work independently, how often mistakes are made, how the production documents are completed, keeping the piece time, etc, and only two factors are included that are not related to production: the level of education and tenure.

Closely intertwined with the emphasis on training, there is a strong rhetoric of quality, present in company documents and everyday interactions in meetings or on the shop floor.⁶⁶ Despite the strong rhetoric of quality, the products of KFT are not high quality in the same sense as, for example, microprocessors are: although some of the products are complex, the majority of them could be produced more cheaply using automated processes. It is only the

⁶⁶ KFT follows the EFQM excellence model
<http://www.efqm.org/en/Home/AboutEFQM/tabid/108/Default.aspx>

customization and the small volumes that create the need for labor intensive methods and high quality manual work. Still, KFT meets all the company processes meet the international quality standards (ISO 14001, ISO 9001), and it is under permanent customer audits.

5.3 Functional flexibility East and West

Although at first sight the rhetoric of flexibility seems a modern Western idea, Dunn (1998, 2004) argues that flexibility had an alternative interpretation among blue-collar workers on the shop floor of Alima Gerber, a then recently privatized Polish firm. According to Dunn, the North American management conceptualized ‘flexibility’ as a personality trait, and valued it highly in recently recruited sales representatives. At the same time, flexibility was thought to be missing from ‘old people’, who spent a part of their working lives under state socialism, and were therefore seen as rigid, “backward,” and unsuitable for being retrained or promoted into white-collar occupations in the firm.

However, production workers, marginalized by the rhetoric of (in)flexibility and the labor control strategy introduced by the new management, developed a different interpretation of flexibility and claimed that it is precisely their state-socialist work experience that made them ‘flexible’: they had a lot of experience working in different positions along the production line, using different machines and handling a wide range of products, thus, flexibility in their interpretation was based on their general knowledge of production (Dunn 1998: 138). The CEO’s strategy to create a flexible workforce through “generalism” (Dunn 1998: 138) is based on the same view of the labor process as that of the experienced Polish workers: all blue-collar women are given a comprehensive training in all the skills necessary

on the shop floor and thus they can move from one team to another, and switch from one product to another flexibly.⁶⁷

5.4 Human resource practices – employee satisfaction and commitment

While the concept and practice of functional flexibility is not necessarily modern or Western, the rhetoric of employee satisfaction certainly is. This rhetoric links the notions of quality, commitment and profit, and plays a central role to the management strategy of the CEO, who firmly believes that the main ‘value’ of the company is the human capital of its workers:

When we started the company in 1991[...] we did not have machines, we did not have raw materials, we did not have know-how. We only had the workers. The workers and their knowledge are the main capital that we have. [...] We produce hundreds of products, but anyone could buy the machines tomorrow and make the same products.

In order to retain workers, the main asset of the company, employee satisfaction is regularly monitored. The company takes part in the annual ‘Best Employers Study Hungary,’ and the CEO analyses the results very carefully, and when she finds something troubling in the summary report, she orders further, more detailed analysis.⁶⁸ According to the human resource theory that the study is based on, employee satisfaction leads to positive attitudes of workers, which in turn lead to their commitment, and at the end of the chain there is business results, which can be measured by total shareholder return, that is, profits. In the CEO’s own words: “Satisfied employees work better, they put their soul into the product.” Again, it must be emphasized that she talks about semi-skilled operatives who produce cable harnesses.

⁶⁷ There is only one group, made up of four blue-collar women who were specialized in using ‘crimping’ machines. The members of this group received a general training, but once they were put on this team, they stopped doing other production steps. They could be moved back to other teams, but members of other teams cannot be moved to this team without training them first.

⁶⁸ The study is conducted by Hewitt Associates, a management consultancy, who claim to have developed the ‘Commitment Model.’ <https://ceplb03.hewitt.com/bestemployers/hungary/eng/pages/index.htm> The basics of the model are explained in the detailed report given out to participants of the study. The reports about KFT for 2007 and 2008 are my sources.

5.5 Gender segregation at KFT

Where are the women in the story of this increasingly global company whose manager claims to value workers above all? The company is managed by a woman, and the average proportion of women among the employees was 75% in 2008, when I started my fieldwork. The – numerical - dominance of women is even stronger if we concentrate on blue-collar workers only: 80% of them were women in 2008. In addition, blue-collar men and women different jobs and occupy different physical spaces.

When entering the factory hall, the visitor can see about forty women, wearing mostly white tops, sitting at work stations positioned along large work counters. It takes a while until one can locate two people in navy blue T-shirts or overalls, the two men working on the shop floor. However, they do not assemble wire harnesses: one of them is on the quality control team, the other one is a machine operator, both of them are the only men in their small work teams.

The other ten men work in their own spaces: two of them are in the warehouse, three of them cut cables in the preparation room using large automated machines (‘cutters’ in the local shorthand), and the remaining four work in two small workshops. They walk through the shop floor several times a day, dressed in navy blue moving among the seated women, dressed in white. They do not give orders to the women or to each other, they are friendly and approachable, but they are different: although the men in the workshops are classified as ‘maintenance workers’ and the ‘cutters’ are classified as machine operators, they are all skilled and experienced mechanics and electricians.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Blue-collar men have their morning break at the same time, as one group, after four groups of women. These times are official – and so are the groups. The lunch break is at the same time for all workers, and some of the men tend to stick together, but the lunch groups are informal, and thus there is a lot more flexibility.

One of the warehouse workers and one the maintenance workers are young men with secondary-level technical qualifications, and both of them are studying for college degrees – they were hired into these low-level jobs as a first step toward their engineering jobs in the offices.⁷⁰ Although several of the blue-collar women workers also have secondary-level technical qualifications, they are all classified as operatives, and they do not use ‘real’ machines, only hand tools. Most of this dissertation focuses on these women, because their work is the key factor in the company’s success and development.

5.6 Employee commitment and wages at KFT

After all this talk about commitment, and valuing the workforce, just how committed are the workers? Is the management successful at keeping the workers with firm-specific knowledge? The short answer is yes. Blue-collar workers are highly committed to KFT. It is demonstrated by the results of the annual surveys, carried out in the framework of the ‘Best Employer Study Hungary’: KFT is always ranked very high among the participating Hungarian companies, and in 2009 it won the title of Best Employer among industrial companies. Workers’ attachment to the company, an important element of commitment, is also strong, as it is demonstrated by the low level of turnover and the long tenure of several workers. The annual turnover at KFT is under 5%, but among the operatives it is even lower: none of the women workers I met at the beginning of my field work left the company during the almost two years, and only two newly recruited workers left at the end of the probationary period.⁷¹ How about the other aspect of competitiveness, keeping the wages low?

⁷⁰ Indeed, by the end of my field work one of them worked on the quality control team, replacing another man who retired, while the other young man was in the office, working closely with a work process design engineer.

⁷¹ I have no information whether they left or they were not offered a permanent contract. Based on my observation I think that one of them left, because she felt that the work was boring, and the other one was not offered a permanent contract.

Blue-collar women workers at KFT earn very low wages. As it is shown in Table 15, production workers are hired at the national minimum wage, which was approximately 270 Euros a month in 2008.⁷² Although the pay increases with seniority, this increase is limited. Doris, who has been working for the company since 1991, earns only 350 Euros a month. The highest wage paid to any blue-collar worker in this factory, including men, is 390 Euros a month.

Table 15. Gross monthly wages of blue-collar women workers in the factory in 2008 in Euros

Worker category	Woman worker - newly recruited	Woman worker with 2-year- tenure	Woman worker with 17 year- tenure	Highest earning blue-collar worker (men and women)
Monthly pay	270	300	360	390

Source: Interviews with individual workers, the last figure was given by the CEO

Wages at KFT can also be compared to those paid in semi-skilled manual jobs blue-collar jobs in the same county. According to the Individual Earnings Survey, carried out annually by the National Employment Office, the average wage at the county-level is 371 Euros/month (National Employment Office 2009), thus even one of the highest paid blue-collar women⁷³ at KFT earns less than the county average for women in comparable jobs. Wages can also be compared to what these women earned in their previous jobs. Eva has joined the company recently, so the comparison between her old and current wages is the most accurate. She says:

⁷² I always refer to gross wages, unless I specify it otherwise. The minimum wage was 69.000 HUF/month (gross) in 2008 – approximately 270 Euros. The forint-Euro exchange rate changed several times and rapidly in 2008 from 229 Forint/Euro in July to 270 Forint/Euro in October. In conversions I will use the exchange rate 256 Forint/Euro.

⁷³ Workers are forbidden to talk about their wages, not only to the ethnographer, but also to each other. This expectation is often unrealistic: sisters, or husbands and wives are expected not to discuss their wages with each other.

My base pay was 84 000 forints (330 Euros) a month. There was an extra payment of 10 000 forints (40 Euros), the ‘being present’ bonus, you got it if you didn’t take any time off that month for sick leave or holiday. We also got a bonus every month. So in the end, I took home around 100 000 forints a month (390 Euros). Here, it is the minimum wage (270 Euros).

The essence of Eva’s comparison is that she now earns 70% of her former pay, and the jobs are very similar: semi-skilled manual work in permanent morning shift. The difference may be explained by an ‘objective’ factor: she used to work in a machine shop, where both men and women are employed, whereas in our factory only women work as operators. That is, the labor force in our factory is more ‘feminized’, and feminized occupations and industries, such as assembly workers in electronics tend to be lower paid than non-feminized ones.

The effect of feminization can be ‘controlled for’ to some extent by comparing the current and the previous wages of another operator, who used to work in another highly feminized sub-sector of manufacturing, in the garment industry. Klari sewed men’s suits in a small workshop for several years, but the business closed down, and she was made redundant. She received unemployment benefit for a year, and then she came to this factory in 2007. When we compared the pay, she said: “My net pay is lower now than my unemployment benefit used to be. Yes, the money was better in the garment factory.” Even in the garment workshop, in another highly feminized occupation she earned much more than she does now.

Petra has just returned to the factory after an extended parental leave with her two sons. Although the HR manager told her she would receive the minimum wage, she was still very disappointed on the first pay day. Her family was outraged by her low pay: “When my father-in-law saw how little I earn, he told me it was not worth coming back to work.” In the final year of the parental leave Petra would have received the flat rate benefit of 120 Euros, while in this full-time position she receives 270 Euros, so the difference is 150 Euros a month. While the difference explains why Petra returned from the leave, it certainly does not explain why she’s loyal to the factory, and why she did not look for a better paid job.

Emma, who joined the company just before I started my field work, earns less than what she received while on parental leave: in the first two years of the leave her benefit was based on her previous earnings, and as a waitress and bartender she made about 700 Euros a month. These low wages make the high level of employee satisfaction and the commitment of blue-collar women puzzling.

5.7 Alternative explanations for worker commitment

Although seniority in itself does not have a strong effect on wages, promotion into more prestigious jobs within the company may explain the high level of commitment of blue-collar workers. However, I have found that almost all blue-collar women work as semi-skilled operators, and there are a few alternative jobs at the firm.

Some of the most experienced operatives hold the special statuses of instructor and team-leader. Instructors are responsible for pilot production: when a new product is introduced, they manufactured/assembled the sample products, closely co-operating with the engineers. It is only after the pilot products are ready that the work instructions and the piece time of a new product is finalized. Although the CEO insists that being an instructor entails prestige, they are not paid more than other operatives with the same tenure.

Another promotion opportunity available is to become a team leader. Workers who assemble the same (range of) products are organized in small teams, but only one team had a formal leader during my fieldwork. This team was responsible for all the orders of one client: there were several complex products which were very similar to each other. Kinga, the team leader worked as a member of the team and her position was not marked in any obvious way. She saw her task as helping the others in the team: whenever they had a problem, they turned to her. Kinga found the job very stressful because she had to do her own share of production as well as helping others, and especially because she was the first line of quality control. If the

client had a complaint, she had to take part in formal meetings with a member of the quality control team and an engineer. She did not discipline or evaluate workers on her team, she was there only to help them and make sure their work was perfect.

Although she received some extra pay, she was very elusive about it, and only told me that it was a very small amount. To emphasize the functional and short-term nature of the position, towards the end of my time at the company Kati's team was dissolved, because the orders from this particular client became small and occasional. So Kati became a regular operator, but it did not occur to anyone that her wages should be reduced after she lost the team-leader position. In sum, the position of the team leader was (1) not a position of real power; (2) the prestige and the extra pay that came with the position were never mentioned by other workers, becoming a team-leader was not something that they aspired to.

Another form of upward mobility for an operator is to be promoted to the quality control (QC) team or to the warehouse. These positions are better paid: Mira earned 40 Euros more a month on the QC team than she did when she was an operative, and Ditta's pay went up by 30 Euros when she was promoted to the warehouse. These positions entail more responsibility and stress, and longer work hours, but what is the most important factor when considering the chance of being promoted into these jobs as compensation for the low pay of operators is that these paths of promotion are open only to a few people. The quality control team is made up only of three people, and the warehouse workers are traditionally men, Ditta was the first woman to get a blue-collar job there.

In summary, the promotion opportunities open to blue-collar women and the higher pay that goes with them do not explain the commitment of women operatives to KFT. To solve the puzzle, I gathered more information about similar semi-skilled jobs in the city and the region, in order to map more precisely what options that they are choosing from when they make the decision to work for KFT. As Salzinger (1991: 142) argued, women's work

strategies outside the local context are “opaque” and it is only against the backdrop of the context that their actions become “comprehensible.”

I collected data about other electronics companies about the turnover, the wages, work hours, and the gender composition of the workforce. Four of these companies, which I name G, N, FX and FC are subsidiaries of multinationals, V is Hungarian owned, but all four companies are larger than KFT. The information is summarized in Table 16. Most of the information was collected from trade union representatives, only the HR manager of company G that agreed to give me information.

Table 16. Worker turnover, work conditions and mothers in the workforce – local electronics companies compared

	KFT	G	N	V	FX	FC
Turnover	Low	Low	Low	Low/medium	Very high	High
Pay	Low	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Work hours	8 hours	Three 8-hour-shifts	Two 12-hour-shifts	Three 8-hour-shifts	Three 8- hour-shifts	Three 8-hour-shifts
	No shifts	Fixed shifts	3-day blocks	Rotating shifts	Rotating shifts	Rotating shifts
	Free weekends	Free weekends	Work at weekends	Work at weekends	Work at weekends	Work at weekends
Mothers of young children among workers	Mostly mothers	Yes, but missing from afternoon shift	(Few mothers)*	Few mothers	(Few mothers)*	(Few mothers)*

* At N, FX and FC the informants stated that only those mothers can keep their jobs who can rely on their families to provide child care while they work.

To start the analysis with the data on turnover, we see that at companies N and G employee turnover is also very low: at G it is under 1% annually, and although I have no exact data about N, the trade union representative claims that turnover is very low. However, a large proportion of workers at N are temporary, 'agency' workers, and the 'very low' turnover applies only to the permanent, core workers. At FX and FC turnover is very high: at

FX it is a staggering 38 % annually,⁷⁴ and the instability of the workforce creates quality problems in the automotive section of the factory. FX and FC also employ as many as half of their workforce through agencies, while at KFT, V and N all workers are employed directly with regular work contracts.

As for the wages, the comparison becomes even more complicated. In Table 16 I summarized the findings about wages as low, medium and high, but I explain my findings in more detail here. At companies FX and FC workers are also hired for the minimum wage but all operatives are paid a small monthly bonus, and there is a special ‘being present’ bonus paid to those who do not miss a single day a month. At FC the workers receive the bonus if their immediate supervisor found their work satisfactory, thus, for the bonus more is demanded of them than ‘being present.’ New recruits at V are also paid the minimum wage, and they do not receive individual bonuses, only regular annual pay rises. At N and G the base wages are much higher: at N they are 30 percent more than the national minimum wage, at G it is 50 per cent higher. In addition, at company G operators automatically receive a 10 per cent pay rise after the first three months, that is, after the probationary period.

The gap between KFT and the four other companies is widened further by the extra pay that is linked to shift work: the pay rates for evening and night shifts are regulated in the Labor Code as a per cent of the base wage, and according to my informants all the companies follow the regulation, at company N workers are paid at higher rates for. Overall, all these companies pay higher wages than KFT: at FC, which pays the lowest wages among the four factories, a manual worker without tenure would earn 90 000 forints (352 Euros) net a month, while at KFT the starting net pay is just over 60 000 forints (240 Euros) a month.

⁷⁴ This is a conservative estimate based on the following data: according to the trade union representative of the factory, 60-150 people leave the factory every week from the workforce of 8000.

5.8 Work hours

According to the head of the local Employment Office, jobs available for women with low qualifications typically involved shift work: the most common arrangement is the three-shift routine: 6 am – 2 pm, 2 pm – 10 pm, 10 pm – 6 am. This is the arrangement at companies V, FX and FC, and the shifts ‘rotate’: after five or six days in the morning shift workers have two days off, and start work in the afternoon shift. In addition, these factories produce continuously, including weekends and holidays as well.

The most recent trend in the region is to introduce 12-hour shifts: company N has adopted this pattern, and FX also experimented with it for a while, but then they returned to the three-shift arrangement. In this arrangement, employees work from 6 a.m to 6 p.m. for three consecutive days, followed by three days off, then they work three days from 6 p. m. to 6 a. m. That is, although the workers get long periods of time off work, but rarely at the weekends, which makes the arrangement ‘antisocial,’ apart from very tiring.

At company G, work is organized in three shifts, but employees always work in the same shift, and the company only runs from Monday to Friday, workers have free weekends and holidays, which make the work hours much more regular, despite the shifts. Finally, blue-collar women at KFT work one eight-hour-shift a day, from Monday to Friday: there are not afternoon or night shifts, or work at weekends, which is the most regular arrangement in the comparison.

The different work hour arrangements at different companies are the expressions of different managerial assumptions about who the blue-collar workers are and what they need. Setting ‘family friendly’ work hours at KFT reveals the CEO’s assumption that many of the blue-collar workers are mothers, responsible for young children, and thus, they need special company practices to better combine paid work and childcare. At most other companies it is assumed that their workers are free of reproductive responsibilities, or use their own resources

to organize their caring responsibilities. At the same time, managements also construct their blue-collar workforce through the practices around work hours: while at KFT all operatives are women, and many of them have young children, the workforce is less feminized at other companies, and the proportion of mothers is lower (Table 16).

At FX there are many women operatives, but the majority of them are childless, and they tend not to return to the company after having children. According to the trade union representative, “mothers of young children can only work here if they can organize childcare in the family.” That is, she claims that the irregular hours prevent many women with young children from working here.⁷⁵

In contrast, almost all mothers return from the parental leave to company N, despite the blocked work hours (three 12-hour workdays in a row followed by a three days off). However, my informant used almost exactly the same words as his colleague at FX: only those mothers return after the parental leave who can rely on their families for child care. The trade union representative at N then went on to explain that the blocked work hours are very popular with workers because they can use the three days off work to do other paid jobs, and earn more. His comment echoes the managerial assumption that workers at N are free of reproductive responsibilities: an employee who works twelve-hour shifts and fits in another paid job is unlikely to have a lot of care responsibilities.

At company G the reproductive responsibilities of mothers are acknowledged by the management, despite the shift work. As the HR manager explains, mothers of young children are not distributed equally in the three shifts:

I do not recommend the afternoon shift for mothers, they usually cannot cope with it. But in the morning and the night shifts there are several women with young children. [...] They like the night shift because they can send the children to school in the morning and then rest until the children come home.

⁷⁵ Women whose children are older probably also work here in large numbers, but the trade union representative I interviewed did not have exact data.

The HR manager actively shapes the distribution of mothers in the three shifts, that is, she also follows a gendered strategy around work hours to create a stable workforce, similarly to the management of KFT: she knows that mothers “cannot cope with” the afternoon shift, and so she does not hire them into this shift. Finally, at company V few shop floor workers have young children: according to my informant only 10% of them have children under the age of 18, and thus, according to my informant, the issue of reconciling paid work and care work is not relevant to the management.

The final point that proves that the practice of setting work hours is central issue for manufacturing companies employing large numbers of women is that there are plans at FX, N and G to introduce special work hours for mothers of young children. At FX, the proposed hours are very similar to those at KFT: the new shift would run from 8 am to 4 pm. The local trade union support their proposal with arguments based on efficiency:

The special shift for parents whose children go to nursery school or kindergarten [...] would provide an overlap between the regular shifts. They would work wherever extra hands are needed in production: helping on the production line, or sorting out materials. [...] Luckily, the production managers have understood that this would be useful in production, and they support the proposal.

At G, a ‘reduced hours arrangement’ is being considered for women returning from parental leave, and at N, there is ‘pressure’ from women returning after the parental leave to adapt the work hours to better meet their needs, but no plans have been made yet. At company V, despite the low rate of parents among employees there is a special team who work only one shift, open only for “workers who have problems.” This is a temporary arrangement, employees are expected to solve their problems and resume the usual work hours after a few months – however, the existence of this team shows that to some extent the management adapts the work arrangements to employees’ life outside the shop into account, which probably contributes to the lower level of employee turnover at V.

To summarize the findings of the comparison, the current combination of irregular work hours and medium-level wages do not keep workers attached to FX and FC. Workers are more attached to V, although the wages are not higher and the wages are not better, but there is some consideration for employees care responsibilities, while the examples of N and G show that high wages can create employee attachment. Mothers of young children face problems at all five companies apart from KFT because of shift work: only those can work at FX, FC and N, and two of the shifts at G who can rely on family-based child care, which fits in with the information about the lack of accessible formal child care arrangements that I discussed in chapter three. Mothers with young children who are employed in the morning shift at G have the best of two worlds: regular, family-friendly work hours and high wages, while the blue-collar mothers at KFT have the ‘family-friendly’ hours but receive the lowest wages.

These regular work hours seem to be the solution to my puzzle: they attract women, including mothers of young children to KFT and keep them attached to the company despite the low wages, because these work hours fit in with their family responsibilities. Indeed, many of the women at KFT told me stories that support this solution to the puzzle. Edna refers to housework when she says: “it’s good that we finish early so I can go home and do my chores.”

Juli is much more specific, and insists that she had no other choice, but to come and work for KFT in the early 1990s, when as a mother of two small children, she was on unemployed benefit. According to the regulations, she was obliged to accept any job offers that matched her qualifications. However, she had to refuse a job that involved shift work, because, as she argued, she simply could not look after her children and work three shifts: “My husband was an army officer, and sometimes he was away from home for months. I could not leave the kids alone at night.” The employment office did not listen to her plea, and

her benefit was withdrawn, which meant that they lived on her husband's salary two months, until Juli found a job at KFT. She became one of the most committed workers of the company, she has worked here for over fifteen years, climbing up the career ladder – when I met her she was the production manager, overseeing operatives on the shop floor.

Anna joined the company in 2007, only a few months before I started fieldwork. She chose this workplace over company G, and when she talks about her decision she only talks about work hours, she does not even mention the difference in pay, what is important to her is that she was offered a job in the evening shift, and she could not accept that.

After the test we had an interview, and they told me I did well in the test. They asked me about my expectations, and I told them there was only one thing: I wanted to work in the mornings. That's how the job was advertised, that is why I applied in the first place. But they told me the morning shift was full, and if they have vacancies there they would inform me. They would have taken me on the permanent afternoon shift, and I could have been a team leader. But for that I would have had to go on a two-week training course abroad. I thought it would be a waste of time, because I did not want to do the constant afternoon shift. That's from 2 pm to 10 pm.

The two stories are very similar: Juli and Anna refused to take jobs that interfered with her maternal responsibilities, even though it meant that Juli was without any income for a while and Anna ended up in a lower-paid job. In other words, they chose a 'family-friendly' job at KFT, despite the low wages, so they can combine paid work and care work at home.

However, I argue that there is more to the puzzle than a simple tradeoff. Women's inclusion in these industrial jobs and their commitment to their employers are influenced by several factors apart from the work hours and the pay. In particular, I argue that the family-friendly work hours at KFT are part of a managerial strategy that is aimed at constructing a committed and cheap workforce of blue-collar women through special, gendered work-family practices and rhetoric. In the following chapter I will analyze the practices and the rhetoric through which workers' commitment is elicited at KFT.

CHAPTER 6: ELICITING COMMITMENT THROUGH MATERNALIST RHETORIC AND PRACTICES

The shop floor at KFT is a pleasant place: it is clean, light, spacious and not too loud. There are not any foremen or forewomen, the production manager is the only person who supervises workers, when her other responsibilities do not take her away from the shop floor. Workers can talk to each other, they decide how to divide the tasks within the groups and sometimes they swap with each other, just to avoid boredom. If a problem arises, they leave their workstation and approach a quality control person, an engineer or the production manager. Control is invisible, there are no time cards, no ID cards, and although there is a uniform, a white T-shirt with the company logo and a white coat, no one worries about it. If visitors are expected, management reminds them in advance to wear their company T-shirt.

They can go to the toilet any time, and although food and drink, or telephones are not allowed on the shop floor, most people keep their phones in their pockets for emergencies and for showing photos to each other. At break times the women simply leave the shop floor, and come back when the break is over, according to the large clock above the entrance, there are no signals or security guards.

The environment seems effortlessly ordered: workers seem to be genuinely motivated to meet expectations such as deadlines and quality requirements. It is still work, and people complain sometimes, when tools are not working properly, or a new product is particularly complex or something is missing from the materials prepared by the warehouse team, but there are no open conflicts on the shop floor. It is more common that a maintenance worker or an engineer lose their temper on the shop floor when they are installing a new machine – or white collar workers run through the shop floor on their way to the warehouse, while the operatives are working away steadily.

There are only women on the shop floor, the majority of them are in their thirties and early forties, and many of them have small children. Many of them have long tenure, and they have brought their friends and some of them even their children to the same shop floor, while some of them have their husbands around in one of the offices or the workshops. Workers' relative autonomy and the co-operation between workers and management signal a hegemonic work regime, based on workers' consent rather than coercion (Burawoy 1979, 1985; Lee 1998). In the previous chapter I showed that KFT's 'family-friendly' work hours are exceptional among industrial workplaces in the city, and the work hour arrangements contribute to the commitment of the feminized workforce at KFT. In this chapter I analyze the methods of labor control to explore how workers commitment is elicited.

First I discuss the methods of labor control, the managerial discourse and the special work hours, and show why this labor control strategy is successful. I argue that the management incorporates workers' motherhood ideology into shop floor control, constituting blue-collar women as 'working mothers', whose identity as mothers is emphasized over that of the worker. I term the emerging work regime as maternalist hegemony. Then I discuss the informal labor control practices which are rooted in state-socialist workplace practices, and just as important as the formal practices and argue that the management-worker relationship is informal and maternalistic, leaving very little space for blue-collar women to challenge the hegemonic managerial control.

6.1 The maternalist managerial rhetoric

The CEO talks about the company's 'family-friendly' practices at conferences, in newspaper articles and TV programs. Although the term 'family-friendly' is gender neutral, the CEO explicitly refers to women workers, and talks about them as mothers when addressing a group of start-up entrepreneurs:

Sometimes children get ill when we have an urgent order, and the mother cannot decide what to do. In these cases she can take the work home from the office and from the factory, too.

The employee invoked in the example is a mother, who is torn between her work and family responsibilities, but thanks to the maternalist practices at KFT she does not have to choose: she can look after the child *and* do the job. This quote demonstrates the rhetoric of maternalism, which provides the basis for the company's work-family practices.

This rhetoric is rooted in the state socialist ideology⁷⁶ and practice of women's inclusion in paid work that became dominant in Hungary in the late 1960s, which constructed women as 'worker – mothers' (Einhorn 1993), or as 'female earners and unpaid caregivers' in the family (Zimmermann 2010). Both terms express that a good mother is expected to contribute to her children's and family's wellbeing through providing financially, *and* by doing care work, carefully negotiating between her paid work and their children's interest (Haney 2002).

The maternalist rhetoric is also used by other members of management at KFT. A few weeks before Christmas, when all workers do overtime to make up for the two-week Christmas holiday, Sara, a white-collar worker said that by doing overtime the production workers were "doing their share" in return for the long break they can "spend with their families." She did not simply talk about a long holiday when the workers can have a rest, but emphasized blue-collar women's connection to their families, using the maternalist rhetoric.

An important aspect of the maternalist rhetoric is that the CEO emphasizes her own motherhood. In this quote she is talking about the origins of the company:

There I was with two young children, without a job, and I had to do something. [...] No one wanted to hire me with two young children. [...] I didn't know how a business worked [...] but within a few weeks all the administration was arranged and there we were, starting a new company.

⁷⁶ Relying on the argument of Purvis and Hunt (1993), I use the concept of ideology to focus on how the interpellation of subject positions – in this case, through the rhetoric of maternalism – reinforces and reproduces dominant social relations.

The figure of the CEO as a working mother is evident in the story: although it was difficult to find a job because being a mother, the CEO does not even mention the option of staying at home with her children. Rather, it is presented as natural that as a mother she wanted to continue to work and contribute financially to the wellbeing of her family, despite the obstacles. The CEO's presenting herself as a mother does not stop at the origin of the company: in the newspaper and TV interviews that focus on the company's work-family practices, she always makes clear that she practises 'hands on' mothering (Rudd 2003). For example, she is always available to her children:

My phone is never switched off, not even if I have an important meeting. I want to be available to my children. I always tell my negotiating partners that if one of my children calls me, I'll answer the phone.

Retelling these stories, the CEO emphasizes her shared experience with her workers: she may be running a company and giving orders to them, but there is something they have in common - the experience of motherhood. This way, she contributes to building a more personal relationship with the blue-collar women in a way that has not been discussed in the literature on production politics.

Even if the workers do not read the interviews or watch the TV programs featuring their manager, they see the CEO with her children, who regularly turn up at the factory, either to work during the summer holidays, or just to visit their parents. Those workers who have very long tenure actually remember the youngest child coming to work with his parents – the CEO did not take an extended maternity leave but continued to work.

The maternalist rhetoric is successful at addressing women employees: they refer to the CEO as someone who understands the difficulties of combining mothering and paid work. According to Doris, "she knows what it's like, because she has three children, too." For Sara, who works in the office, the CEO is a role model, an ultimate example of a successful businesswoman: "she has achieved so much professionally, and she has three children."

In sum, the management of KFT addresses women workers through the rhetoric of maternalism, which encompasses all the mothers at the company, whether they work on the shop floor or in the office, and the CEO herself. The rhetoric of maternalism is part of the labor control strategy for eliciting workers' commitment to the company, and it is successful because workers recognize the ideology of maternalism as their own – they can be successfully addressed through it. The fact that they also share this ideology with the CEO, who draws on the ideology herself, adds a special layer to the maternalist labor control.

The case seems similar to that discussed by Lee (1998) in a Hong Kong based company. Lee argues that the managers successfully addressed and constituted women on the shop floor as 'matron workers,' whose paid work is secondary to their family responsibilities. However, there are important differences between the two cases, the first one is the existence of the strong rhetoric of maternalism at KFT: it is an important part of everyday life, and includes the CEO herself, while at the Hong Kong factory familism was implicit, reflected in informal company practices.

Dunn (2004) also discusses a case when workers' motherhood ideology was important in shaping labor control, as women workers relied on the discourse of motherhood, trying to shape the managerial control based on discourses of quality and individualism. The Polish workers in Dunn's analysis also demanded concessions from the management on the basis of their maternity. However, at KFT the maternalist rhetoric and practices are offered by the management, leaving only a more passive role for women workers: motherhood as an alternative identity to the worker identity is harnessed by management, limiting women workers' ability to base demands for concessions as mothers. I will now discuss the work-family practices through which blue-collar women are constituted as working mothers, starting with the special work hours.

6.2 Maternalist work-family practices: special work hours

In the previous chapter I showed that the regular, ‘family-friendly’ work hours at KFT are unusual among factories in the city and the region, and they attract mothers of young children. The work hours at KFT are designed especially for mothers: not only is there only one shift in the morning, but it runs from 7 am to 3 pm instead of the routine 6 am to 2 pm arrangement. When the company was set up, the CEO established the same work hours that she, as a middle-manager in a large, local state-socialist electronics factory had before she lost her job. As a mother of two young children, she was entitled to special work hours there:

[W]hen I worked in Videoton, at first I started at 6 am, and later I had flexible hours. When I had the children I could work flexible hours. If you have 5-10 minutes more with a child in the morning, maybe you can work all day in a much better mood. [...] My children were six and four when the company was founded, this is how we got started.

Later, when the company was expanding, the CEO realized that with these hours it was easier to hire new workers and they could choose from a larger pool of applicants:

When we are hiring new people, and we tell them that they do not have to start at 6, only at 7, that is a huge advantage. For some people this was the decisive factor. For someone who lives outside the city it means that they can take a child to the kindergarten. Otherwise they couldn’t work here.

The CEO immediately connects the work hours to the needs of parents who have to adapt to the opening hours of public day care institutions. After emphasizing the practical benefits of the work hour arrangements for the company, she discusses how this arrangement makes the employees more satisfied:

Some of those [workers] who have young children could perhaps start at 6 o’clock, but they would be so hassled. I know it from my own experience. [...] And it doesn’t cost us anything. [...] If I can give a little benefit that makes the employee happier and there is no drawback to it, why not?

Although the special work hours were established without strategic thinking, the CEO later discovered their benefits, and started to consciously deploy them in order to attract workers and maintain their commitment. The work hours in the Hong Kong factory that also fitted in

with workers' family routines were probably not established and maintained with working mothers in mind, as in the heyday of the firm the majority of workers were 'factory daughters,' teenage girls who had just left school, without qualifications.

Following McKay (2006) who argues that human resource practices aimed at eliciting workers' commitment are closely intertwined with aspects of power and control, I conceptualize the work-family arrangements at KFT, including the special work hours, as methods of labor control. Although the work-family practices are nominally gender neutral, they are intertwined with the rhetoric of maternalism in a highly feminized workplace, and thus, I argue that the practices themselves are maternalist.

6.3 Women's everyday work-family routines

How is the maternalist ideology translated into everyday practices in blue-collar women's working lives? How do the company practices influence their daily routines? I will describe the daily routines of a few women workers who have small children to demonstrate the importance of these practices.

Before she had children, Petra did as much overtime as possible, as she was saving to build a house with her husband. Now, with two small children, the 'family-friendly' work hours and the management's understanding attitude to her maternal responsibilities are more important than the pay: "As long as the children are little I wouldn't go elsewhere, even if they paid me more, because I couldn't organize our life." That is, she does not believe that other companies would tolerate her maternal responsibilities, and this is an important factor in her commitment to KFT.

The special work hours are very important to the family's daily routine. Petra and her husband get up at 5.15 am every weekday, then they share the task of waking up and getting ready their children, aged two and five. The whole family get into the car and they first drive

to the house of Petra's mother: there is no nursery in their village, and the grandmother looks after the younger boy while the parents work. Then she drives to the village kindergarten to drop off their older son. They are lucky, because this kindergarten opens very early, at 5.30 in the morning: almost everyone commutes to the nearby city, and the kindergarten, maintained by the local council adapts to the parents' needs. Next, Petra and her husband drive to the city, stop at the hardware store where her husband works as a sales person, and only then does she drive to the factory, to arrive a few minutes before 7 am.

In the afternoon she finishes work at 3 pm, picks everyone up on the way, and by the time they get home it is past 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Because her mother cooks every day, they often eat at her place, so they get home a bit later, but then Petra does not have to cook in the evening. Her husband sometimes plays football in the evening with his friends and Petra goes out with her own friends about once a month, while her husband looks after the children.

Emma is not as lucky as Petra, although they live in the city, their kindergarten opens only at 7 am, so she cannot 'arrange the child in the mornings and get to work in time. So in the mornings either her partner takes the boy to the kindergarten, or, when he also works in the morning shift in another factory, a babysitter, the teenage daughter of Doris, another blue-collar woman at KFT, comes to their home by 6.15. "I pay the babysitter 400 forints (2 Euros) every morning. She wakes him up, gets him ready and takes him to the kindergarten" says Emma. That is, even with the special 'late' start in the factory, they need to hire help, but only for one hour a day, thus, the late start saves money to Emma and her partner. In the afternoon it is always Emma who picks up the boy who was still asleep when she left in the morning, then they go shopping, go home and start making dinner, because Emma's boyfriend only eats dinner that is freshly cooked.

The 7 a.m. start is also highly appreciated by Timi, who takes her son to kindergarten using public transport, so she has to adapt to the timetable of local buses. She has to drop the

boy in the kindergarten before 6 in the morning, so she can get to work by 7 - indeed, as the CEO said, she could not start work at 6 o'clock, even though she lives in the city. In sum, although the later start makes morning routines easier for blue-collar families, and fits in better with the opening hours of day care centres than the typical industrial work hours, the daily routine of women workers is still rather busy and their children still spend long hours in day care. What is more, they also have to rely on help from retired grandmothers or babysitters, despite the 'maternalist' work hours.

Another important difference compared to the case of familial hegemony discussed by Lee (1998) is that most women workers joined the Hong Kong factory as teenagers, dropped out of work when their children were young, and returned to the same workplace when their children started school. They were 'stuck' at the factory, as manufacturing lost its dominance in the local economy, but they did not have the right qualifications to take up jobs in the service sector. There were only a few younger women who joined the factory because of the special work hours.

What was the exception at the company in Hong Kong is common at KFT: several women workers have given up service jobs they are qualified for to take on a semi-skilled job at KFT because of the special work hours. Others have left better paying industrial jobs that involved shift work to have more time for doing care work in their families. When I say that women have given up their jobs and 'chose' to work at KFT, I do not want to adopt the rhetoric of rational choice and preference theories (for example Hakim 1991, 1998, 2006), rather, I argue that women carefully negotiated the different demands in terms of time and wages. Their decisions are also influenced by their beliefs about appropriate mothering and femininity, as well as other institutional and interactional factors, such as the availability of child care services and the gender ideologies of their partners.

The importance of their motherhood ideologies can be assessed not only from their decision to change jobs, but also from the way they talk about these decisions: all of them concentrate on the work hours and refer to the needs of their children, but do not mention other important factors, such as the wages, or their qualifications. Emma, who used to work as a bartender, came to KFT after she had a child and was on parental leave for two years. She did not even consider going back to her former job, as she explains: “You can’t work sixteen hours a day when you have a child.” Monica also left the service sector because the work hours interfered with her norms about mothering. Although working long hours was not a problem when she was single, getting married and having children was a major change: “When I was a girl, I even worked in a grocery shop that was open 24 hours a day, but with the kids, no way.”

When they talk about their decisions to change jobs, Emma and Monica oppose the time spent doing paid work to their children’s needs. Given the maternalist rhetoric at KFT and the strong maternalist ideology in Hungary in general, referring to their maternal duties is the kind of reasoning these women are most familiar with. This is even more so when they were talking to me, a relative stranger.

The following story shows very clearly how a complex decision about changing jobs is reduced to work hours and children’s needs. When Eva explains why she came to work at KFT, she emphasizes that her current work hours make her nine-year-old son happy:

I left that job because I hated my boss and he wanted to make us work in two shifts. Since I started to work here, I am already at home when my son comes home from school. [...] He asks me every morning: “Mum, are you going to be at home in the afternoon?”

Eva does not give details about important aspects of the decision, such as why she hated her former boss, or how the change of jobs affected her wages. When I asked her directly, it turned out that her former boss was a bully, and although she now makes only about 70% of her former wages, which is a serious drop, KFT is a much more pleasant place to work, and

she came here on the recommendation of an old friend. However, out of all these factors that influenced her decision, she feels that her son's reaction is the most important. These examples show that blue-collar women draw on the ideology of maternalism, just as the CEO does when she talks about women workers as mothers.

At first, Ada seems to be an exception, because she mentions other factors, such as the wages and the difficulty of shift work when she talks about her employment decisions: "Oh yes, I would work two or three shifts if they paid me really well. But you can only do that for a while, then you have to cut down on the hours, and slow down a bit." She used to be a real 'overtime hound' (Hochschild 1997) when she worked for the Hungarian State Railways, exactly at the time when her children were very young, because the overtime was paid really well:

If you worked at night you got paid twice the normal rate, and if it was a weekend or a national holiday, and you worked at night you got four times the normal rate. I used to do it a lot, and my husband, too. [...] My mother looked after the children.

Ada describes a work-family strategy centered on maximizing earnings, rather than on meeting children's perceived needs. However, when she talks about coming to KFT, she also refers to her children, although indirectly:

I stopped doing shift work because I was so tired I didn't even know what day it was. Sometimes the kids told me three times that they had to take something to school, because I forgot it. I was really worn out.

Although she was really tired, she refers to her imperfectly performed maternal duties as a justification for slowing down, thus, she claims that it is for her children's sake that she decided to come to this factory. Susan also talks about how tiring shift work was, linking her tiredness to her maternal responsibilities: "When I worked shifts, I could sleep only a few hours. Then the children came home and always wanted something from me." In the end, Susan came to KFT, and lost the extra pay she earned doing shifts.

Heidi's story seems the most extreme: she dropped out of paid work to be a good mother – she claims she had to do this because the work hours and the opening hours of the day care centres of her two children did not match. She is a bit defensive when she talks about the decision:

We could have arranged it somehow, but my kids would have had a key on a string in their neck. I didn't want that. I'm sure they would have grown up anyway, but that would have been very different.

She refers to the well-known image of 'latchkey children' to express what she wanted to avoid, and refers to her own childhood with a stay-at-home mother as her ideal:

Until I started secondary school my mum prepared breakfast every day, and when I came home from school, she waited for me with lunch. Maybe that's why I have these ideas from the stone age.

Heidi acknowledges that her values about proper mothering may be too old-fashioned, but she stuck to them anyway. When she justifies this decision, she claims that it is the task of the parents to raise their kids, and they should not leave it to others, not even to grandparents:

I thought that if we wanted these children, then we have to raise them. Our parents had already worked so much [...] I really could not expect them to look after my children too. It was enough for them to look after the kids in the long summer holidays.

She was unemployed until she found a job at KFT, where the work hours and the management's attitude to her maternal responsibilities were acceptable.

Thus, while blue-collar women saw employment and motherhood compatible, or even integral to each other, they wanted to remain the primary caregivers to their children, and long, irregular work hours went against their 'moral mapping' (Rudd 2003) or 'gendered moral rationality' (Duncan and Edwards 1997; Duncan et al. 2003). One of the factors that make their decisions to work shorter hours possible is that they can count on their partners' wages: all the women at KFT with young children are partnered.⁷⁷ However, the fathers are

⁷⁷ There are two divorced women, and both of them have one grown up child. Edina was hired recently, but Mira came to work for KFT when her son was ten. She worked on the QC team, where the wages are higher, and she also had extra jobs, such as cleaning offices.

mostly missing from their stories which include children, mothers, workplaces and day care centers. As I was listening to them, I was struck by the accuracy of the following statement, made about Swedish working mothers: "To be a working mother becomes an endless project of meeting the children's needs and desires and a constant struggle to adapt everyday life circumstances to what these women understand as their children's essential needs" (Elvin-Novak and Thomsson 2001: 419).

The work hours keep some blue-collar women workers attached to the factory even when though at times they complain about these jobs. Monica and Klari occasionally got so angry with the production manager that they thought about leaving. However, both of them stated that "I'll go only if I find another job with a morning shift." Monica is particularly careful, because it was really hard for her to find this job: "[I wanted to leave my previous job, but] it took me one and a half years to find a job without shift work." Monica's story and their tolerance to the negative aspects of the job highlight that although semi-skilled jobs can be found in the area, most of them involve irregular and long work hours. The commitment of these two women can be characterized as 'alienative' (Mueller and Boyer 1994): they stay at the company because they think there are no alternative employment opportunities that would suit them.

Not all workers at KFT are mothers of young children of course. The few young and childless women also appreciate the regular work hours, but for other reasons: Ditta plays in a semi-professional basketball team, and in her previous job she often had to miss trainings because of work, but here it is not a problem. Eper values her regular employment contract very highly after working for a multinational company as an agency worker for years, on a monthly contract – she faced the prospect of being dismissed at the end of every month. Now she also has time to study and could finally complete her general secondary education – she already has completed a vocational training school and she is a qualified hairdresser. Reka,

the older daughter of Doris came to KFT after dropping out of secondary school, is now studying for a vocational qualification as a retail worker, and goes to school two afternoons a week. Sari is deeply religious, and she could not tolerate what she terms the ‘loose morals’ of her co-workers in another factory, so the ‘women only’ environment is very important to her. By the time I left the field, she was on maternity leave with her twins – planning to stay at home for years.

The children of those workers who joined the company a decade ago are almost grown up, but by now the women themselves are in their late forties, and they appreciate the security of the job, as Etko put it: “I’m 47, who would want to hire me?” Finally, there are a few middle-aged women with teenage children who have joined the company recently, after losing their jobs elsewhere – they got the ‘easy’ job at KFT through their friends employed here. Although these older women also do care work at home, which is made easier by the regular work hours, they are not addressed by the maternalist rhetoric.

The company policy of short, family-friendly work hours is only one of the work-family arrangements. I will now discuss the informal arrangements that are also part of the managerial labor control strategy, and demonstrate how they help the management to elicit workers’ commitment to KFT.

6.4 Informal practices

At KFT there are several informal, but institutionalized work-family practices, such as emergency leaves and work time accounts, long summer and winter holidays and negotiated overtime. These practices also have a maternalist character, and also play an important role in maintaining the hegemonic relationship between labor and capital. At the Hong Kong firm analyzed by Lee (1998) there was only one special work-life arrangement and it was informal: managers allowed women workers to take time off for family reasons and did not reduce their

wages. This practice was an essential part of the hegemonic control: workers could gain concessions from the management within limits, which were maintained by the self-monitoring of workers. Self-imposed limits are also very important at KFT, both for workers and for the management, and the informal arrangements provide a space for workers to challenge hegemonic managerial power.

6.4.1 Emergency leaves and individual work time accounts

Blue-collar workers at KFT can take a few hours off without using their paid holiday days or going on formal sick leave, and they receive their full pay, despite the missed time. These arrangements are very popular with workers, and almost everyone uses them occasionally. When Heidi wanted to take her son to the doctor, she asked the production manager for time off, and was allowed to leave work an hour earlier. Zoe started work an hour later for a few days when her son started school: this way she could take the child to school in the morning without using her holiday days she will need during the long summer holiday. In these cases the short leaves were arranged in advance, but there are also unexpected events: when one of her children is sick, Petra calls the production manager in the evening to ask for the morning off so she can take the boy to the doctor. There are ongoing arrangements as well: when Anna was hired, she agreed with the production manager that she can leave early on some Friday afternoons. On these days she goes to Budapest to pick up her son from the special needs school, and not her husband, so that Anna can talk to her son's teachers in person.

The production manager keeps a log of the time that blue-collar workers take off: the arrangement is a personal work-time account, which also includes the overtime done by the workers: overtime hours can be added to their work time account, while informal leaves are

‘withdrawn.’ Although workers also have the option to be paid for doing overtime, it is far more common for them to use the time account, as Zoe explains:

Since I had my son, I always ask for time instead of pay for overtime. I’d rather save up time so I can use it [later] to cover emergencies, you know, if something happens, or we have to go to the doctor for check ups. This way I don’t have to use my holiday days, and I don’t have to take unpaid leave at Christmas.

Zoe explicitly links motherhood to her preference of ‘time’ over getting paid for overtime. Anna also prefers the flexibility of these short leaves to the overtime pay: “Sometimes [the production manager] asks me if I want to get paid for the overtime, but I always say no, because if I have to take time off ... I can go.” Petra, who has two small children, is even more enthusiastic: “There are so many times when I have to take the kids somewhere – if it wasn’t for the time bank, I wouldn’t have any holidays left in the summer.” Although the workers lose the higher rate of pay that goes with overtime, they get their regular pay even if they take time off and gain flexibility.

There are a few additional practices linked to the system of short emergency leaves, making it even more popular with the workers. Those with very young children appreciate it that managers at KFT accept a doctor’s note which proves that they have taken the child to the doctor, and they get paid for the missed day. As Petra, who has two young children explains: “Officially, there is no such a thing as a one-day sick leave, but the CEO accepts the doctor’s note, so it’s OK to miss only one day.”⁷⁸ A second additional practice that goes together with emergency leaves is that managers help the workers to get to work or get home from work if they work non-standard hours. At 8 o’clock in the morning there is no public transport to the factory gate, so when Zoe started to work later, the production manager

⁷⁸ It is the HR manager who deals with holidays and doctor’s notes, etc, but workers tend to refer to the CEO as the person who makes decisions in these matters.

picked her up in the nearest bus stop and gave her a lift, saving both Zoe and the company another thirty minutes' absence.⁷⁹

The practice of informal leaves is made possible by the technical organization of the labor process: teamwork and functional flexibility of the highly trained workers allows for several workers to take time off work at the same time. According to the CEO, even 10% of blue-collar workers could be absent without seriously damaging production, whereas in factories where production is organized in moving assembly lines even as few as three missing people can stop an entire production line.

6.4.2 Long summer and Christmas holidays

The factory closes completely for two weeks at Christmas and in the summer. The long breaks are linked to the time accounts, and workers who do not have enough paid holiday days to cover the breaks have to do overtime before, or after the holidays, to make up for the time. This informal practice is appreciated by all workers, but again, especially by those women who are responsible for arranging childcare during the long school and kindergarten holidays. In addition, the exact time of the summer break is negotiated with the workers informally, as early as April or workers start discussing when the break should be, and suggestions are discussed in the factory meetings that take place every Monday morning.

6.4.3 Negotiated overtime

Even though Hungarian labor regulations allow employers to order workers to do a certain amount of mandatory overtime, the management of KFT always asks, rather than orders workers to do overtime. Naturally, a request that comes from a manager is hard to

⁷⁹ Naturally, the time bank is not only used to look after children: workers – men and women alike - take time off to go to their own medical appointments, or attend a funeral, etc.

refuse, but I will show that at KFT real negotiation may take place around overtime. Typically, the production manager or the CEO herself walks up to a worker or a team, asks them to do overtime, and they negotiate the details. The negotiation is about the exact scheduling of overtime, but sometimes members of the team decide who exactly does the work, or how they divide it within the team.

For example, Zoe prefers to do overtime before the regular work hours, from 6 a.m., so that she can leave at 3 p.m. as usual, and collect her son from the kindergarten. One morning, when she was asked to stay longer in the afternoon, she said no, because it was too late for her to arrange for someone else to pick up her son from the kindergarten. But she immediately offered to come in early the next morning, and the production manager accepted this arrangement. Vicky, on the other hand, usually prefers to add two or three hours to her workday in the afternoon, because that is when her husband or her mother can look after their daughter. So workers occasionally say 'no' to the overtime request, but usually suggest an alternative arrangement – thus, there is some real, albeit limited negotiation taking place.

When all the operatives are asked to do overtime, the CEO calls a meeting and tells workers how much extra work she asks of them, and gives reasons, so although in these cases the overtime is ordered, rather than negotiated, the announcement is made in a respectful way. This approach is radically different to what Monica experienced in her previous workplace:

A few hours before the end of the shift the boss would tell us that we had to stay and do overtime. So I often ended up working for 12 hours in one stretch. I hated it, especially when it happened at the end of a night shift.

Monica hated last-minute mandatory overtime not only because she was tired and sleepy, but also because it upset the tight work-family arrangements she had when she worked in three shifts. She had to make last-minute phone calls to make sure her husband or her mother can get the children ready for school instead of her. Although the overtime was paid, she prefers her current job where such unexpected events do not happen, even though the pay is lower.

At some large factories the number of work hours is not regulated on a weekly or daily basis, but in three- or even six-month-periods.⁸⁰ Thus, it can happen that the workers do overtime for extended periods of time, then they work shorter hours, perhaps only two or three days a week. If the overall number of hours is within the limits for the given period, workers do not receive extra pay for the overtime as the busy and the quiet periods even out. Compared to these rules, the amount of overtime, and the length of work hours at KFT is predictable.

Finally, the amount of overtime is kept relatively low at KFT: the management tends to hire agency workers instead of asking too much overtime of its regular blue-collar workers. In the summer of 2008, students worked in the afternoon alongside the blue-collar men who cut the raw materials for the assembly workers. Any of the women workers could have done the job, but they were not asked to do so.⁸¹ Another example of ‘sparing’ blue-collar women from doing too much overtime is that of a large scale project that took place a few years before my fieldwork. Several truck loads of faulty harnesses had to be reworked urgently, but blue-collar women kept their usual hours and temporary student workers came to the factory in the evenings and at weekends, until the project was completed.

Occasionally not only overtime, but regular work hours are also negotiated. In Hungary, work days are often reorganized by the central government around national holidays, and on this occasion a Saturday was a work day. Friday afternoon, only fifteen minutes before the end of the work hours the CEO announced that blue-collar women do not have to come in the next day. Workers were expecting this news, as some of them had asked the CEO, completely informally, if they could have the following day off. The CEO

⁸⁰ At company N there are two three-month periods and a six-month period, at FX the year is divided into three-month periods. The unions fought against the introduction of these rules, but in the end accepted them on certain conditions, for example in N the management promised not to lay off any workers for 12 months in return for introducing this system.

⁸¹ Teenage children of blue-collar workers tend to come and work at KFT in the summer holidays: although it is arranged with the management in advance, the agencies are still involved.

considered the request, walked around the shop floor, asking all the groups if they can work hard enough on Monday to meet the deadlines. Naturally, they all said yes, and the CEO gave this concession. Everyone else had a normal workday on Saturday, even the blue-collar men, only the operatives on the shop floor – all women – were given a day off.

Similar informal workplace arrangements around women's family responsibilities were common under state-socialism (Fodor 2003), and are common in contemporary workplaces as well, especially in the public sector where there are a high proportion of women (Vicsek and Nagy 2006). However, Vicsek and Nagy (2006) found that despite the informal arrangements, women employees often had to break rules or use their paid holiday days in family emergencies, so the informal practices at KFT, in the market sector are unusual.

6.5 The importance of informality

The dominance of informal arrangements at KFT is not unusual: Dex and Scheibl (2002) argue that work-family policies are often kept informal at small- and medium sized enterprises in the UK as well. Under normal circumstances informal arrangements function smoothly, but workers do not have the 'right' to use them, and access to them is decided by the management on an individual basis. The hierarchical nature of informal worker-management relationships is highlighted in the scholarly literature on (post-) state socialist informality, and such relationships have been termed as 'vassalage' (Kennedy and Bialecki 1989), clientalism (Walder 1986, 1994), or simply as informality (Borocz 2000).⁸² It has been argued that these personal and instrumental relationships 'lubricate' the formal nexus between workers and management (Dunn 2001, 2004; Walder 1986, 1994).

⁸² Instead of 'hierarchical', the term 'vertical' is also used. Informal networks were first described between the political and economic elites (Kennedy and Bialecki 1989)

Both the workers and management perceive the informal work-family practices as managerial favors. Favors are supposed to be returned, thus, when management is in an 'emergency' situation, it is their turn to ask a favor: in the simplest cases they request overtime or a change of work hours. For example, the production manager told Mia and Edna on Thursday that the order they were working on should be completed by Friday lunchtime, so that the courier would deliver it on time to the client in Germany. The two women agreed to start work an hour earlier on Friday, and they completed the order in time. They could have said no to the request, but, as they argued, one hour overtime "did not really make any difference" to them. In addition, they know that they have to keep the system of exchanging favors going: a few months earlier both of them had asked for a couple of days off to prepare for their high school examinations, and their request was granted by the CEO personally. Now it was their turn to return the favor. I am not suggesting that it was a straightforward 'quid pro quo' arrangement, rather, that both workers and management are willing to do certain favors to one another, knowing that they might need one in return.

As the practice is informal, there is always a risk that a manager says no to a request: once a work team told me half laughing and half worried that they expected the production manager to become annoyed with them because half the team wanted to ask for a leave on the same day: "She's going to get mad when she finds out that three of us have to go to the doctor on Monday, and we all want to ask for time off."⁸³ In the end they were all given permission to go, but they felt they 'owed one' to the production manager.

There are also occasions when the leave is not granted. Soon after joining the company Ada was denied an emergency leave when the roof of their house was damaged in a storm, and she wanted to stay at home to start organizing the repair. Although she accepted the production manager's decision and went to work, she decided to be less cooperative with

⁸³ The exact wording the workers use when addressing the manager is best translated as 'asking for a permission to leave,' which expresses perfectly the hierarchical relationship between the two parties.

the manager: “I promised myself that I would never do her a favor again.” Thus, Ada points out that the informal arrangement allows her to refuse to be more co-operative with the manager than necessary. The stories above also show that the exchange of favors is not always related to maternal responsibilities, but also to other needs of the workers – these needs are also legitimate, which is why blue-collar men also use flexible leave policies to go to medical appointments for example.

Most blue-collar women emphasized the long-term benefits in being co-operative with the management, as Anna explains:

In my second week here there was some overtime. I wanted to meet the expectations and I wanted to learn, so I asked the production manager if I can come in, too. Can I help, or would I just slow down the others? She thanked me, and told me to come in. [...] Since then, whenever I asked her for anything, she always told me to just go and do what I have to do.

Anna sums up how the system of hierarchical informal exchanges work from the workers’ point of view, supporting the argument that informality, based on mutual exchanges leaves workers more room to maneuver than formal relationships (Borocz 2000; Dunn 2001, 2004; Kennedy and Bialeczki 1989).

Dunn (2004) argues that despite the top management’s focus on impersonal, routinized processes of labor control, Polish managers at lower levels of the company hierarchy continued to rely on informal relationships with workers, which led to a ‘hybrid’ form of labor control made up of elements of the new and the old practices (Dunn 2004: 93). At KFT all levels of management engage in the informal exchange of favors, and such exchanges are often initiated by the management. The exchange of favors serves the interest of the firm in two ways: first, by solving short-term issues such as a pressing deadline as workers are more likely to work flexible hours in return for managerial favors, and second, by keeping workers committed to the company in the long term. Referring back to the CEO’s rhetorical question, “Why not do it if it does not cost us anything, but makes the employee happy?”

Indeed, these informal arrangements do not cost anything to the company, but help maintain to smooth and flexible production, and thus, contribute to profits.

Informal practices are also individualized, and workers access to practices depends on their bargaining power, as the following case illustrates it. Over the years Zoe has become the specialist of a particular group of products: she has the most experience with them, even though she is not a team leader or an instructor. When an urgent order arrived for these products and Zoe was at home, looking after her son who was ill, rather than assigning the work to other employees, the CEO called Zoe personally, and asked for help. Zoe was happy to do the work, on the condition that she can work at home. So the raw materials and the tools were taken to her flat, and she got down to work: “I did everything at home, even the soldering and the shrinking. ... I didn’t even stand up from the table until it was done. I worked at night, too. In the end I worked forty hours in three days. When it was over, I got really ill, too, so in the end I stayed at home all week.” Is this a family-friendly arrangement, a case of win-win scenario for the worker and for management?

While there are different possible answers to this question, the arrangement was certainly acceptable to Zoe: she was at home with her son, who slept in the other room while she was working. In addition, her maternal identity was respected, and she had a say in what happened: she was consulted, she was asked a favor and not given an order. To use Dunn’s term (2004), in this case Zoe was subjected to managerial control *on her own terms*. The management definitely benefited from the arrangement: the deadline was met, and the person with the most experience completed the job, minimizing the risk of quality problems. As for her individual bargaining power with management, Zoe possesses special skills, which strengthened her position in this case, but also has a young child, and she regularly uses and highly appreciates the informal maternalist arrangements, so she is fully aware of her dependence on managerial goodwill.

Dunn (2004) argues that the Polish workers challenged the formal, impersonal and individualizing labor control by emphasizing their socially embedded personhood. In my case study workers' familial embeddedness does not challenge managerial control: because managerial control practices address and constitute them as working mothers, their familial embeddedness feeds into the hegemonic managerial control, and contributes to the creation of profits, while they also gain from these arrangements. In other words, the maternalist version of hegemonic control coordinates the interests of labor and capital through maternalist rhetoric and practices that construct women workers as embedded persons.

The informal and individualized maternalist labor control at KFT also goes with the self-monitoring of workers – as in all hegemonic regimes. I have shown before that women workers keep track of the favors they exchange with the management, and try to stay within the tacit limits. The following examples show the extent to which some workers have internalized the interest of the company. Sometimes the managers do not even have to ask a favor, the workers volunteer to help, thus, workers use their own initiative, do not only respond to managerial requests.

One afternoon, just before the end of the workday, Heidi went up to the production manager and offered to do overtime, so she can complete the task she was working on. Naturally, the production manager welcomed the suggestion. Heidi explained later that she made this offer because she felt it was her turn to do a favor to the management. In her own words: “I owe the company a lot of time. Recently, I’ve been asking for time off a lot.” She did leave early a few times to take her younger son, who suffered a sport injury to a private doctor. Offering and doing voluntary overtime, Heidi not only compensated for the time she had taken off, but recognized and acted in the company’s interest.

The hegemonic work regime at KFT is based on formal and informal work-family practices. This regime is radically different from the hegemonic regime under monopoly

capitalism discussed by Burawoy (1979; 1985), based on shared economic interests between labor and capital, internal labor markets and collective negotiation between unions and the management. The blue-collar workers in my study do not gain financially from the coordination of interests – they gain time to do unpaid care work in their households, and they do not have formal rights to care time either.

The final aspect of the informal work-family practices that I want to point out is the personal, affective element of the relationship between women workers and the CEO: although they are committed to the company, at times it seems they are committed to the CEO personally. This relationship is a special, maternalistic reconfiguration of state 'socialist paternalism,' the informal relationships between managers and workers (Verdery 1994, 1996). Verdery argues that this worker-management relationship is the derivative of the relationship between the socialist state and its subjects: both relationships are based on redistribution. Central redistribution constructed the socialist state as a "wise" parent, and socialist subjects as "grateful recipients – like small children in a family" (Verdery 1996: 64).

Scholars have argued that workers continued to expect material and symbolic 'caring' from the managements after the collapse of state socialism (Dunn 2001, 2004; Kovacs and Varadi 2000; Verdery 1994, 1996), but they did not receive it: although Walder (1994) found the remains of such paternalistic relationships in market socialist China, Lee (1999) argues that paternalism has disappeared from state-owned enterprises, leaving shop floor workers disoriented. At KFT the workers continue to be given such caring. I term the relationship maternalistic, because, as I will show, it contains elements of protectiveness and trust, yet at the same time expects gratitude in return and constructs the workers as dependent children, who sometimes do not deserve the care that is poured onto them.⁸⁴ Workers do not refer to management in familial terms, and the CEO directly refuses to discuss the company as a

⁸⁴ This argument is inspired by Rollins' discussion about the maternalist relationship between domestic workers and the lady of the house (1985).

family, rather, she argues that employees form a 'team,' yet, her behavior contradicts her claim: her reactions are highly emotional.

The CEO and the production manager distribute work hours-related concessions to workers, and the CEO is the main authority in this respect as well: when the production manager refused to let Ada and Mia take a leave to prepare for high school exams, they went straight to the CEO, and they were given the permission. The expectation of gratitude becomes particularly clear when the CEO feels that workers do not show enough gratitude and commitment: in these situations the CEO becomes resentful, and considers introducing stricter control measures.

Such a meltdown happened in 2009, when the economic crisis hit the company: there were fewer orders, and several companies in the area started to dismiss workers. The management was biding their time and applied for a government grant paid to employers who guaranteed to keep their workers and pay the current wages for twelve months. Within this scheme the CEO signed a contract with the government and also with the workers, which specified a four-day-working week for the duration of the grant. Despite the contract, workers were still expected to work five days a week, although the pace of work was very relaxed: they spent more time on training and quality workshops than on actual work.

A few months later some of the women started to complain. When the waves of discontent reached the CEO, she became angry and disappointed, and regretted that she "protected the workers from the harsh reality of the outside world," instead of taking more restrictive steps at the beginning of the crisis. She quoted examples of other companies where wages and work hours were reduced in order to save labor costs. The CEO argued that such steps would have "made the workers feel [...] the crisis," whereas she "kept them in a [protective] shell." Yet, only symbolic steps were taken to 'warn' the workers: the breaks were cut shorter, and the time left for cleaning the shop floor at the end of the workday was

reduced. These cuts amount for fifteen minutes a day altogether, and none of the informal maternalistic arrangements were withdrawn, which means that the hybrid form of labor control is maintained. In addition, she invited the recently recruited blue-collar women for a chat, talked to them about ‘company values’ and gave all of them a copy of the company values booklet. Thus, she made efforts to maintain but at the same time reframe the maternalistic relationship based on informality as a human resource practice.

Thus, I use maternalism as a multivalent concept to analyze the factory regime at KFT: the first aspect is the shared experience of motherhood between the CEO and the workers, the second aspect is the maternalistic relationship between the CEO and the workers, which, I argue to be a reconfiguration of state socialist paternalism in the workplace.

The highly informal, individualized and affective management-worker relations are linked to the lack of organization among workers: there is no union or a workers’ council in the factory, even though it would be compulsory to set up the council.⁸⁵ The CEO is aware of the regulations, but claims that it is up to the workers to organize the council, and she will not do it instead of them. Women workers are not interested in the council, and claimed that if they have a problem they can turn to the management directly, without a council or union. This finding supports the argument of Lamphere et al. (1993), that managers of non unionized firms, characterized by low wages tended to invest in creating worker commitment through a range of ‘social activities,’ whereas unionized firms paid higher wages, as a result of union negotiations, and social activities, if there were any were also organized by the union.

Haney (2002) argues that within the framework of state-socialist maternalism, women learnt to rely on their maternal identity in order to protect their interests as workers or wives, or women when dealing with authorities. Basing claims on their identities as workers or as women is new in the Hungarian context. At KFT, within the framework of the maternalist

⁸⁵ According to the Labor Code, a workers’ council should be elected in companies with 50 or more employees. At companies employing 16- 50 people a worker representative should be elected. The election is initiated by the workers – the employer is not obliged to establish the council or organize the elections.

hegemony, they can only make limited claims on their maternal identity, as this is incorporated into labor control.

Is there space for resistance in this hegemonic work regime, with informal and affective ties between workers and the management? Workers directed very little criticism at management, or the company in general: even though they were unhappy about their wages, the maternalist labor control elicited their commitment. In addition, many of them claimed, referring to the experience of their friends or relatives that even working much harder and doing shift work in large factories would earn only slightly higher wages.

There were two major grievances that workers regularly voiced: many of the women resented that the production manager often lost her temper and was rude to them when there was a lot of pressure to meet a deadline, or problems emerged with production. The workers were convinced that the CEO was ‘misled’ by the production manager, otherwise she would not tolerate this behavior. Although the CEO knew about the conflicts from a number of sources but waited for a long time until she finally dismissed the production manager, and claimed that she did not know about the seriousness of the problem.

Some of the workers were triumphant to see the manager go, but naturally, it was only a matter of time until conflicts with the CEO started to emerge: a new production manager was not appointed for several months, and in the meantime the CEO and the technical manager personally monitored shop floor production – this was an attempt to improve the personal relationships. Workers even had their mobile phone numbers of the couple, for cases of emergency: if a child was sick and a worker could not come in the next day, they called the CEO directly.

The other point of discontent was the rule about fringe benefits. The management of KFT used a variety of the ‘being present’ bonus paid by several other firms to workers who did not miss a single day in a given month. KFT used a version of this policy, which was

perhaps even stricter: workers who missed five or more days in a given month lost their fringe benefits, worth of 80 Euros (20 000 forints). That is, it was not a bonus that they did not get when they missed work, but they lost benefits that they counted on as part of their regular monthly earnings. Workers resented this policy, and were convinced that it was the production manager's idea in the first place. Although the rule was withdrawn after the production manager was dismissed, the whole system of tax-free fringe benefits was abolished by the government a few months later, which was a serious cut for all of them: a 25% loss of income for workers on the minimum wage.

In fact the CEO argued that fringe benefits were 'due' only to those workers who contributed to production, and if someone was away from the shop floor, they clearly did not contribute. Although the CEO is fully aware that the operators are unsatisfied with their pay, she claims that she 'cannot' raise wages. She usually avoided talking about wages, and insisted that commitment cannot be bought by paying high wages. She passionately argued against 'calculating and 'give and take' when it comes to the relationship between management and workers, and emphasized the importance of mutual respect. She turned the ideology of maternalism, and the informal, personal labor-management relationships against the workers: if time to care was more important for them than money, they did not have a platform from which to demand higher wages. If informal relationships were important to gain individual favors, the workers could not risk losing the benevolence of the CEO.

There were other ways designed to boost employee satisfaction and eliciting commitment apart from the maternalist arrangements. After analyzing the results of the 2007 worker satisfaction survey, the workstations were upgraded, and many hand tools were replaced. The offices were also redecorated, and the people who worked in the office were involved in the decisions. These are clearly cheap methods of improving the work environment, but the CEO believed and argued that it is not only the improvements that

count, rather, workers appreciated that they had a say in shaping the environment. Thus, workers exercised very limited control over the conditions of their work and only in matters that were decided by the management.

Still, the maternalist methods of labor control are effective, at least for the time being, partly because of the workers really need time to care, and partly because the economic crisis and the rise in unemployment made the workers more aware of their vulnerability, and many of them began to appreciate the fact that they had a job. When Emma's son started kindergarten, Emma did not ask for special work arrangements, not even for a few days, even though she was planning to. In addition, the company had a very good reputation – the head of the local employment office was convinced that KFT was an 'elite' workplace.

6.6 Summary of arguments and theoretical contributions

In this chapter I have argued that the management of KFT meets the contradictory demands the skill-dependent labor process and the product market by creating a committed and stable yet cheap and feminized workforce through a gendered labor control strategy. Labor control is based on maternalist managerial rhetoric and work-family practices, and constitutes blue-collar women as 'working mothers,' rather than workers. I termed the emerging locally specific work regime as maternalist hegemony. This work regime has two main characteristics, first that the CEO's own motherhood serves as a basis for shared experience with the workers; and second, that many of the labor control practices are informal and individualized, viewed by workers and management as managerial favors. The informal practices give rise to an emotional, protective relationship between the CEO which, I argue, is a reconfiguration of state socialist paternalism. Finally, I have argued that maternalist labor control contributes to the lack of labor organization among blue-collar women workers: the management has integrated the ideology of maternalism into the labor control strategy,

limiting the extent to which motherhood can serve as a basis for women workers to contest managerial control.

The argument about maternalist work regime contributes to the theory of production politics. Maternalist hegemony is based on workers' motherhood ideology and work-family arrangements, many of which are informal. This is in sharp contrast with the hegemonic regime under monopoly capitalism discussed by Burawoy (1979, 1985), based on shared economic interests between labor and capital and workers' rights, negotiated between unions and the management.

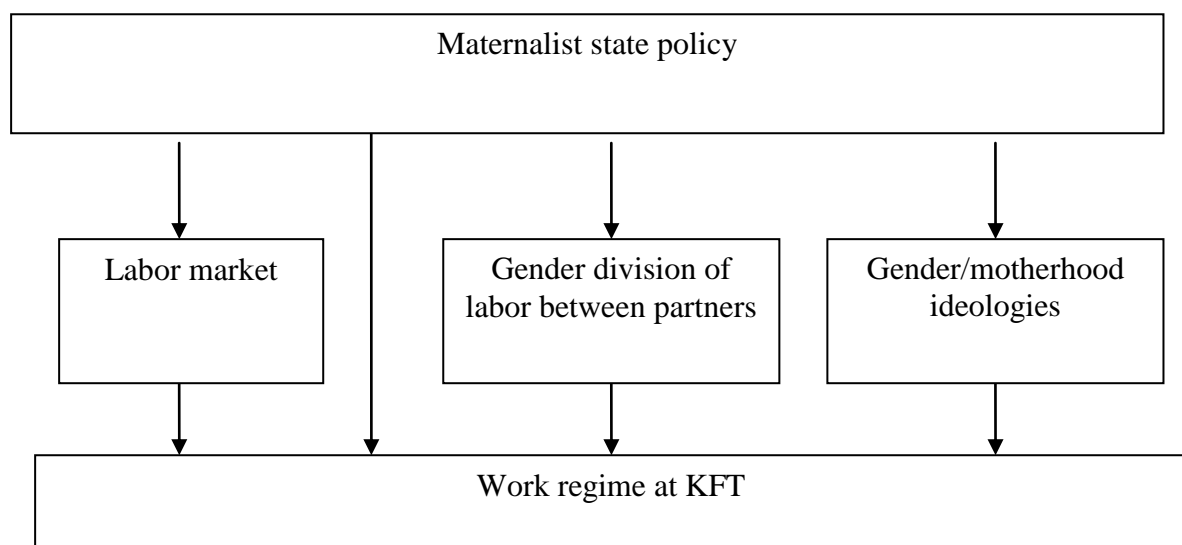
According to Burawoy, in the era of global capital employers may use "quality of work-life programmes" to coordinate their and the workers' interests in order to increase profitability and marginalize the union (1985: 128), which goes together with a shift toward hegemonic despotism. My discussion adds ethnographic depth to Burawoy's predictions: maternalist practices can be interpreted as a 'quality of work-life programme,' especially in a feminized workplace. However, while Burawoy talks about gender neutral work-life programs, the maternalist regime is distinctly gendered, as it is based on women's reproductive difference, usually seen as an obstacle to productivity. Furthermore, the regime is hegemonic, and not hegemonic-despotic, as Burawoy predicted (1985). Thus, I contribute to this theory by showing that in this particular location hegemonic control based on motherhood can serve as an alternative to more coercive methods of increasing profitability. A part of the explanation for this local specificity is likely to be the technical organization of the labor process, which is skill-dependent, labor intensive and focused on batch production.

My arguments also contribute to the work-family literature by demonstrating that work-family policies are not innocent, win-win arrangements, but intertwined with managerial control and can contribute to workers' marginalization.

CHAPTER 7: THE INSTITUTIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL SOURCES OF MATERNALIST HEGEMONY

In this chapter I examine the institutional and ideological embeddedness of the maternalist work regime I discussed in Chapter Five, in order to explain its emergence and stability. The central element of the institutional context is the state-level work-family policy, which affects the work regime at KFT directly, and indirectly, through the labor market, the gender division of labor in the families of workers and their gender ideology, as shown in the diagram below.

Diagram 1. The institutional and ideological context of the maternalist work regime



Lee (1998) uses the term 'the social organization of the labor market' to refer to the diverse institutional and ideological influences on the locally specific factory regime. The framework presented above is heuristic and the outcome of my ethnographic fieldwork. However, by linking the locally specific institutional and ideological factors which influence

the factory regime to theoretical arguments, the heuristic framework allows me to draw more generalizable conclusions.

At a more empirical level, the aim in this chapter is to examine how and why the blue-collar women ended up working for KFT in the first place: how does this workplace fit in with their work-family strategies, and what explains that they can be successfully addressed by the maternalist managerial practices and rhetoric. After reading the previous chapter, it may be argued that working mothers have 'chosen' to work at KFT because of their preference for family-friendly work arrangements. In this chapter the focus is on the constraints these women face when making employment decisions

After a brief summary of arguments about the role of the state in shaping factory regimes I discuss how maternalist state policies influence the production regime at KFT directly and indirectly, through shaping the labor market, the gender division of labor in the family, and the gender ideologies of blue-collar women workers and their partners. Then I expand the discussion about the gender division of labor and gender ideologies and pay special attention to how the male partners of working mothers influence the work-family decisions of these women in a way that contributes to their responding to the labor control strategies at KFT.

7.1 The state's influence on factory regimes – revisiting the theory of production politics

Burawoy (1985) argues that the state has played an important role in the shift from despotic to hegemonic factory regimes under capitalist conditions: by introducing wage minimums, social security provisions, and regulating labor and capital relations the state intervention reduced workers' dependence on wages to reproduce their labor power. This argument can be reformulated in the following way: as a result of the state intervention,

workers become dependent not only on wages, but also on the state to reproduce their labor power.

In state socialist countries a maternalist segment of state policy and welfare provisions was created, which still exists in Hungary, to the effect that employed mothers continue to depend on the state as workers and as mothers: although men are also eligible, mothers tend to use the paid care leaves, and it is mothers' employment that is shaped by state supported day care for children, not fathers. The working mothers in my research depend on the state to a much larger degree than any groups of workers whose situation is discussed in the labor process literature. Although working mothers benefit from gender-neutral state policies, such as the minimum wage, unemployment benefit, general health insurance and pensions to reproduce their labor power, maternalist state policies also influence their working lives to a great extent. Some workers, especially the older ones, who were already working in the early 1990s, have drawn unemployment benefits, but even they have spent much longer periods on paid parental leaves - thus the state contributed to the reproduction of their labor power as workers and mothers/working mothers.⁸⁶

7.2 The labor market effects of maternalist state policies

The most important state-level work-family policy in post-state socialist Hungary is the system of paid maternity and parental leaves: women with previous labor market experience are entitled to a two-year earnings-related leave, which can be extended until the child's third birthday, but in the last year the amount of the benefit is fixed, and for most women, lower than the earnings-related benefit was. According to the Labor Code, employers

⁸⁶ For example, Heidi received the unemployment benefit for just over a year, but spent five years on parental leave in the early 1990s. Viki was unemployed for a few months after the three-year parental leave ended.

are obliged to re-employ parents after the leave: either in their previous position or in a similar one.

Almost all Hungarian mothers take paid leaves after having a child, however, many of them face difficulties in returning to their jobs after the maternity leaves, despite the protective regulations. I use the following story as an example. Emma started to work at KFT after two years of maternity leave. Before she had her son, she had worked as a bartender and earned a good salary. She did not even want to try and go back to her old job, because of the long work hours, but when she started to look for a new job, she soon found out that having a young child made the process very difficult, at times hopeless:

I didn't want to work in a factory, I looked for a job elsewhere, but I didn't get anything [else] because of the kid. In one place they told me to come back in ten years' time. [...] I didn't believe it when others told me, but it's true: you cannot get a job if you have a small child.

Faced with these rejections, Emma eventually followed Monica's suggestion and applied for a job at KFT, even though a factory job is lower paid, and of lower prestige than she hoped for. She may have found a better paid job after a longer search, but she felt under pressure as her insurance based parental leave was running out, and the leave with the flat rate benefit would have meant a serious drop in her income.

The direct discrimination against mothers in hiring that Emma experienced is supported by research data (Blasko 2009, Echo-survey 2005; Glass and Fodor 2011; Jol-Let Foundation 1996; Szalai 2006). Although it is difficult to gather data about discrimination, according to Frey (2002), 32.5 % of women on parental leave say that although they would like to go back to their employers, they are 'unwanted.' As for managerial attitudes, according to Pailhe (2000), 79 % of interviewed Hungarian managers said that pre-school children had a negative effect on women's chances of being hired, while only 10 % of them said that men's chances were affected.

Human resources managers talk openly about direct discrimination in re/hiring (Glass and Fodor 2011), and although applicants could take legal action or turn to the Equal Treatment Authority, such cases are rare.⁸⁷ Thus, employers can engage in discrimination without negative consequences even though the protective labor legislation and the antidiscrimination machinery exist. Rather than taking legal action, women have developed individual strategies to cope with discrimination. The following quotes highlight that discriminatory practices against mothers have become ‘natural.’

The Human Resources manager at company G told me that women often start job interviews by stating that they have children, just to save time in case they are not welcome:

One of the team leaders in the night shift is a lady with three children. When she came for the job interview she stopped at the door and asked me: “I have three children, shall I come in?”

It is clear that there were several negative experiences behind the opening line of the applicant. Another strategy is that mothers of young children try to convince interviewers that they are still reliable employees, despite their family responsibilities. To create a better impression during the job interview, Emma informed the production manager at KFT that her son has a place in a crèche, and as a back-up solution for emergencies, she can also rely on her family. Vicky, who joined KFT when her daughter was three, came to the interview with a mental list of relatives she can call on if her daughter gets ill. From Timi’s story it seems that the need for childcare may even influence couples’ decision when to start a family:

My mum told me not to have a baby before she retires. She was right, of course, but if I’d waited for everything to be perfect, we would’ve never had children.

⁸⁷ The Authority was set up to enforce Act CXXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities

Women also try to assure their prospective employers that they do not want to have another child. Mia, who works at KFT and is aspiring to get a job as a legal assistant, was advised to include the following sentence in her CV: “I am not planning to have another child.”⁸⁸

It has been argued that discrimination against mothers of young children is partly the consequence of the maternalist state policies themselves, as they construct women as potentially unreliable employees in post-state socialist countries (Einhorn 1993, Fodor 2003, Glass 2008, Rudd 2000, 2003, Scharle 2007). In other countries that have a broad range of state-level work-family policies, mothers are excluded from the more prestigious positions in the market sector of the labor market and segregated in ‘sheltered’ state employment (Mandel 2009; Mandel and Semyonov 2005). Under market conditions employers are under stronger pressure to achieve profits and they are less tolerant towards mothers who are not seen as fully devoted to their paid work (Fodor 2003, 2006; Glass 2008, Glass and Fodor 2011, Rudd 2000, 2003).

In addition, the protective labor regulations restrict the authority of employers in hiring, firing and granting leaves, which may be another reason why employers are wary of employing mothers of young children. Discrimination also encourages self-selection: women who encounter or fear discrimination may decide to look for ‘family-friendly’ jobs or to drop out of the labor market completely until their children are older.

Indeed, the employment rate of mothers dropped more sharply than the average drop in employment after the first phase of post-state socialist transformations in Hungary: in 1993 mothers of young children were just as likely to hold a job as childless women, but by 2000 the chances of mothers were only one fourth of those of childless women (Glass 2008: 773-74). The difference between the employment rate of mothers and that of men’s or childless women’s in Hungary is among the largest ones in the European Union (Bukodi 2006, Fodor

⁸⁸ What makes the story special is that she was applying for a position at the local police station.

2006). The Hungarian Central Statistical Office stated that “raising a child is a universal disadvantage in the labor market” (2010: 11),⁸⁹ and people returning from parental leave are referred to as a ‘disadvantaged group’ of job seekers in national employment strategies and in EU-funded Operational Programs.⁹⁰ The expansion of work hours after the post-state socialist transformations (Glass 2008; Bukodi 2006) is another characteristic of the Hungarian labour market which affects workers with caring responsibilities more adversely than others.

In sum, mothers of young children are in a vulnerable position in the Hungarian labor market, a labor market: although the management of KFT are not responsible for their vulnerable position, they exploit it it: the recruitment of women, especially mothers of young children is part of the maternalist labor control strategy through which a committed but cheap workforce is created at KFT. As Rubery and Wilkinson (1994: 31-32) argue: “the segmented labor market...provides the basis for a flexible, committed but cheap labor force: primary workers at secondary prices.” Next, I will discuss the exact mechanisms through which the management takes advantage of the vulnerable labor market position of mothers.

7.3 Implementing maternalist state policies: re/hiring mothers of young children

KFT can exploit the vulnerable labor market position of mothers by *not* discriminating against them: mothers of young children are routinely hired, and they are rehired after the parental leave. The vulnerable labor market position of mothers and the company’s reputation for being a family-friendly employer means that the management of KFT can choose from applicants whenever they want to recruit new workers, and select ‘good’ candidates despite

⁸⁹ It is not always discrimination that makes returning from parental leave difficult: companies may dissolve during long parental leaves, although this is less likely these days than at the beginning of the 1990s when the post-state socialist economic restructuring was at its height, and the CEO herself and several of the long-standing employees became unemployed during their parental leave (see also Rudd 2000).

⁹⁰ Social Mobility Operational Program (TAMOP). According to the head of the employment office in the city where KFT is located, women are not named directly because that would be “against the principle of non-discrimination.”

offering them the minimum wage. To decide who the good workers are, applicants are interviewed and given a practical test, regardless of their work experience, qualifications or recommendations. Eva, who graduated from a technical high school, was surprised at the complex selection process: “I have qualifications, I was recommended by someone who works here, and still, I had to do [the practical test].” The mandatory trial period of three months is also used to test workers before offering them a regular work contract: in one round in 2009 the management hired four people, and only two of them stayed after the trial period.⁹¹

The vulnerable labor market position of mothers also means that KFT can select people with a relatively high level of education for the semi-skilled operative jobs. Anna, another recently recruited worker also went through a difficult job search after an extended parental leave. Although she is a high school graduate and worked as the financial – administrative manager of a shop before the parental leave, she sounds relieved about being hired into a semi-skilled job:

I have applied for administrative jobs. [...] I have applied for telesales jobs, I have applied for everything I found. I even started doing telesales, but in the end they didn't pay me.... so I said [to myself], it doesn't matter where I work, I'll lower my expectations and try to get a factory job. [...] When the production manager saw my CV, she asked me what I was looking for in this place, this is 'light manual' work. I told her I just wanted a job.

The company benefits from Anna's difficulty securing an office job after the long leave,⁹² not only because she is educated and can be retrained easily, but because she is grateful for her job at KFT – in Chapter Five I discussed how she became one of the most committed workers through a series of informal arrangements around work hours with the production manager.

⁹¹ It is also possible of course that the workers decided not to stay on. However, in this particular case I found out from an overheard conversation between two white-collar workers that one of the two women who left was not considered a good enough worker.

⁹² The fact that Emma and Anna had trouble finding service sector jobs but no problem finding a factory job underlies the argument I made earlier about the availability of semi-skilled industrial jobs for women in the area.

Kati also appreciates the ‘benevolence’ of the management when she contrasts her experiences at KFT with other employers this way: “In other places they don’t hire women who have children. Not even those ones who they think will have children.” Thus, management’s motivation for re/hiring mothers is more complex than simply following the regulations of the Labor Code – it is part of a conscious strategy of creating a committed workforce. When talking about the rehiring of mothers after the parental leave, the CEO emphasizes the benefits to the company of rehiring experienced workers:

Their old knowledge comes back quickly, even after four or five years [at home]. They do not forget how to solder, how to assemble a connector or read technical drawings.

It is argued that a worker returning from parental leave needs less training than a new recruit, which is a form of saving on labor costs. Yet, despite her emphasis on the skills and experience of these workers, she also takes into account the additional costs of employing mothers:

If we add up all the the paid leaves and holidays,⁹³ it turns out that the company pays about six months’ wages to an employee who has a baby. At the moment there are ten people on parental leave, which is 15% of the employees. It is hard to produce this amount of money.

The CEO openly discusses the cost-benefit considerations about employing mothers, but she does not mention that the company pays low wages to production workers, who are almost all working mothers, unlike the Russian managers interviewed by Ashwin and Bowers (1997) who emphasized that women were the ultimate source of cheap labor, despite the additional costs related to their maternal responsibilities.

Reference to the legal obligation of rehiring workers is also conspicuously missing from her discussion about employing mothers, which suggests that it is not moral or legal considerations that underlie the strategy of employing mothers, even though the CEO is fully aware of the discrimination against mothers and uses her experience of being the victim of

⁹³ Workers are entitled to their annual paid holidays accumulated during the parental leave.

such discrimination, as part of the maternalist rhetoric embedded in labor control practices. I already quoted her talking about how the company was established: "I had to do something. [...] no one wanted to hire me with two young children."

Hiring at KFT also has an informal quality to it: blue-collar jobs are usually not advertised, either the production manager tells workers about the vacancies, or workers ask management about possible openings. In short, new workers are recruited through the networks of current employees, which makes it more likely that people with similar background will apply, ensuring a flow of working mothers. In addition, those who recommend a new worker will feel responsible for the people they brought to the company, which adds another layer of labor control: workers will help each other more, as they are friends, and they will try to keep each other out of trouble so that they are not embarrassed by the people they recommended (Granovetter 1973, 1985; Granovetter and Tilly 1988). The method is also cheap, as there is no cost of advertising. The production manager justifies this method by arguing that the people recruited through recommendations are 'better' and more reliable compared to those recommended by the employment office: "I don't like hiring people from the street. [...] Those sent by the employment office often do not even turn up for the interview."

In summary, management can elicit worker commitment by following the Labor Code and implementing the state-level work-family policy of parental leave with a job guarantee. In the discriminative labor market context women workers consider this as a managerial favor, and they exercise self-discipline in their use of other state policies, such as the care leave to look after sick children, similarly to their use of informal company practices discussed in the previous chapter. I will discuss commitment and self-discipline in more detail.

7.4 Special leave to look after sick children

Workers who have young children are entitled to special paid leaves to care for their children when they are sick.⁹⁴ Employers who are reluctant to employ mothers often cite this regulation as part of their justification for discrimination: young children tend to get ill quite often, which makes their mothers ‘unreliable’ workers. Thus, this state regulation also contributes to the vulnerability of working mothers. The management of KFT implements this work-family policy as well, and it also contributes to the construction of workers’ commitment, as it becomes clear from the following stories.

When Kati joined the company, she had two young children, and one of them fell ill almost immediately after Kati was hired. During the first three months of employment, the ‘trial period’, a work contract can be terminated without giving a reason, which is why Kati was afraid to stay at home with the child:

I was really afraid to stay at home with [my daughter], because in the first three months it is very easy to sack you. But she was really sick, so I asked the CEO what to do, and she told me that if a child is sick, it is sick, so I should just stay at home with her.

Kati has told me the story so vividly that I was surprised to find out it happened fifteen years ago: the CEO’s respect of Kati’s maternal responsibility clearly made a strong impression on her.

Just as the regulation in the Labor Code has not changed in the past fifteen years, neither has the factory’s practice: Emma’s story is very similar, but much more recent. Emma’s son contracted a stubborn infection of Salmonella, and after staying at home with him for two weeks, she was told that the child still cannot go back to the creche. Emma became worried about missing so much work – which shows that she is aware of her

⁹⁴ According to health insurance legislation, for children aged 3-6 there are 42 days available a year, for children aged 6-12 there are 14 days a year. Single parents are entitled for twice as many days. The amount of the benefit is the same as if the parent was on sick leave him/herself. Parents on parental leave are not entitled to this type of sick leave.

vulnerable position -, and asked for an appointment with the CEO to tell her about the situation in person: “I told the CEO that I have to stay at home for even longer, and that I would understand if she dismissed me.” She was not dismissed of course, and she got the same response from the CEO as Kati: if a child is sick, there is nothing you can do. In the end, Emma stayed at home with her son for almost a month, and when she returned to work she was relieved that she still had a job and was more committed to the company than before.

Rudd argued that after the collapse of state socialism working women in East-Germany were faced with the pressure to “act as though” they were not mothers (2003: 194), and they were anxious about losing their jobs if they missed too much work to care for a sick child. Blue-collar women at KFT do take special leaves when necessary, but they are careful not to ‘overdo’ it, for example, by relying on family support with child care to reduce the length of the sick leave, as Petra explains:

With two small children there is always something. Last week the little one had an upset stomach, now the older one has a sore throat. I took them to the doctor, but my mother is looking after them, not me.

Similarly, Zoe often takes only two-three days off when her son is ill, and then the grandmother looks after him. That is, even though they are entitled to care leaves, working mothers tend to treat this leave the same way as the informal leaves – they exercise self-discipline, which is in the interest of the management. This self-discipline is even stronger in those workers who recently joined KFT and are not used to the freedom of using care leaves: instead they use their their annual paid holiday days when their children are ill. Eva explained her strategy this way: “In job interviews they always ask you if you have ever been on sick leave in your life.” That is, Eva goes to greater lengths and in trying to act as though she was not a mother.

When women workers take sick leaves themselves, the managerial attitude is less understanding, and if absenteeism is suspected, a manager calls the doctor who signed the

workers' sick notes to check whether the leave is really justified. Such a call is meant as a warning to the doctor and the worker that action may be taken against them. Workers who have long-term health problems and have taken extended sick leaves are also grateful to management for not dismissing them.⁹⁵ Thus management's tolerance to extended sick leaves also contributed to the loyalty of workers. However, there was no company rhetoric around these cases, which proves that only maternalism had a special importance in shaping labor control at KFT.

The different managerial attitude to the two types of sick leave also has its cost-benefit aspect. When a worker takes time off to look after a sick child, the employer does not have to contribute to the sick leave benefit paid to the worker, the benefit is paid from the national social security fund, the only costs are related to the reorganization of production on the shop floor and the slower production. If a worker herself takes sick leave, the company has to contribute to the sick pay as well, as an additional direct cost, which is why the CEO informs workers who are not aware of the financial differences between different kinds of sick leave: "When Petra called in to say she was taking sick leave, I told her that if it is the same for her, then she should go on a care leave rather than going on sick leave herself." In sum, there is a financial reasoning behind the adoption of maternalist state policy, similarly to the case of parental leaves.

The managerial strategy of hiring vulnerable workers is the basis of the maternalist company practices. The two steps are linked: the women who are hired face labor market discrimination as (potential) mothers, thus, when they are hired by the management of KFT, it carries the message that at this company it is OK to be a mother. Then the management addresses them as mothers through the company-level maternalist practices and rhetoric

⁹⁵ Long-term health problems are also considered as a common cause of dismissals in Hungary. Edina claims that she has lost her warehouse job at a multinational company because she was off sick for months after a series of operations, and she is grateful for the management of KFT for tolerating her 'disability.' Magda, one of the older workers thanked the management with tears in her eyes for 'keeping her' until she reached retirement age, even though she was often off sick.

analyzed in the previous chapter: the combination of the two steps – selecting mothers and then reinforcing, or even strengthening their maternal identity – is a powerful strategy. Bank Munoz (2008) discusses a similar case when illegal immigrant Mexican men, who are in a vulnerable position in the USA labor market based on their immigrant status are addressed as by Mexican foremen on the shop floor as fellow immigrants. Their migrant Mexican identity is the basis of their vulnerability and it is also invoked and reinforced on the shop floor.

In this section I have examined how the local production regime is influenced by maternalist state policies directly, bureaucratically, through regulations such as the job guarantee and workers' right to care leaves and indirectly, through the segmentation of the labor market. My arguments contribute to those that emphasize the indirect role of state policies, such as immigration laws (Bank Munoz 2008; Lee 1999; McKay 2006; Peng 2011; Pun 2005, Pun and Smith 2007; Wells 1996).

What is special about this case is that the policies are explicitly gendered, and that the management of KFT benefit from the labor market vulnerability of mothers by following all the regulations, and fully implementing the state-level work-family policies. In similar cases employers and/or workers break some regulations, and the state policies involved are restrictive, but this is not the case here. The vulnerability-generating effect of state-level work-family policies has been pointed out before (Fodor 2006; Glass and Fodor 2011; Mandel and Semyonov 2005; Mandel 2009; Morgan and Zippel 2003, Orloff 2006), but my study is the first that highlights a factory regime that is based on this effect of state policies. Another difference to the cases discussed in the literature is that typically despotic production regimes are built on workers' vulnerability, while the management of KFT has succeeded in eliciting workers' commitment and creating a hegemonic regime.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Another hegemonic regime that is based on workers' vulnerability is discussed by Peng (2011) who argues that the consent of internal migrant workers is based on a protective variation of the dormitory labor regime emerging in state capitalist China.

In post-state socialist Hungary the vulnerable position of women workers is linked to the state to a large extent: lengthy maternity leaves and state-funded cash benefits are granted to mothers to look after their young children themselves, but the protective labor regulations are not enforced and employers are practically free to discriminate. That is, the state pursues an active maternalist strategy towards individual women, and a passive, non-interventionist strategy towards companies, which provides the opportunity for the management to create a maternalist production regime.

What explains that the protective labor regulations related to mothers' paid work are not enforced by the Hungarian state? One possible explanation is country's dependence on foreign direct investment: by not enforcing protective laws, the country is argued to be more attractive to employers (Glass and Fodor 2011).⁹⁷ This may be part of the explanation, but it has also been argued that the local subsidiaries of multinational companies are more likely to follow the labor regulations, than the smaller, Hungarian-owned businesses (interviews with experts at Jol-Let Foundation, interview with the management of the local Employment Office).

I will now turn to the second element of the institutional context around the work regime at KFT, to the households of working mothers: in the next section I discuss how the gender division of labor and the gender ideologies of blue-collar women and their male partners influence women's work-family decisions, and thus, the local production regime. These factors are intertwined and influenced by the maternalist state policies - I will pay special attention to this complex interplay.

⁹⁷ Glass and Fodor (2011) made this argument about the finance and banking sector, but the manufacturing industry, especially in the Western part of Hungary where KFT is located is also dominated by foreign capital.

7.5 Women's parental leave practices and motherhood ideology

Having children has a strong impact on the division of labor between parents: couples tend to adopt a more traditional arrangement: mothers usually withdraw from the labor market at least temporarily, while fathers' labor force participation increases (Bianchi et al. 2000; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Nock and Kingston 1988; Singley and Hynes 2005). According to rational choice theories (Hakim 1991, 1998, 2006) women invest in their human capital with these long career breaks in mind: they choose a job where long career breaks are not detrimental. However, according to statistical data (Bukodi 2006; Glass 2008), in Hungary there is a very strong relationship between the number of children and women's employment status in Hungary.⁹⁸ I have also shown that several blue-collar women changed occupations *after* having children, and came to work at KFT despite having the qualifications for jobs in the service sector, that is, they did not prepare for motherhood when planning their working lives, rather they made new decisions during the parental leave.

One of the aims of the maternalist state policies at the time of their introduction was to withdraw mothers from paid work while their children were young (Fodor 2003; Haney 2002; Zimmermann 2010). The policies and the ideology of maternalism, which emphasizes children's needs have mutually strengthened each other over the decades, establishing the 'magical' status of children's third birthday and naturalizing the statement that children are not ready for day care before this age (Szikra and Haskova 2012). The practical aspects of motherwork are also monitored by institutions that were established parallel with the state policies, such as compulsory medical examinations during pregnancy and the network of district nurses, who visit all new mothers. Although the main goal of these visits is supposedly to provide support to new mothers, nurses are in the position to control the

⁹⁸ Bukodi (2006) relies on EUROSTAT data from 2005, according to which 80 percent of childless women aged 20-49 are employed, while for women with one child under the age of 12 the rate is 59.4 percent, and for those with three or more children the rate is 12.6 percent. However, these figures do not allow us to tell apart women on parental leave (with children aged under 3) from those who are 'stay-home-mothers.'

routine tasks of mothering based on criteria such as the diet of the baby and the orderliness of the home.

The maternalist arm of state policy and institutions are closely linked to each other in a circular manner: the arguments that children need maternal care in the home until they turn three and the benefits paid to mothers convinced them to stay at home, which in turn serves to justify the dearth of day care places. Although mothers do not necessarily share the ideology of maternalism (Blasko 2011), many of them stay at home because there are not enough child care places and/or jobs (Balint and Kollo 2007). I continue the analysis of women's motherhood ideologies and mothering practices that I started in the previous chapter, as it is through these practices that a type of "culturally sanctioned femininity" (Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson 2001) is produced, which means that studying mothering practices provides insights about the dominant motherhood ideologies.

Blue-collar women at KFT take long paid maternity leaves: they drop out of paid work for as long as 2-3 years with one child, and up to 5 – 10 years if they had two or three children in succession.⁹⁹ Although some of them 'stayed at home' for as long as a decade, they were always on a parental leave, receiving a form of state benefit. They did not mention psychological arguments about 'attachment' parenting and the mother-child bond, many of them are convinced that mothers should stay at home, and have a low opinion of women who cut their parental leave short, as Vanda put it, "instead of being with the child 24 hours a day for three years." It is completely natural to her that it is a mother's duty to be with their children when they are small.

Although Vanda also emphasizes the joys of hands-on- mothering, she formulates it as a warning : "[Children] grow up so quickly, you don't want to miss out on it. You don't want them to say their first words to the childminder in the crèche." Because she talked in general

⁹⁹ The shortest leave that a blue-collar woman told me about was one and a half years long, the majority used all three years of the leave.

terms, not only about herself, I probed whether 'you' could be understood as the father, and asked her what she thought about fathers who miss out on the early years of their children, because they work long hours. She did not hesitate, and gave a very practical answer: "That's what weekends are for. Then fathers have time to be with the kids, too." That is, looking after young children is the responsibility of mothers only.

Others do not have such strong opinions, and some of them even said that they were bored during the maternity leave or even that they felt trapped: women whose maternity leave ended recently described mixed emotions. Petra felt that five years at home was too long: "It was enough. The two kids were too much for me. Now I really appreciate when I can be with them." Timi and Emma felt isolated and bored, rather than tired, and had to make efforts to structure their time. Timi says: "Being closed up at home for two years.... We went out a lot: we went for walks, we went shopping, we went to the bus stop to wait for my mother." Emma realized that she was bored only when she started work again: "When I was at home, I had five cups of coffee a day. Now I have only two. I guess I was bored." Although these women did not have a great time at home looking after small children, they accepted that this is what they have to do for their children.

While staying on the leave is the 'normal,' common sense practice that many women had nothing to say about, those who 'deviated' from the norm and returned to paid work before the child's third birthday all had an explanation, which they told me without eliciting. The explanation was simple and always the same: they stated more or less apologetically that the flat-rate parental leave benefit paid to mothers in the last year of the leave is too low. Blasko (2011) argues that mothers who stayed at home for the final year of the leave tended to refer to children's needs even when they argued for shorter leaves, but the women at KFT referred only to financial reasons.

7.5.1 Intensive mothering

During the long parental leave, Hungarian women can and often do engage in intensive mothering, defined as “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive child rearing” Hays (1996: 12). Hays argues that mothers in the USA, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, engage in intensive mothering, at least at the level of ideology, if their circumstances do not allow them to fully adopt the practices. The long, paid parental leaves in post-state socialist Hungary reduce the difficulties poor and working class women face in the USA and other liberal welfare states (Korteweg 2003; McCormack 2005; Mink 1998): although the benefits are low, they are universal and women on parental leave are neither stigmatized nor pressured to take up paid work.¹⁰⁰

What does intensive mothering entail in this context? Which elements of Hays’ definition (1996) are followed? This was Vanda’s daily routine when she was on parental leave in the mid 1990s:

I was at home with the younger one, so the older one could stay in the kindergarten only in the morning, that was the rule. He could have had lunch there, but I cooked at home because it worked out cheaper this way. In the morning we took the older one to the kindergarten, then we went shopping, together with the little one, cooked lunch, maybe did the laundry, then we had to hurry back to pick up the older one. We went home, had lunch, then they had a nap. In the afternoon, we went to the playground, or they played at home.

This is clearly a limited version of intensive mothering. Still, I have found that although they focus on the routine tasks of mothering, all the women in my study mentioned playing with children and contrasted it with housework, such as cooking and cleaning. The main problem Petra faced during the leave with two children is how to best cater for both of them: “the little one needed a lot more sleep than the older one, so it was a real hassle to try and keep both of them happy.”

¹⁰⁰ This is not true for Romani women: they are much more likely to be stigmatized for taking long leaves.

Anna's story is a mix of practical and 'educational' approaches: she used special methods to teach her special needs son, and she used to get up very early in the summer, to start cooking lunch before they went to the playground to avoid the strong midday sun. Emma, who only has one child, could spend more time teaching him, using special books and DVDs, and is very happy when the child is praised by strangers: "Tomi can count, people sometimes tell me it shows that he was given a lot of attention at home."

So, although the women do not talk explicitly about the importance of intensive mothering, and do not refer directly to arguments of developmental psychology, their daily routines are organized around the children and their practices show the influence of these ideas. Also, even though all of them take their children to day care at the age of three, some of them at the age of two, they agree that that the most important influence in children's lives is the family. In particular, what they learn at home: "Everything depends on the family. Kindergartens and schools can try to influence children but it's useless" says Vanda.

7.6 Gender specialization between partners

During the long leaves mothers specialize in caregiving, while fathers specialize in paid work, and work longer hours than they did before having a child. This gendered arrangement has a strong influence on women's employment decisions at the end of the parental leave, as it is clear from the following stories. The first two examples are from the 1990s, these women have very long tenure at KFT.

I have already quoted Heidi, who argued that she 'chose' the family-friendly work hours because it is the duty of the parents to raise their children: "I thought that if *we* wanted these kids, then *we* have to raise them." However, it seems that she looked after their children alone while her husband worked very long hours:

My husband worked a lot at that time. I was afraid to go back to work [to my old job] because I was supposed to arrange the children in the morning and in the afternoon. I thought that if anything [unexpected] happens at my workplace, I can't make it.

So in terms of caregiving Heidi bore sole responsibility for the children, even after the parental leave, because of her husband's job, which clearly limited her choice. Kinga's story is very similar: she came to the factory as a mother of two children, immediately after the parental leave in the mid 1990s. She does not use the rhetoric of choice, she simply states that she had few options: "I could only take a job with one shift, because my husband worked very long hours and he had to travel a lot."

The following accounts come from a younger generation of working mothers at KFT, who had pre-school children in 2008-2010, during my fieldwork, and they are remarkably similar to the ones above. When I first met Renata, the partner of Tim, the IT specialist at KFT, she was still on parental leave and was rather fed up with being at home with their daughter alone, while Tim worked long hours. Tim admitted that their daughter was usually asleep by the time he got home in the evening, but explained that he had to make more money, his salary at KFT was simply not enough: "It's true, I don't often see my daughter awake in the evening. But my wallet is always empty, I have two more bills to pay this month." He showed us the bills and claimed that he does not have time for his friends, either, he always refuses invitations to go out with colleagues in the evening, because he is working in his second job. Given Tim's long and irregular work hours it is not surprising that Renata also came to work at KFT after the parental leave: with the regular work hours she could pick up their daughter in the afternoons, and Tim continued to work 'all day.'

Andras, a blue-collar worker at KFT emphasized the importance of having time for his family when I asked him about his work-family decisions: "They couldn't pay me so much that I would sacrifice all my free time. I just want to make enough money to live in financial security." He had two small children, and his wife was expecting the third one at the time, and

in order to achieve financial security, he worked for three other companies on top of his full-time job at KFT. The extra work hours were irregular: “They call me when they need me. It’s not much [work], and it’s usually not urgent, but I have to find the time to do it.” Indeed, Andras came to a ‘family day’ organized at KFT with his wife and two children, but he soon left to run an errand, and returned a few hours later. That is, the division of paid work and unpaid care work is highly unequal in these blue-collar families: men take on extra work, in order to provide financial security for their families while the women take long parental leaves.

While the gendered specialization within couples cannot be separated from their gender ideologies, which construct mothers’ jobs as more ‘flexible’ than fathers’ (Walzer 1997), it is also ‘rational,’ as men earned more than mothers when their children were born and one of them had to stay at home. Tim, an IT specialist with some college education earned “much more” than Renata, who completed high school and had a part-time job delivering lunch orders to offices before she had the baby. The case is less clear cut for the other couple: Andras claims that he would have loved to stay on parental leave, but “it did not make sense,” as he earned more. In fact, the difference was quite small, because Andras works as a machine operator at KFT,¹⁰¹ while his wife was a maths teacher in a secondary school – now on parental leave. Vicky, a blue-collar worker also thought that her husband should have stayed on parental leave, but it was more rational for her to stay at home: “My husband would have been better suited to stay on parental leave, because he gets on better with our daughter. But he earns a hundred thousand forints a month (400 Euros), and not sixty thousand (270 Euros) [like me].”

These stories support arguments that long parental leaves contribute to the unequal gender division of labor in families with young children (Blasko 2006, 2010; European

¹⁰¹ Andras is one of the three male production workers – the other blue collar men are maintenance workers and technicians.

Commission 2006; Glass and Fodor 2007; Gornick and Meyers 2003). Vaskovics et al (2005) found that in families where women ‘temporarily’ take an increased share of care work, the division of labor is likely to remain unequal, or return to an earlier, more egalitarian division only very slowly after this period in the life cycle. Other researchers have pointed out the link between the high level of stress related to men’s position as main breadwinners and Hungarian men’s high mortality rate (Kopp and Rethelyi 2004).

There is only one blue-collar couple who told me about a more equal division of labor. Etka returned to paid work earlier than most women and they shared childcare and housework with her partner:

My first child was born in 1985, and I went back to work when he was 18 months old... We had just got our flat and it was completely empty, we had no furniture... The second time I was made redundant during the leave [1993], I could have stayed at home until his third birthday, but there was a really good job offer, and I didn’t want to miss out on it.

So she took the well paid job instead of looking for a job with family-friendly hours, and Dave, her husband “did everything around the house” according to Etka. More specifically, everything meant that “he looked after the children [two boys], took them to the crèche or picked them up, made dinner for them and put them to bed” when Etka was working. That is, Dave was involved with the children, instead of specializing only in paid work.

7.6.1 Day care services as an alternative to long leaves

Could women avoid taking long parental leaves with low benefits and the homemaker ‘specialization’ that seems inevitably to go with it? Even if fathers do not take up leaves, mothers could still rely on child care services.

Only 10% of children under the age of three go to public daycare in Hungary (Szikra 2010, HCSO 2011), which indicates that the overwhelming majority of small children are looked after at home. In the literature on child care policies the countries of post-state socialist

Eastern-Europe are often discussed as a cluster with similar policy trends. It is argued that the ‘refamilialization’ of care is the trend after the post-state socialist transformations, that is, childcare that was the previously defamilialized through accessible and affordable public child care services is assigned to the family once again (Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Pascall and Lewis, 2004).

Other scholars have highlighted country-specific differences and outlined a more complex picture (Fodor and Glass et al. 2002; Szelewa 2006; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Szikra 2010). First, the proportion of children attending crèches was always low in Hungary (Fodor 2005; Lukacs and Frey 2003). The post-state socialist day care provision in Hungary has been characterized as a succession of two types: ‘explicit familialism’ in the 1990s and a ‘weak comprehensive support’ type after 2002 (Szelewa and Polakowski 2008). That is, parents can make a decision between looking after their young children at home or using public services, but the system supports care in the family. Furthermore, although entitlement to public day care services is universal, the quality of the services is low (Szelewa and Polakowski 2008). Szikra (2010) adds that certain groups of women, such as those living in rural areas, have difficulties in securing day care for their children younger than three, thus, she terms the policy type as “limited optional familialism.”¹⁰²

The women who returned to KFT after their children turned two used public crèches or the help of grandmothers. Petra’s younger son was looked after by the grandmother for a year, until he started kindergarten, but women who live in the neighboring villages, often have to wait until their children reach the age of three and can attend kindergarten, where there are many more places.¹⁰³

¹⁰² According to the ‘limited’ optional familialism argument poor women, the majority of whom are Romani, are discriminated against in the child care system, as the system prefers mothers with good employment records.

¹⁰³ 93 % of children aged 3-6 attend a crèche or a kindergarten (FLOWS WP 3).

7.6.2 Gender specialization between partners after the parental leave

When the parental leaves end, mothers lose the cash benefits and their social insurance coverage. As their blue-collar partners do not earn enough to be the sole supporters of the family, the women in my study resume paid work – and this is when the maternalist work regime at KFT becomes highly attractive to them. Thanks to the maternalist company practices they can continue to be the sole caregivers in their families *and* work full-time, while their partners can continue working long and irregular hours, even though the women now earn wages, not only the parental leave benefit. That is, the gender specialization continues in blue-collar households after the parental leave.

The men often do extra work in the evenings and at weekends, in a way that is very similar to their participation in the 'second economy' under state-socialism (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992; Szalai 2000). Monica's husband is employed full-time as a plumber, and he also works informally in the evenings and at the weekend. Feri, a maintenance worker at KFT, fixes cars and electronic equipment in his own workshop at home after work. Vicky's husband works in three shifts as a warehouse worker, but his weekends are free. He has two additional jobs: he helps out in a garage, fixing cars and works for a removal company. Vicky told me that "Now, during the summer holiday he is at home a bit more because [our daughter] is not in the kindergarten. I don't tell him to take on more work, I think he should take it easier, but he wants to go."

Another group of men work irregular hours because they run their own businesses, for example, Kati's husband repairs vending machines, Anna's husband has his own pest control business, both of them travel a lot and their work hours are unpredictable. Mia's husband used to work in Germany, and although now he works in Hungary, he does not spend much more time with his family than before. He spends hours every day commuting to his changing workplaces on construction sites all over the country:

Yesterday he left at 4.30 in the morning and came home at 9.30 in the evening. He works until 8 pm in Budapest. He works at weekends, too. [...] Given my wages, my husband has to work a lot. He hasn't taken a single day off sick in his life.

The long work hours put a lot of pressure on the men, and also on the women: Timi spends the long summer break with her son, but without her husband, because of his work commitments, and she sounds less than enthusiastic: "During the holiday it will be just me and my son.[...] My husband drives a lorry, the summer is the best season for him, when he can earn a lot."

While the income that is generated from these very demanding jobs is important for the household, and women also benefit from it, the irregular work hours of their partners force women to keep their own work hours very regular and short, as they have to adapt their work hours to the child's needs, but not the fathers. These findings support Cha's argument (2010) that the overwork of husbands contributes to a gendered specialization between spouses, even if they previously had a dual-earner arrangement. Also, Deutsch and Saxon (1998) demonstrated that men tend to work longer hours to maintain their position as primary providers when their wives increase their earnings – when they return to paid work after a long parental leave is a perfect example of such a situation.

There are a few exceptions to the gender-based specialization after the parental leave: when Irma started to work again, her husband shared the care work, so she could work irregular hours in a hospital laboratory. Now the children are almost grown up, but he helps Irma to look after her elderly and sick mother. Ada joined her husband in working long hours, including a lot of well-paid overtime after the parental leave, and her mother looked after the twins.

The ongoing specialization of women in care work and men in paid work further increases or maintains the wage gap between partners that existed even before the women took extended maternity leaves. Male partners earn more even in the lowest paid jobs because

of the extra pay that goes with shift work. Some of the women are co-providers, earning similar wages to their partners, but it is a matter of opinion what similar is. Ilona says that her husband earns “an average pay like me,” but it turned out to be 24 thousand forints (100 Euros) higher than hers, because he works rotating shifts. Peter, a maintenance worker at KFT also earns about 30% more than his wife on the shop floor, although they work exactly the same work hours.¹⁰⁴ When Zoe explains why she stays at home with a sick child and not the father, she says: “my partner brings home around 90-100 thousand forints a month (350-400 Euros), I take home 60 thousand (this is her net earnings, 270 Euros).”¹⁰⁵ That is, even in co-provider arrangements, the men earn 25-30% more than the women, and the men in well paid jobs, such as the partners of Mia, Klari or Renata take home three or four times as much as the women.

Although women’s earnings are essential for the households, both men and women interpreted women’s contribution as a ‘supplement,’ which confirms the argument of Potuchek (1997, quoted in Cha and Thebaud 2009) that even if women earn the same as their husbands their income is likely to be considered secondary.

Szalai (2000) agrees with the arguments that the maternalist state policies contribute to women’s secondary earner status in the family, however, she emphasizes the positive consequences of this arrangement. She argues that secondary status makes it possible for women to “take on even part-time forms of gainful employment that would be unacceptable to men,” reducing women’s unemployment and creating better work-family balance (1999: 119). Indeed, some women worked for pay while they were on parental leave: Julia worked for a small food producer informally, while Vicky had a formal temporary job as an assembly worker in another factory, as soon as the leave ended, they took a formal job. A few working mothers continue to have informal jobs on top of their work at KFT: Doris and Renata work

¹⁰⁴ At KFT all blue-collar men in technical positions are officially classified as ‘maintenance workers.’

¹⁰⁵ During sick leave employees receive 70% of their average earnings. After August 2009 it was reduced to 60% and for those who did not have continuous social insurance for a minimum of 2 years, to 50%.

as hairdressers in their own homes, and Anna makes cakes and pastries for wedding receptions.¹⁰⁶ Thus, my findings do not support Szalai's argument: while in the early 1990s women may have preferred any paid work to unemployment, the blue-collar women in my study seek stability both in terms of employment status and in terms of work hours, even if it means low wages.

How do women feel about the gender division of labor in their families? Most of them simply stated the fact that their partners worked long hours, and accepted that childcare was their own responsibility. Zoe on the other hand was disappointed in her partner as a provider, and complained that he does not work as hard as many of his colleagues do: he refused to take on extra shifts, claiming that he is too tired to do overtime. Although Zoe did not spell it out, she implied that her partner is simply too lazy.

At the other end of the scale Renata was unhappy about Tim's absence from home and often 'nagged' him about it. During our first interview I asked them if they wanted more children, and Tim said he wouldn't mind it in a few years' time, but Renata said with strong emotions in her voice that "I wouldn't give birth to another child." When I asked for clarification, expecting a story of a horrible hospital birth, she answered: "The problem is not with giving birth, it's that we are left alone a lot." She resented that she was 'locked up' with the child at home and Tim was not even around.

In summary, although the highly gendered division of labor between partners is not unusual in itself, my main aim was to show how the maternalist state policies contribute to this pattern. I have shown that they steer couples' decisions about jobs and work hours toward women's domesticity and men's specialization in market work by setting their everyday routines after their children are born. Or in other words, the policies, including the public day care provision encourage men and women to follow the "logic of gendered choices" Risman

¹⁰⁶ Some workers – women and men - also work in their gardens and keep animals for home consumption, sometimes sharing the work with their partners or older children.

(1998). The policies limit women's 'choice' in employment and support blue-collar mothers' self-selection into 'family-friendly' employment with short and regular work hours, which is also a form of gender specialization. Although self-selection is rational, the rationality argument is circular, as the maternalist policies shape all other elements of the context, and thus, they are part of the explanation why women's wages are lower than their partners to start with.

7.6.3 Everyday routines: childcare and housework

When women talk about their everyday mothering practices, they tend to focus on routine tasks, such as such as picking children up from day care, feeding them, taking them to the doctor and looking after them when they are ill. They try to continue the practices of intensive mothering, even though they now work full time and have to 'balance' paid work, housework and childcare. One aspect of intensive mothering is related to the routine tasks: despite their low wages, the families spend a lot of money, and mothers spend a lot of time and energy getting access to special services for their children, such as speech therapy and private doctors. Petra and Heidi took their children to expensive private doctors, because they wanted to make sure that they are in good hands. Timi did not take her son to a private dentist, but she took special leaves from work to take her son to his appointments with the only child orthodontist in the city whose services were available under the public health service.

Although these women do not use the concept of 'quality time' (DeVault 2000), they try to give quality time to their children. When Timi was making plans for the summer holiday she was searching for day trip locations that could be interesting for her son, including the Zoo in Budapest. Most often though quality time meant time spent with the children at home, but not doing housework. Marika was aware of the 'problem' that her son

plays alone in the garden and she joins him only after she has finishing housework: "When dinner is on the cooker, I go out, too, and play with him."

Petra sometimes stopped doing the housework and started to play with the children: "I was doing the dishes yesterday afternoon, and Mano asked me to play with him. I did only half the dishes and went to play with him. We made paper aeroplanes." At other times, she decided to finish the housework, but she 'knew' that children were more important than the housework, and felt guilty about not choosing the children. She was saddened by the wish of her older son: "Mum, I would like to throw out all the ovens from the kitchen so you could play with me."

Even Heidi, whose children are almost grown up talks about how housework took too much time away from the more important tasks of mothering, and she has some regrets: "In retrospect, I would not not worry so much about the flat and cleaning, I would play more with the children and spend more time with them. Because they are so sweet [when they are small], and they grow up so quickly." That is, although these mothers are not well versed in the terminology of childcare experts, they try to follow the principles of intensive mothering while working full time.

Another important element of intensive mothering practices is helping children with their schoolwork. Zoe's case is a special one, which shows the extent to which attention to children's education consumes the time and energy of these women. Her son has a speech impediment, and the kindergarten teachers held him back for a year, arguing he would not be able to cope in school. Although Zoe did not challenge the decision, she decided to take action so that a year later the boy could go to school: she demanded extra sessions from the speech therapist of the kindergarten, took the child to experts and got all the necessary test results that proved that the child was ready for school. When the boy started school, she continued to work hard to help the boy and make sure he succeeds despite the difficult start.

In the first few months of the academic year, Zoe took him to the playground every afternoon, because, as she argued: "He needs some play time after school, he gets very tired." When they got home, she started the housework and supervised his homework at the same time:

By the time we get home it's already 6 o'clock, that's when I start cooking, practising with him and preparing his books and school stuff for the next day. He wants me to help with his homework, so I told him to come and sit down in the kitchen. But he likes his own desk better. So I keep walking between the two places. I'm so tired by the end of the day that I simply collapse. I have never slept so well in my whole life.

Some of the women talk about their emotions as well. Ada was almost in tears when she realized her children were less and less dependent on her:

My son is in a summer camp and he either forgets to call me, or calls me after 11 o'clock in the evening. ... I'm happy that he's having a good time and forgets what time it is, and I'm happy he's so independent, but I'm also a bit hurt that he doesn't need me any more.

Most of them showed their love by 'spoiling' their children. Before Doris took her elder daughter to work at KFT, the girl had another factory job where the shift started at 6 am. Doris used to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning, to wake up the girl and prepare breakfast for her: "I made some cocoa, packed her sandwiches, and we sat down and had a chat. [...] Well, I'll do it for her as long as I can. They are lucky, they have me, they don't have to look after themselves." Indeed, when the girls had a fight with their father and moved into a rented flat, Doris continued to cook especially for them and smuggle the food out of the house, while her husband pretended not to notice.

Could women work longer hours and use flexible child care services after the maternity leave rather than being employed in low-paid family-friendly jobs? As I discussed before, and public day care provision is not flexible enough, and the cost of private services are inhibitive for blue-collar women. When her son started kindergarten, Emma hired a babysitter to take him there in the morning and paid 8 000 forints (30 Euros) a month from her pay that is about 60 000 forints (250 Euros, this is a net figure).

When Heidi justified her work-family decisions, she referred to her own idyllic childhood with a stay-at-home mother preparing breakfast and lunch for her. Although her own ambitions as a mother were similar, that is, she wanted to be at home when her children got home from school, and make sure that they have a home-cooked meal every day, she did not expect to be a stay-at home mother: she took her children to kindergarten and enrolled them for the afternoon care service in the primary school. But she wanted to be at home when they arrived home after 4 o'clock in the afternoon: just as the three-year child care leave is natural for them, so is the fact that children stay in school after classes.

There is a group of mothers who can use hardly any of the day care services because their children have a long term health problem or disability. As a special maternalist policy, the child care leave with the flat-rate benefit can be extended until the children's 10th birthday. These women are faced with more care work and a very long period for the breadwinner-homemaker specialization. Ivett has three children, two of whom have health problems such as severe asthma and food intolerance. Both children needed regular medical check-ups, and the special dietary needs of the younger one meant that he could not eat in the kindergarten or in the school canteen. As Ivett was at home for almost a decade, her husband worked exceptionally long hours to provide for the family: "My husband worked all day, because we had a lot of expenses." Anna's son has a hearing disability, and she was out of paid work for eight years, taking the child from one specialist to the other and supplementing his special education with home schooling. Although the situation of these women is not typical, it is not rare, either: children with special needs are looked after at home, almost exclusively by their mothers, in the lack of specialized care services. Delegating their care to the mothers is part of the maternalist policy framework.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Three women on the shop floor had children with special needs.

It is not only childcare that is shared unequally between partners, but housework as well, and after the previous discussions it is not surprising that Hungarian couples are ‘traditional’ in sharing the housework compared to other EU countries (Bukodi 2006). According to statistics, women spend 24.73 hours a week doing housework, while for men it is 9.57 hours¹⁰⁸ (Blasko 2006), and 45 % of women aged 20-40 and employed full-time do the housework alone, without help from anyone else (Pongracz 2006). Pre-school children in the family increase the time mothers spend on housework by one third, whether or not the mother is on parental leave (Blasko 2006; Vaskovics et al. 2005). Although the long leaves are justified with children’s emotional needs, mothers on parental leave are considered responsible not only for childcare, but for all household tasks: this is clear from the sheer amount of public advice on time management and good housekeeping for women on child care leave.¹⁰⁹

Several blue-collar women at KFT state that their partners do hardly any housework, regardless of the age of the children: Heidi’s husband has never done any housework, but she says that her sons, who are now in their late teens, help her sometimes: “the boys do the dishes sometimes, or take the clean clothes off the line, but my husband does not do anything.” She is resigned to this arrangement, and tends to talk about it with humor: she told us with a smile that she was sure her younger son had invited his new girlfriend to their home, because the living room was surprisingly tidy when she got home from work the previous day: “He even vacuumed the living room. I hope she will come to our place more often.” However, she never criticized her husband for not sharing housework.

Some partners share the housework, but to a rather limited extent. Anna’s husband does not do any cooking, or cleaning, or tidying, or laundry, but he keeps the garden and the car in order, and he is responsible for the maintenance of their house, which, according to

¹⁰⁸ The figures refer to men and women aged 15-74.

¹⁰⁹ Zimmermann (2010) discusses the beginning of this trend under state socialism.

Anna, keeps him relatively busy. This division of labor, described by many women who live in houses rather than flats means that certain tasks, such as chopping wood or mowing the lawn are reserved for men, as a variation of the ‘upstairs – downstairs’ arrangement described by Hochschild (1989). Anna seems content with this arrangement and adds that her husband is a ‘good’ one, because he does not expect her to prepare a hot meal every day: he has lunch at the canteen of a nearby school, which she sees as a sign of co-operation, even ‘help.’ She has much higher expectations of her children, and during a summer holiday she often complained about their reluctance to do housework.

Petra does not criticize the ‘upstairs-downstairs’ division of labor explicitly, but it is easy to detect how overwhelmed she must have felt in the situation she described as follows:

When we get home, my husband and I have something to eat [they don’t have proper lunch at work], then the boys come up to me with their things and ask me to put something together, to fix something, to look at something, to help them with something. Like yesterday, Mano came up to me and said “Mum, let’s paint!” I asked him “What do you mean sweetie?” He came back with his finger painting set. I told him I couldn’t paint with him. I was cooking dinner. My husband was mowing the lawn.

Others, such as Emma and Zoe told me that their partners ‘help out’ when they ask for help. More specifically, Zoe has “trained” her husband over the years to do the washing up when he eats at home during the day, so when Zoe gets home from work, she is not confronted with dirty dishes. All other housework is Zoe’s responsibility, including doing the dishes after family meals. Emma’s partner also does only one thing around the house: “he does the shopping *for me* when he’s on afternoon or night shift.”

Emma and Zoe may think of shared housework as secondary, compared to their partners’ main contribution of taking the kids to the crèche and the kindergarten in the morning.¹¹⁰ That is, women talk about housework as their responsibility, and consider their partners’ contribution as help – even the lack of demands is appreciated. These stories support

¹¹⁰ The kindergarten run in the morning also involves Zoe’s mother-in-law and Emma’s babysitter as the partners also work shifts and cannot look after the children every morning.

the argument that men's involvement is more likely to focus on children and not on housework (Hochschild 1997). It is her husbands' lack of involvement with the children that makes Petra angry – at least this is the kind of criticism she feels she can share with me – “he would sit in front of the TV and when the kids talk to him, or ask him he doesn't even hear them, I have to tell him to pay attention, they have already asked you twice.”

While Petra is trying to make her husband more engaged with the children, and Zoe is ‘training’ her partner to do the dishes when he eats alone, both of them expect the maternalist policy framework to recognize and ease the double burden of working mothers. Zoe thinks that women should be able to retire earlier than men, and disagrees with the idea of the gender neutral pension age: “It is such a stupid idea that women and men can retire at the same age. Women do everything at home. These laws are made by men who have no idea how much work there is to do at home.” Petra would like to have shorter work hours for mothers, or a longer parental leave: “I think women these days are forced to go back to work. It would be nice to stay at home longer, or if mothers could work six hours a day until their children are eight years old.”¹¹¹

Scholars have argued (Blasko 2006; Crompton et al. 2007; Milkman 2009) that care work at home provides more satisfaction and a sense of achievement to working class women than their paid work, which may be monotonous, tiring or stressful. Most women in my study liked being at home, unlike the blue-collar women in some other studies (Ashwin and Bowers 1997; Hochschild 1997), or rather, they did not complain about their family lives, except for one issue: the problems with teenage children were often discussed between blue-collar women.

In summary, in the stories of these women there is no sign of the ‘sacralization’ of the home (Gal and Kligman 2000a). They try to engage in intensive mothering despite their full-

¹¹¹ Petra spent five years at home with her two children, and returned to paid work when the younger one was two years old.

time jobs and the lack of support from their partners, but do not use the language of child psychology to talk about their efforts, and although their lives are centered on their children, they are highly practical and use the available day care services. As they are primary caregivers in their families and shoulder the double burden with less, rather than more contribution from their partners, they have a very clear interest in limiting the sum of their care work and paid work without threatening the financial stability of their households. This interest is part of the explanation why they respond to the maternalist managerial practices and give the CEO their commitment. I will now discuss how male partners influence blue-collar women's work and family decisions more directly, not only through their work hours and not sharing care work.

7.7 Maternalist gender ideology

Scholars have highlighted that Hungarians hold rather conservative opinions about the ideal gender division of labor (Blasko 2006, 2010; Fodor and Balogh 2010; Pongracz 2006, Takacs 2008; Toth 1991, 1995). Discussing findings of the International Social Survey Programme, ISSP Toth (1995) argues that the views on childcare and mothers' employment were generally conservative in 1988, just before the post-state socialist transformations, with men holding 'anachronistic' views.

Blasko (2006) has found that in 1994 views about the ideal work and family balance for mothers were even more conservative and in an unusual pattern, women's opinions were more conservative than men's. In 2002, even with a shift in opinions that Blasko (2006) argues to be 'liberal,' 65 percent of women and 66 percent of men agreed or completely agreed with the statement in the ISSP survey that '*a preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works,*' but at the same time there was a large drop in the support of the breadwinner-homemaker specialization between partners compared to the previous survey,

assessed by another survey question (Blasko 2006). Overall, attitudes to women's paid work in 2002 are rather similar to those in 1988, which is why Fodor and Balogh (2010: 295) argue that these attitudes 'froze' at the collapse of socialism.

The attitudes indicated by these survey results are in sharp contrast to each other - mothers damage young children by their paid work, but they should contribute financially to the family's wellbeing. They are also in contrast to the actual work-family practices: 93 percent of children aged 3-6 are enrolled in a formal day care institution or in school, and 56 percent of the mothers whose youngest child is in this age group are employed (FLOWS WP1), while the majority thinks that this is damaging to children. The ISSP survey results represent the opinions of the entire Hungarian population, regardless of their parental status, age, or experience of raising children, which may be one reason for these contradictions, but it is more likely that there is a strong discrepancy between attitudes and practices of mothers, as it has been argued before (Blasko 2006; Fodor 2005, Fodor and Balogh 2010).

In this context the strategy of blue-collar women to work family-friendly hours appears less conservative than it did at first, and the maternalist rhetoric used by the management of KFT is definitely a great deal closer to women's lived experiences than the attitudes expressed by the survey results. The managerial rhetoric and women's work-family strategy acknowledge the reality of mothers' need for paid work.¹¹² How do the partners of blue-collar women think about mother's paid work? Scholars have pointed out that men's opinions and behavior shape the work-family strategies of their partners to a large extent (Singley and Hynes 2005; Walzer 1997).

Andras, a blue-collar man at KFT has very clear ideas about what good mothering means:

¹¹² The working mothers who returned to KFT when their youngest child was 2 belong to an absolute minority of mother in Hungary: according to Blasko (2010), only 2 percent of mothers with children under the age of three work regularly, although another 25 percent of these mothers would like to work, but they cannot, for the lack of jobs and/or childcare options.

Mothers should be at home if they are real mothers. Their children need them more at home than others. [...] I respect the women who go home from here and then get started with the work at home. [...] I think the mothers of school aged children should not work eight hours a day, only four or six.

Blue-collar women would be offended, as Andras implies that they are not ‘real’ mothers, yet, several women live with men who would agree with this argument. These men have pressured the women into becoming stay-at-home mothers, which is what Andras has probably meant by ‘real’ mothers. Kitti has two children and she dropped out of paid work until the younger one started school: “My husband didn’t let me go back to work until [the younger child] was six. We lived on his salary, we had to be very careful with the money.” Kitti did not say anything about her own feelings, but Ivett, in a similar position was more forthcoming about the conflict she had with her husband over her work: “I went back to work after the first child, but between the two younger ones I didn’t. I wanted to, but my husband didn’t let me. He told me that my place is at home. I went completely mad after a while.” Although these husbands refer to the needs of the children, by pressuring women to stay at home, they enforced their own ideas about the ideal gender division of labor, or to use the terminology of Williams (2000; 2010) the ideal of women’s domesticity.

Dave, who was among the few men sharing a lot of childcare and some housework, also had a strong influence on Etká’s decision to come to KFT. In Etká’s version of the story she left her previous job because she got tired: “two children, three shifts, I could only do it for one year.” When we talked about his working life Dave told me that “money is not everything” and “we live on the first floor of a ten-floor block of flats – it’s impossible to sleep during the day, so working three shifts is not even an option.” After hearing these comments, I sensed that Etká chose a family-friendly workplace to please Dave – even if his wish was never said explicitly. My suspicion was confirmed later, when Etká told me the following: “Towards the end [in my previous job] we were both really fed up, and felt that

this was not going to work. Dave said the three-shift work should end. But we had no choice, we had to pay the mortgage on the flat, we had to eat.”

What is more, a second similar story was revealed from their shared past, which shows that male partners can have a very strong constraining influence on women’s employment decisions: when Etká met Dave, she worked as waitress in a café in the city center. She wanted to go back to this job after the parental leave, but Dave asked her to look for another job: “[In the café] I had to work at the weekends and it was open until 9 o’clock in the evening. I wanted to go back, but he asked me not to. That’s when I went to Videoton and learned to work with cables” she remembers. The men in these stories push their partners more or less directly toward the household, and ‘moral’ factory jobs, as opposed to service jobs. The way factory work is considered to fit in with notions of appropriate femininity is similar to what scholars have described in other locations (Lee 1998; Ong 1987; Wright 2006).

The demands of some husbands were couched in the idiom of proper mothering, although it seems that not the children but the husbands themselves needed the mothers at home, so that they can remain in the position of the breadwinner and enjoy the domestic service of their wives. Others did not even refer to the children, and their attempts to control their female partners become fully transparent. Emma’s boyfriend did not let her work in a café or a pub when she looked for jobs after the parental leave – Emma thinks that he is simply jealous and does not want her to meet a lot of other men at work. Monica’s husband did not like it when she worked nights in her previous job – in another factory – and this was an important factor in Monica’s decision to look for another job.

Feri, one of the blue-collar men at KFT told me about two occasions when he was unhappy about his wife working too much. On the more recent occasion he interfered because she worked three shifts and did too much overtime, which meant that, according to Feri, she

was never at home and they hardly met each other. Although Feri also has two jobs at the moment and before he came to KFT he worked shifts himself, he solved the what he considered to be a problem by a threat: “I told her that this was not going to be all right if she was never at home.” His wife cut down on her work hours, and as far as Feri is concerned, everything is alright now. The other, older story reveals that the real issue is not whether they can spend enough time together, but that Feri wanted to demonstrate his power over his wife:

My wife worked in a grocery shop and she had to go in that weekend. She was supposed to work only for a few hours, but she only got home in the evening. I was doing some building work on the garage with my friends, and there was no one to cook for us. So I had to go in and cook, and it was terribly embarrassing, because I had to leave my friends alone, and they were doing me a favor in the first place. So when she got home, I told her to call her boss and quit.

She did as she was told, just like the women on the shop floor who decided to accommodate to their partners’ wishes. Vicky, whose husband also works very long hours, sums up the domestic bargain this way: “You can’t work long hours if you have a kid. Well, you can, but then the child never sees its mother and you’ll be divorced in five years’ time.” As she was aware of the dangers inherent in working long hours, she did not even consider returning to her old job after the parental leave, but decided to work in a factory.

The findings about blue-collar men’s attitudes and influence on their female partners’ working lives are very similar to those of Vicsek and Nagy (2006): interviewing the white-collar employees of a local authority about issues of gender equality they have found that men supported the idea of women’s domesticity, although they maintained that this decision should depend on what women want: “If a lady wants to work, then she should work, but it shouldn’t be forced on her. Unfortunately both of us have to work in my family because it is impossible to live on one salary.” Unlike this man, the partners of blue-collar women in my study did not want their wives to stay at home, but they were interested in limiting their work hours. By doing this, they prevented the women from contributing more to the household budget, even though their own jobs were far from secure: Emma’s boyfriend lost his job

during my field work and could only get a new one three months later as an agency worker. Dave's own business was on a downward slope when he pressured Etká to leave her previous job, and eventually he ended up working for KFT as well, in a low paid but relatively secure segment of the labor market. What might explain their behavior?

Couples negotiate the gender division of paid and unpaid work in a way that conforms to their gender ideologies. It has been argued (Pyke 1994, 1996) that working-class men tend to use direct forms of controlling behavior with their partners to assert their masculinity and show their dominance in an effort to compensate for their subordinated class status. Further, Cha and Thebaud (2009) have examined the link between men's breadwinner attitudes and the flexibility/rigidity of the labor market. They argued that in a flexible labor market, such as the Hungarian one, men tend to see themselves as breadwinners even when their partners earned almost as much as them.¹¹³ Even losing their provider status temporarily was compatible with their view of themselves as main breadwinners.

The region where KFT is located, men's jobs were hit particularly hard by unemployment in the early-mid 1990s due to the dominance of heavy industries and machinery under state socialism. Although many of the older women in my case study also lost their jobs in electronics, especially those who were on parental leave, they could find new jobs in small apparel firms, in the factories established by multinationals, or indeed, at KFT without experiencing a loss of prestige. Men, Dave and Feri among them, experienced a drop in the stability and prestige of their jobs, which may explain why they are so sensitive to perceived threats to their main provider status. As for younger men, Blasko (2006) finds that in the 2002 round of the ISSP the youngest cohort of men were more conservative than

¹¹³ Cha and Thebaud use an index to measure the flexibility/rigidity of the labor market and they find that all Eastern European countries have flexible labour markets. While this may not be true for all regions of Hungary, it is true for the region where KFT is located.

middle-aged ones, and argues that the youngest generation of men view themselves as breadwinners and their partners as homemakers.

My findings also support the arguments of Takacs et al. (2011) that among the seventeen European societies they examined Hungary was the only one where traditional attitudes to the gender division of labor did not decline between 2005 and 2010. Furthermore, while in most countries employees' preference for secure employment increased, employees in Hungary, particularly women, wanted a job with better work-family balance. As Takacs et al. point out, this "can be interpreted as a sign of [women] adjusting their attitudes to conform to the realities of their everyday lives" (2011:16) – for some families this reality is the increasing breadwinner – homemaker specialization, even if it has negative consequences for families' financial stability.

Women's submission to their partners can partly be explained by their economic dependence: the blue-collar women at KFT do not earn enough to support themselves, or themselves and their children. A selection bias also operates here: only those women could work at KFT who could rely on the economic support of their families.

7.8 Summary of arguments and theoretical contributions

In this chapter I have examined the institutional and ideological embeddedness of the maternalist hegemonic work regime by focusing on the state-level work-family policy, the gender division of labor in workers' households and the gender ideologies of workers and their partners.

First, I have argued that maternalist state policies are not only one element of the institutional context, but that they are in the centre of the whole picture: they have a strong and direct influence on the factory regime through bureaucratic state regulation, and at the same time they also shape every other element of the context. These policies contribute to the

vulnerable labor market position of mothers, and the management of KFT takes advantage of this situation by selectively hiring mothers of young children as part of the maternalist labor control strategy. In the context of a labor market that is discriminative to mothers, blue-collar women view the full implementation of maternalist policies at KFT as a managerial favor, and thus fulfilling the regulations also serves as a method of eliciting worker commitment. As the blue-collar women in my study are primary caregivers in their families, they try to limit the hours of paid work while also maintaining the financial stability of their households. It is this interest that takes them to KFT and that is why they respond to the maternalist managerial rhetoric and practices. The company-level maternalist practices that I discussed in the previous chapter reproduce working mothers' vulnerable position in the labor market.

These arguments contribute to the feminist theory of production politics by highlighting the role of explicitly gendered state policies in influencing the work regime and by analyzing the mechanisms through which this happens. My study is the first to focus on this aspect of state-level work-family policies, and although my case study is carried out in a post-state socialist country, the arguments may be relevant to other contexts with similar policies. I also contribute to the work-family literature by pointing to the link between state-level work-family policies and women's vulnerable labor market position.

Second, I have argued that the ideological and institutional context of mothers' employment is ambiguous, and the state plays a central role in maintaining this ambiguity: there are long parental leaves, but job guarantees are not enforced, there is public daycare provision, but it is scarce and inflexible, families need two paychecks, but mothers are held responsible for the psychological well-being of their children and their families. In this context the maternalist company practices at KFT help blue-collar mothers to cope with the double burden of paid work and unpaid care work. This argument contributes to feminist theories of gender in production by highlighting the disjuncture between work-family policies

based on the principle of women's difference on the one hand, and the changing labor market where women are increasingly included as similar to men.

How do women become primary caregivers? Through influencing the gender division of paid and unpaid work in blue-collar families, the long parental leaves and limited public day care services steer couples towards women's specialization in care work in the family and men's specialization in paid work. I have found that the blue-collar men in my study are main providers in their households, and that some of them maintain this position by actively limiting the paid employment of their women partners.

The state policies, company and family practices discussed in this chapter may be interpreted as a 'pocket' of state-socialism: however, they all take on new meanings in the post-socialist capitalist labor market context, and somewhat ironically, contribute to the company's success on the global capitalist marketplace.

CHAPTER 8: THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND OCCUPATIONAL CLASS IN SHAPING THE LABOR PROCESS

In this chapter I compare the managerial control strategies used with blue- and white collar workers at KFT: focusing on the different modes of eliciting commitment from these two groups my aim is to trace how gender and class¹¹⁴ intersect in shaping labor control. I argue that there are two different versions of the work regime I defined as maternalist hegemony, one for blue- and one for white-collar mothers, in the first part of the chapter I discuss the white-collar work regime. Then I contextualize the labor control used with white-collar mothers: I discuss their work-family strategies, including the division of care work in their households and their gender ideologies, and compare this context to the institutional and ideological context of maternalist labor control outlined in the previous chapter. The overall aim of the chapter is to draw attention to class differences in the way motherhood shapes the working lives of women in post-state socialist Hungary.

There is an important caveat to my discussion: as only four white-collar women had small children during the time I spent at the company, my comparison is limited.¹¹⁵ The most robust element of the comparison is labor control, while the findings about the family division of labor and male partners role in shaping women's decisions are only pointers towards issues that are worth further research. In addition, I do not have comprehensive information on white-collar men's salaries: although the women who spent a lot of time with me gave me this piece of information, white collar men took the secrecy clause of their employment contract more seriously.

¹¹⁴ The concept of class has an extensive literature. In the dissertation I follow Hochschild's lead and compare the practices and attitudes of blue- and white-collar women workers. The first group includes women working on the shop floor, the second one those working in the offices – the second group is further divided into administrative support workers and professionals/managers.

¹¹⁵ One of the four women returned from parental leave during my fieldwork, while a fifth woman was expecting a baby and went on leave – there is definitely motherhood-related turnover among the office staff.

8.1 White-collar workers: positions and salaries

KFT has a very flat organizational structure, very few people who work in the offices have supervisory responsibilities: only the CEO, the technical manager, the logistics and the production managers. The CEO and the technical manager – the couple who own half of the company's shares – communicate with office workers and production workers directly, not only through 'intermediate' managers. Because the company itself is small, there are no 'departments': often only one person is responsible for a certain area.

There is no gender segregation among office workers with respect to authority, there are both men and women in managerial positions,¹¹⁶ however, there is a clear gender segregation in the type of work they do. Men work in technical jobs, such as engineering, IT or production support, whereas women specialize in client services and 'administration', which includes work such as translations, writing proposals, reports, keeping in touch with authorities.¹¹⁷ This division of labor means that women workers often have to 'nag' the engineers to provide them details, documents, answers to client questions, and mediate between their male colleagues and clients, often in a foreign language. Client service is constructed as feminine as opposed to masculine engineering, as the women who do these jobs are seen as more 'tactful' and 'diplomatic' than the engineers, who are all men: "Bela is a technical-minded person, he gets very impatient when a client asks questions that he thinks are stupid, or obvious. So it's good that I talk to the clients, because I am nicer to them, and they always communicate with the same person, it's better for the clients" commented Lea, who works in client service.

¹¹⁶ The managers responsible for production, logistics and finance/administration are women, the technical and quality control managers are men.

¹¹⁷ There is one white-collar man who works in logistics, together with two women.

White-collar women earn more than blue-collar women: in basic administrative positions such as reception and logistics, the monthly salary was 130 thousand forints (500 Euros), those in more senior positions, such as Sara and Alma earned more: 160 thousand forints (630 Euros) a month, while blue-collar women with a few years' tenure earn around 300 Euros a month.¹¹⁸ Compared to the pay in office jobs in the city and the surrounding county, the salaries of white-collar women are slightly lower: the county-level average for white-collar women is 171 408 forints – Alma and Sara earns almost exactly this amount, but they have very long tenure, and Panni and Anita, who are not managers, earn less. Overtime, or time spent at training courses is not remunerated either – it is considered as part of the job. In addition to their salaries, office workers can choose from the selection of fringe benefits – the same ones that were available to blue-collar workers, but the value of the fringe benefits is proportionate to the base pay.¹¹⁹ There were also regular bonuses, which were not paid to blue-collar workers. Sara for example received 180 000 forints (700 Euros) as a mid-year bonus.

There were only a few visible perks given to the office workers: they had a separate fridge, a separate bathroom, and there was also a small 'exercise' room reserved for white-collar workers, which no one seemed to use. A massage therapist, whose services were reserved for the office workers was also contracted and paid by the company, but the service was not used: white-collar workers claimed that they did not have time for it. Office workers did not have a separate diner, or break rooms, the microwave oven and the coffee machine were also used by everyone, regardless of their position. It was only the CEO and the

¹¹⁸ These are gross figures, based on interview data in 2008-2010. As a result of the taxation system, the difference between the net earnings of entry-level white- and blue-collar women (94.000 vs 68.000 Forints) is much smaller than the difference between their gross earnings (130.000 vs 69.000).

¹¹⁹ Fringe benefits are also given informally – even I received gift vouchers worth 20 thousand Forints as a Christmas 'bonus' in 2008, after doing a lot of translation and interpreting. The vouchers were hidden in a traditional gift pack every white-collar worker was given for Christmas. Blue-collar workers also received a gift pack, but a simpler version.

technical manager – the couple who also owned half the shares of the company- who would ask the secretary for a coffee, everyone else had to rely on themselves.

Despite the higher wages, white-collar women were less satisfied with their jobs than blue-collar ones, and this was obvious just by spending time in the office: there was more tension and people were more stressed than on the shop floor. Some white-collar women also complained about their jobs, and a few of them even left the company because they were unhappy with their jobs. I will focus on the labor control strategies to examine why white-collar women are less satisfied with their jobs than women on the shop floor.

8.2 The work hours of white-collar workers

White-collar employees tend to work more irregular hours than blue-collar ones. Although the official work hours are the same for all employees, 7 am to 3 pm, ‘deviations’ from this start and finish time are quite common. Occasionally, the management actively extends work hours: meetings regularly finish after 3 pm, and occasionally start at 3 pm, which means that at least some of the white-collar workers have to stay in the office after the official work hours. The after-hours meetings are called when something ‘unexpected’ comes up, for example, when the CEO arrived home from a business trip to Germany, she called a meeting to share information with white-collar workers. In busy periods the ‘unexpected’ tends to happen quite regularly, and last-minute meetings are called every other week, in addition to the regular Monday meetings.

Overtime is often unexpected - Panni is the administrative person in the warehouse, and her work hours are often affected by couriers arriving late. Sometimes it is her supervisor, the logistics manager, who tells her to stay after 3 pm. At these times Panni feels she has no control over her work hours:

[The logistics manager] told me after the lunch break to stay an hour longer. I will miss the bus, so I should call my boyfriend to come and pick me up. But I want to wait a bit, because if the CEO says it's one hour extra it always becomes two in the end.

Such sudden demands for overtime are unknown among blue-collar workers: blue-collar workers are asked to do overtime, they are not told or ordered to stay longer, and there is often a negotiation about the exact time of the overtime, as I discussed in Chapter Five.

Work hours get particularly long when new products are introduced, or a client audit is coming up: the day before a new foreign client arrived, four white-collar workers, all of them are women, were still in the office at 8 p.m., to prepare for the following day. Client visits are fairly regular, and there is also a variety of other events ranging from the annual ISO audit to a visit of a summer school class, organized by the local business college, or the meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry. These events require preparation and take up time, forcing the office workers involved to extend their work hours.

Although not always unexpected, overtime was more common in the office than in the factory. When new products were introduced, office workers often had to work longer hours for extended periods of time, as Panni complained: "Next week I'll have to stay longer every day." At this particular occasion, Anita called her husband, and asked him to 'book' his parents for babysitting for every afternoon of the following week. On the shop-floor such extended overtime periods only took place before the Christmas and the summer breaks.

There are two more practices that account for the more irregular hours of office workers: training and team-building sessions and travelling to visit clients. Training sessions that involve all office workers usually take place on a Friday and a Saturday, which adds a whole day to their work week. Training of blue-collar workers on the other hand is always organized within work hours, on the shop floor. Travelling abroad on business also means spending very long hours away from home. It is usually the CEO and one of the three client service specialists who visit business partners in Western Europe. In 2007, the CEO spent

eighty days ‘on the market’, that is visiting clients or potential clients, trade fairs, etc, which means that a particular account manager who accompanies her also spends about twenty days away a year. In the autumn of 2009 the CEO and Sara went to Germany twice within a month’s time, and the trips upset Sara’s work and family schedules: documents piled up on her desk and her husband and children resented her being away so much.¹²⁰

One reason for the longer work hours of office workers is that sharing the workload is not always possible, or at least not simple: office workers are responsible for specialized areas of work and there is no one to share the tasks with. When Panni was away for two months with a stubborn illness, at first other people chipped in and did her tasks, but after the first week, a temporary replacement was hired from outside on a fixed-term contract. In contrast, when Zsuzsa was away for several weeks from the shop floor, because of a health problem, a worker from another team replaced her, and the division of labor was reorganized in both teams. There were enough people on the shop floor to ‘buffer’ a few missing workers. The division of the workload among office workers is very tight, there is not enough flexibility in the system to solve the problem of even one missing office worker.

The CEO admits that substitution of white-collar workers can be a problem, and argues that flexible work arrangements are designed exactly to solve this issue:

It is not by chance that Alma has a laptop. We are a small company, it is not like at a bigger company, that everyone has three substitutes. [Here] everyone has specialized tasks, really. ...it is not simple to substitute for someone. ... If someone misses a week because of a small child’s illness, that is too long. If the person is unproductive, some of the work can wait until she gets back, but not everything can wait, and the colleagues are in a difficult situation, because perhaps a client does not get a quote [and we lose a client].

She believes that the company can continue to grow to twice of its current size, and employ up to 110 blue-collar workers without hiring more office staff.

¹²⁰ The time spent traveling was remunerated for office workers, in accordance with the special regulations of the Labor Code.

It is their specialized skills that make office workers hard to substitute: for example the tasks of Lea cannot be shared with or delegated to other colleagues, because they do not have the necessary language skills. Similarly, there is only one person in the office responsible for IT matters and another one for recycling and for environmental protection: no one else can deal with a request or problem but them. When Sara spent a few hours in a local primary school giving a presentation about waste management and recycling, she had to stay in the office longer in the afternoon to catch up with her regular tasks. If someone has an urgent IT question or problem when Tim has taken a day off, they call him and expect him to help. Similarly, even though Tim was on holiday when a tender had to be submitted, he came into the office for a few hours to make sure that the on-line procedure went well.

Because the management does not want to hire more white-collar workers, some of the employees are responsible for a number of different and unrelated tasks: Lea is responsible for keeping in touch with English speaking clients and for translating and interpreting into English: she translates technical manuals, subcontracting agreements and requests for quotations. Sara is responsible for the German-speaking clients, environmental protection related tasks but she also 'triples' as the CEO's personal assistant. These people often have a difficulty finishing any given task without being interrupted because of the conflicting demands on their time. Lea and I were supposed to spend a few hours interpreting for English-speaking visitors, but when the most intensive part of the visit was over, Lea was asked to go to her computer and work on something urgent and important, while I continued the interpreting.

In contrast, sharing work among blue-collar women is not only possible but a routine practice when an unplanned, urgent task has to be done. In such an emergency, when the raw materials arrived in the last minute and thus production had to be rushed to meet the deadline, the workload was divided between several blue-collar women: at least ten people were sent

over from other teams to help the responsible team, and the order was completed in two hours' time. This way, not only did they meet the deadline, but no one had to do overtime either. This was possible because blue-collar workers are 'all rounders', their occupation is characterized by a high degree of "substitutability" (Dex and Scheibl 2002). In addition, blue-collar women were purposefully trained to do all basic work processes, and as they worked in teams, and were encouraged to swap tasks, they became familiar with each other's work processes. The more intensive exploitation of white-collar workers in terms of work hours is thus related to the company's special blue-collar labor process, which in turn is related to their niche position on the product market.

Specialization among blue-collar workers and overtime related to it is the exception, rather than the rule: Etká was one of two experts on a particular product, and when an order arrived with a short deadline, she was given the task. She had to do about an hour's overtime by herself to meet the deadline - a case so unusual, that she was clearly indignant.¹²¹

Organizing production is an area in which the CEO has a great deal of experience and training that she gained before she started her own company in 1991. Even though she follows the new trends and ideas in this field, she evaluates new arguments based on her own 'hands on' experience. This is not the case when it comes to organizing the white-collar production process: the CEO and her husband did not have experience in fields such as HR, marketing, sales or logistics before starting the company – she has learned everything from books and from her new experiences.

What is more, in the first decade of the company's history, when most of their products were 'made-to-print,' these areas remained marginal: only in the 2000s did it become a pressing issue to improve the client services of the previously engineer-led business. The CEO herself describes the changes this way:

¹²¹ It happened just before the end of the year, and Etká's time bank account was in the negative, 'she owed time to the company' that is why she had to work alone.

Eight years ago I did not have to deal with marketing. [...] I traveled 2-3 days a month, the rest of the time I could spend here. [...] There weren't any marketing tasks and I did not have to spend time in the market. We had the clients. [...] If we still had stable products I could spend more time in the factory. But the market has changed so much.

That is, the majority of the white-collar labor processes have been developed recently, and the founders of the company do not have first-hand experience in these areas of business, which means that management science literature is the main source of their ideas.

Apart from the relative novelty of these positions, there may be other reasons why there are relatively few 'support' positions at KFT. One clue is that the CEO refers to blue-collar workers as 'productive' employees while to those in the office as 'unproductive' ones, that is, according to the CEO blue collar workers 'produce' things and profit, while office workers do not, so it makes sense to keep their number at a minimum level.¹²² Thus, white collar workers – men and women – are under stronger pressure of managerial expectations about their work performance.

8.3 Managerial expectations toward white-collar workers

There are higher expectations towards white-collar workers not only in terms of work time, but also in terms of effort and quality of work: more employees were dismissed from the offices than from the factory because the management was dissatisfied with their work.¹²³ I will discuss some of these examples. Livia, who was hired for an engineering position, only spent the three-month trial period at KFT. During this time she often complained about the high expectations of the management. The CEO was also unhappy with her performance, and after she had left, the CEO claimed that "Livia let us down." It turned out that she went on

¹²² The 'productive' vs 'unproductive' terminology was widely used in state-socialist management terminology as well.

¹²³ Four white-collar women and two white-collar men were dismissed during my fieldwork. The dismissal of the production manager, after a series of complaints from shop floor workers was an additional, special case. Meanwhile the only one blue-collar man dismissed was a warehouse worker who consumed alcohol during work hours.

sick leave at a time when, according to the CEO, the “company needed her work.” Although management is concerned with blue-collar women taking sick leaves as well, and tries to limit it, no one on the shop floor has been dismissed for taking time off.

In addition, there are also high expectations related to the quality of the work of white-collar workers. Lea, a client service person was fired the day after a client complained about her work, three other people were dismissed from the offices during my field work because their work did not meet the managerial expectations, while only one blue-collar worker was dismissed during my fieldwork.¹²⁴ These findings suggest that the management of KFT follows a different labor control strategy to that of the North-American management in Dunn’s case study (2001, 2004), who constructed white-collar employees as more valuable working subjects than shop floor workers.

How does it all come together with the maternalist rhetoric I discussed in previous chapters? The maternalist managerial rhetoric included all women workers at KFT: when the CEO talked about the family-friendly practices she never distinguished between blue- and white-collar women, and the women in the offices also thought that their jobs were indeed family-friendly. In the next section I examine how maternalism is transformed in the context of longer work hours and higher workload, that is, I examine how femininity and workers’ position in the company’s occupation hierarchy are intertwined in shaping the work regime.

8.4 Flexible work hours

White-collar workers had much more flexibility and autonomy in organizing their work hours than shop floor workeres: this is true for men and women working in the office, but women, especially those with young children ‘flexibilized’ their hours more often. Sara

¹²⁴ There were two operatives who left the company or their contracts were not finalized at the end of the probationary period (3 months).

and Gabi started work later than the official start time every morning, between 8 and 8.30, because they took their children to school and kindergarten before work without rushing them or waking them up early in the morning. White-collar mothers also regularly left the office to run small errands: Sara left for two hours to make an appearance at the open day of her son's school, Gabi popped out at lunchtime to do grocery shopping for the weekend.

The 'special needs' of mothers were respected when planning the work of the office: the annual quality assurance (ISO) audit, an important event for the company, was always scheduled to take place in August, after the summer break but before the start of the school year, which is a very busy period for the mothers in the office. Sara told me:

I always take a week off at the end of August, so I can get my older son ready for school. Everyone who has school-aged children takes some time off [at that time]. That's why we scheduled the ISO audit to take place right after the holiday.¹²⁵

When Sara says 'everyone' with school aged children, she refers only to mothers in the office, but not fathers. Indeed, this arrangement became an informal practice because white-collar mothers took time off 'en masse' at the same time – even though there are only a few of them, their contribution is crucial for the success of the audit. White-collar men also used flexible leaves: Egon, an engineer sometimes left work early to go to the doctor, or to visit his elderly parents out of town. Tim also took a few days off when his partner had a minor operation and had to stay in hospital overnight, leaving Tim in charge of their daughter. Alma also arrived late after an appointment with her bank manager, which had nothing to do with her three children.

White-collar workers do not have to ask for permission when they 'flexibilize' their work hours: they usually call their immediate colleagues and/or the CEO and simply tell them when they are expected to arrive. There is also a notebook at reception where white-collar workers should enter the time and the reason for their leaving the office: if someone is not

¹²⁵ August 20th is a national holiday in Hungary.

around, colleagues often consult the book first. However, the notebook was often ignored, which made the practice of flexible work hours completely informal: no account was kept of the hours as with the blue-collar workers.

Allowing white-collar workers flexibility was a conscious decision of the CEO, who consciously used 'trust' to elicit the commitment of workers. According to Dex and Scheibl (2002) such a move is common in small organizations, where work-family policies are kept informal, but they are an integral part of the company culture. In the following quote the CEO talks about employees in general, but she refers to white-collar workers:

If someone has to leave, I tell them to leave [...], and do not take the whole day off if [an errand] only takes one or two hours. Write it in the notebook, but we never add it up, I do not want to spend time doing this administration.

The CEO really believes in this type of flexibility, it is not only a rhetorical statement, as it is proven by the examples I quoted above. But of course, in return for trusting her employees, she expects commitment. This expectation becomes clear when commitment is not given, when the CEO feels that employees do not reciprocate her trust:

... a colleague called in and said that (s)he is taking a day off, but she doesn't want to take a formal leave, it can be taken off his/her time account, because (s)he worked extra hours ... recently. And if the manager doesn't let him/her take the leave, (s)he will come to me. I told them that ... I don't agree with this, because there are two possibilities. The first is that we can keep a strict time account. The second is that if you need [time] I'll give it to you, and if I need it, you'll give it to me. But it doesn't work if you only want to take.

This story is very similar to the one when the CEO took offence at the blue-collar women not showing gratitude. Yet, I argue that there is an important difference: when it came to work hours, the CEO viewed blue-collar women as working mothers whose primary commitment is to their children, while white-collar workers were viewed and constructed as workers, whose time belongs to the company. She was convinced that she gave more to white-collar workers

– higher pay, trust and autonomy - and in return expected more from them.¹²⁶ The most important aspect of commitment expected from blue-collar workers was attachment to the company, while from white-collar workers she expected attachment, effort and loyalty.

At first sight the informal arrangement is constructed this way: the management gives some autonomy and flexible work hours in return for the commitment of white-collar workers. However, as Laubach points out, the exchange cannot function successfully if employees may say to a manager: "I won't do that - it is not my job" (Laubach 2005: 1546). In other words, as all methods of labor control, this informal exchange is also power laden, and is highly dependent on the relationship between individual managers and employees.

This informal labor control method worked well with white-collar workers who 'reciprocated' the CEO's trust. On one occasion, when Alma left the office at 11.30 in the morning to prepare for her son's birthday party, she told me that "I have enough overtime, I can afford to leave early." This sounds very casual, but Alma has a long history at the company, which includes several occasions of working in the office until the small hours. Alma sounds almost nostalgic about one of these intensive work periods:

At that time we basically lived in the office, for a month, writing the proposal, and [my husband] looked after [my son] alone. Sometimes we went home, but usually it was 2 or 2.30 in the morning.

The amount of work that Alma describes above is not expected of blue-collar workers – their work hours are short and regular, their overtime is negotiated or announced in advance.¹²⁷

Although the extremely long work hours in Alma's story were an exceptional case, the pressure of deadlines is a common experience of all white-collar workers. Deadlines regularly force Panni to do overtime when she thinks that she is lagging behind: "Today I came in at 6 am, so that I can catch up with my work." Panni is a logistics officer who works in the

¹²⁶ As I discussed in Chapter 2, McKay (2006) argues that the concept of commitment, often used in the human resource literature can be divided into three distinct concepts: attachment, effort and loyalty. I follow his conceptualization.

¹²⁷ When the famous reworking project took place in 2004, the management contracted twenty five temporary student workers to complete the job, while the work hours of blue-collar women were not extended.

warehouse: one of her tasks is to prepare the materials necessary for production the following day. This job is essential for the production process, so she has to plan and work ahead every time she wants to take a day off: "I'm taking the day off tomorrow, so I'm staying longer today to make sure everything is prepared. Actually, it is better to work after 3 pm, I can work faster because no one uses the materials I need." There is no one who could easily substitute Panni, so the organization of the labor process forces her to do overtime, which - it should be stressed again - is unpaid. Ivan, a logistics officer also worked at weekends occasionally: he claimed that it was the best time to complete an inventory of materials, as no one else was using the computer database.

These workers acted in the interest of the company and went beyond the call of duty, however, their behavior was considered normal by the CEO: she expected such effort and flexible work hours and considered it fair in return for flexible work arrangements that, at other times, were in the interest of employees. Although I argued in Chapter Five that the most committed blue-collar women also internalized the interest of the management and offered to do overtime, such behavior was not expected of them. Also, the overtime of blue-collar workers was either paid, or added to their time bank account, which is not the case here.

The main motivation for office employees to work out of office hours is that they are under output control: they are expected to carry out their tasks by the deadline, regardless of how long it takes. This situation is similar to that of a Czech manager, who pointed out that although in principle she can come and go freely during her work hours, she can only really leave when the work is done but "the work is never done" (Weiner 2005: 87). At KFT this expectation was extended not only to managers but to all white-collar workers, but not to manual workers. However, office workers can and do take time off when the pace of work is more relaxed, which makes it impossible to tell how much white-collar workers at KFT worked exactly.

8.5 The commitment of white-collar workers

In view of the above, it is not surprising that white-collar workers were less satisfied with their work-family arrangements than blue-collar ones: they often complained about their work hours, while blue-collar working mothers rarely did so. Almost every time I met Panni, a young, unmarried and childless woman, and asked her how she was, she would tell me that she felt overwhelmed by her tasks and the stress. Bandi, an engineer did not complain, but at the end of the year it turned out that he had most of his annual paid holidays left - he said he had too much work, so he did not go on holiday. Others seemed to crack under pressure: on a particularly busy and stressful day Eva started to cry in the office, saying that she simply “cannot continue to work twelve hours a day.” She turned her resentment against her colleagues, claiming that no one helped her with her tasks.¹²⁸

Those with care responsibilities also complained and even tried to take action to reduce their workload, as it is clear from Alma’s lament: “I have a headache and I cannot see the end of my tasks, or the beginning. I’m going to mention it at the next meeting because this is not going to be OK.” Despite having two young children, Sara was the only white-collar worker who followed what Hochschild (2005: 348) has termed the “temporal strategy of the busy bee” as she insisted she only enjoyed life when there was some work to do. However, I had the impression that by repeating this mantra she was trying to stay optimistic: “I like it when life’s busy. I don’t feel good if when I’m not working. [...] At first I don’t always know how I can do [all the work], and I complain, but it always works out in the end.”

White-collar women with small children managed the workload by using the flexible work arrangements more often than others, and by developing individual work practices. Sara

¹²⁸ Although they were expected to work independently, white-collar workers were also expected to ask for help if they faced problems they could not solve on their own – Sara and Alma later criticized Eva for struggling alone for a long time, and thus forcing everyone to work at the last minute.

for example regularly took some work home, especially for the weekend and claimed that this arrangement suited her well:

I usually think over what I have to do the following week, and if it looks that it won't fit in, then I start working on it at the weekend. You know, something quick that can be done at home.

In other words, she plans ahead, and works during her supposedly free time. Alma is less positive, but her solution is the same: she takes home some of the work:

I can't get all my work done between 7 am and 3 pm, even though I am sitting there, as you can see, and I'm not doing anything else. I am not a chatty type either, and don't take long breaks, but still, I cannot do it all. Yesterday, for example I took my notebook [computer] home, and worked two or three hours at home. That is why I have a notebook.

If we contrast Alma's comment about her notebook computer with that of the CEO's I quoted above, we see that in Alma's opinion the notebook is necessary for her job even if there is not an emergency, because she has too much work, while the CEO argues that working from home, and thus, a notebook computer, is necessary because Alma's children are sometimes ill, and Alma cannot be substituted. The CEO's explanation names employees' maternal responsibilities as the reason for introducing 'flexible solutions,' while Alma states that the reason is the workload itself.

Others gave up trying to manage the workload and left the company. Zoe told me about her friend who used to work as an operative, then she was promoted to the office and eventually became the head of production technology. In the end she left the company, because she felt that it demanded too much of her time and energy. Zoe sums up her story this way:

She had so much work that she did not have time for a private life, she couldn't find a partner. After she'd left, she met someone, got married, and now she is at home with the baby. She never came back to work here.¹²⁹

That is, this white-collar woman left the company because it demanded too much time. In contrast to blue-collar women who came to work at KFT after they had children exactly

¹²⁹ Alma also told me elements of the story.

because less of their time is demanded here than in most industrial workplaces, this white-collar women moved in the opposite direction and left the company. The maternalist work regime on the shop floor makes it easier for blue-collar women to combine paid work and motherhood, while the white-collar work regime has a more ambiguous effect. Sara, who described herself as a ‘workaholic,’ eventually also left the company, and took up a job with regular work hours that did not involve traveling abroad or work at weekends.¹³⁰

These findings support the argument of Kelly et al. (2010) that schedule control works differently for low- wage and professional employees: the former group have more regular schedules and they can negotiate, or even refuse overtime, while work seeps into their free time of professional employees, even though they have more control over the exact scheduling of their work hours. Thus even though white-collar mothers with young children have a high degree of flexibility and more autonomy in organizing their work hours, as well as higher pay, they are less satisfied with their work-family ‘balance’ than blue-collar working mothers.

Flexibility is more in the interest of management than the workers – most white-collar workers would have no problems with the regular work hours – but management needs long work hours from the employees from time to time in order to meet client expectations. It is through client expectations that global competition enters the office: KFT is part of the competitive sector, and has to keep existing clients and attract new ones by providing fast and efficient service to clients, which includes high quality products at ‘competitive’ prices.

Burawoy (1985) argues that in the era of globally mobile capital, employers demand concessions from workers with the threat of cutting jobs and moving production facilities to off shore locations, where higher profitability can be achieved. This leads to the emergence of the factory regime of hegemonic despotism, in which “quality of work-life programmes” may

¹³⁰ In late 2010 Sara left the company for a ‘relaxed’ workplace, where she also earns more.

be used as a method of increasing profitability (Burawoy 1985: 128). The management of KFT competes with other factories in the region for Western European clients and aims to convince them that KFT is their best choice in terms of quality and cost. As the existence of KFT depends on the orders it receives, employers and the workers alike have an interest in being attractive to these clients, that is, in working long hours when ‘necessary’ to attract a client. Thus, the situation is different from that outlined by Burawoy (1985) because the management of KFT is also local, and is also dependent on ‘global’ clients. While the management does have an additional and very important interest in extracting surplus, the more basic interest in the company’s survival in global competition is shared between management and all the workers. Furthermore, due to their position in the labor process, white-collar employees have first-hand information about the company’s performance, thus management does not even need to threaten them with job cuts – employees start worrying about the future at the same time as the management.

Although the white-collar work regime has more despotic elements than the maternalist hegemonic regime on the shop floor, I argue that it is still a hegemonic regime, based on the shared interest in the company’s survival, and complicated by the profit motive of management. Similar arguments about the shared interest of management and workers in companies that belong to the competitive segment of the market have been made (Ashwin and Bowers 1997; Salzinger 2003), but these studies focused on blue-collar workers only, whereas my study analyses two different work regimes.

After discussing the company practices related to the work hours of white-collar workers, can these practices be called maternalist? I argue that they are not, rather, the white-collar work regime constructs all employees in the office, including mothers as implicitly masculine ‘workers.’ The managerial expectation of white-collar employees’ availability and commitment to the job can be met most easily by ‘ideal workers’ (Acker 1990; Cha 2010;

Correll et al. 2007; Williams 1995; Williams 2000), and some white-collar workers, such as young, childless men and women meet this norm. However, mothers of young children are ‘workers with special needs’, thus they use the flexible work arrangements for their own purposes more often than others, which makes them more dependent on, and in turn, more committed to the company. The management may even demand more flexible work hours from mothers in exchange for their more frequent use of the work-family practices, as it is shown by the CEO and Alma’s conflicting interpretations about the notebook computer and the reasons for Alma working from home.

By systematically comparing the work regime on the shop floor and in the offices, my analysis brings back Burawoy’s (1985) argument that a given work context does not depend on the people who work in the particular positions, only the position itself. This argument has been justly criticized, and the influence of gender, ethnicity, and age of the workers has been demonstrated. It has also been demonstrated how different femininities are constituted by managerial practices and discourses on different, but related shop floors (Lee 1998; Salzinger 2003). My analysis has highlighted a particular case of how the individual, gendered subjectivities of producers and their position in production are intertwined in shaping social relations at work, constituting two different femininities through two different work regimes in the same workplace: blue-collar women as working mothers, and white-collar women as implicitly masculine subjects.

After discussing what happens in the offices, I broaden the focus of the discussion and turn to the institutional context of the white-collar work regime: how are the maternalist state policies, such as long parental leaves and special care leaves are translated into ‘flexible’ work practices? In the previous chapter I argued that maternalist state policies contribute to the vulnerable labor market position of blue-collar mothers, and the management takes

advantage of their vulnerability through selective hiring of mothers. How do the maternalist state policies shape the white-collar work regime?

8.6 Hiring and rehiring white-collar mothers

Blue-collar women are hired by management even if they have young children – a practice that builds on the vulnerable labor market position of these women and contributes to their commitment to KFT. In contrast, the white-collar women who have small children now joined the company before they had children, with the exception of Alma, who was hired as a shop floor worker and later promoted to the office. I argue that this hiring pattern is not a coincidence, but a consequence of the different managerial expectations towards blue- and white-collar workers: management is aware of the heavier workload and longer work hours expected of white-collar workers, and they do not recruit mothers of young children into these positions.¹³¹ By not hiring mothers, management can train new recruits and ‘use’ them at their full capacity until they have children.

When it comes to rehiring white-collar women after parental leaves, the maternalist practices I discussed in the previous chapter are adapted to the interests of the company. For example, Sara was called back from parental leave with her second child a few months before the end of the leave period she was entitled to and planned to take. This is not explicitly against the regulations, and according to Sara she was not coerced, however, a favor asked by a CEO is hard to refuse, as it is clear from her own words: ”When she called me, I came back. I didn’t want to risk either my family or my job.” That is, Sara thinks she would have taken a risk had she refused the managerial request to cut her leave short.

¹³¹ It is also possible that mothers with small children do not apply for administrative positions: during my fieldwork only young and childless women or men were recruited into the office. Eva had a baby and took parental leave in 2009, her position was filled by a newly recruited young man.

When Alma had her second child she did not even go on parental leave: she only took a few weeks off and continued to work full-time. While it was her own decision, it was very welcome by the management, as it would have been difficult to replace her. She recalls the story and her feelings this way:

I didn't even go on parental leave after I had my son, I worked from home. I was breastfeeding and making phone calls at the same time. I had a computer at home, and went to the office once a week. There was no internet yet, so I had to use the fax to work from home. But by the time my son got eight months old, I'd had enough. So I told everyone that this is too tiring, I don't want to do it any more. So we agreed that I go on parental leave.

This passage illustrates how an implicitly masculine working subject is constituted through the practices of 'teleworking' and 'home office.' Alma's care responsibilities had a minimal impact on her paid work.

The final evidence that in the case of white-collar women the maternalist work-family policies are adapted to benefit the company is that when women return from the parental leave to the office, the CEO directly asks them whether they are planning another child soon – a question that is not asked of blue-collar workers at this company, but generally asked in job interviews in Hungary, even though it is against labor and equal opportunities regulations. Both Sara and Anita were asked, and although they are convinced they would have been taken back anyway, the answer impacted on what kind of job they were assigned to: when they stated that they do not want another child soon, they became eligible for jobs with more responsibilities, as they were seen as stable, reliable employees. Both of them accept the motivation behind the question, as Anita put it: "The CEO needs to know how long I will be available for work, so she can plan ahead."

As in the case of rehiring blue-collar mothers, the CEO does not mention the legal obligation to rehire workers, but gives a cost-benefit analysis, comparing the merits of Sara and Karola, a young, childless woman who worked as a client representative:

An office worker can reach her former productivity two – three months after coming back from the leave. [...] If we hire a new person it takes at least six months to teach them everything they need. Just look at Karola, she still cannot work independently, still needs training, still not making a profit.

Perhaps the obligation to rehire workers is not mentioned because the CEO thinks it is self-evident, however, I argue that the cost-benefit analysis is an important factor in the practice of rehiring white-collar workers, which is ultimately a method of eliciting employee commitment.

Glass and Fodor (2007) have found that 70-100 % of white-collar women are not rehired after the parental leave by financial institutions in Hungary – managements relied on administrative moves to maneuver around the protective legislation. While KFT does not discriminate against white-collar mothers, the hiring and rehiring pattern is similar to the case of rehiring mothers to part-time positions. Companies are more willing to rehire their best employees into mid- or upper managerial positions, as these workers have already proven to be valuable to the company, and managements are more likely to offer them work-family arrangements to retain them (Glass and Fodor 2011; Oborni 2009, Webber and Williams 2008). I argue that the flexible work arrangements at KFT, although not designed for white-collar mothers at KFT also function in this way: they prioritize the interests of the company, but also build employee loyalty.

The other state-level maternalist policy is the special care leave that parents can take to look after their sick children. There is a clear difference between white- and blue-collar women when it comes to this maternalist practice. As I discussed in the previous chapter, most blue-collar women actually stay at home with their sick children for a few days, sometimes they miss a whole week, or even longer, especially if they have two small children. White-collar mothers on the other hand do not tend to take more than one or two days off, and sometimes they do not take off any time: they work from home and organize their work hours

‘flexibly.’ What is more, when they justify their decisions, they do not refer to the reduced pay during sick leave, but to the workload in the office.

When Alma’s daughter got sick, Alma stayed at home in the morning and took her to the doctor, then arranged for her mother to look after the kid and she came to work at 12 pm and stayed in until 6 pm. She said she would have preferred to stay at home, but felt under pressure because the warehouse inventory was in progress, and she had to oversee the work. She could not afford to stay at home, as there is no one else to do her job, instead, she ‘flexibilized’ her work hours as a compromise.

When both of Sara’s children got chicken pox, the pediatrician told her that the children cannot go to day care for two weeks. Sara did not take any sick leave, because she had a lot to do in the office, instead she worked flexibly: in the mornings she stayed at home with the children, but also checked her e-mail and picked up the phone, then came to the office in the afternoon, after her husband got home from work. She did not spend eight hours in the office, but she kept up with her tasks, and she appreciates the flexible arrangement: “It’s all the same whether I do [the work] here or at home at 8 o’clock. This [arrangement] is very helpful, and the CEO is very understanding.”

On the other hand, Anita, who was at a lower level of the office hierarchy than Sara and Alma, tried to keep her regular hours and rely on her family to ‘manage’ childcare.¹³² When she got a phone call from the crèche and found out that her son has a temperature, she did not leave the office, but called her grandmother, who went to pick up the sick child, while she continued to work and left at 3 pm with the others. Although Anita did not take off any time to look after the child and she tended not use flexible work arrangements for her own purposes, she was not immune to overtime – which shows that flexibility is most often initiated by the management.

¹³² The expression to ‘manage’ the children was used most often by blue- and white-collar mothers to describe the complex child care arrangements.

As there is no formal time-bank, it is hard to tell whether these women actually worked less when their children were sick – the main factor in their decision whether to stay at home or work flexibly was not the child, but the amount of work that awaited them in the office: when there was a lot of work, they came to work, when there was not, they took time off for mundane reasons such as organizing a birthday party. In addition, their decisions were rather autonomous – when they were faced with a situation at home, they made a decision, not the management.

In summary, the state-level work-family policies have a less direct influence on the work-family practices of white-collar mothers than on the maternalist labor control used with blue-collar mothers: mothers in the office took shorter and fewer paid leaves because of their children. Although statistically the labor market position of white-collar mothers is more vulnerable than men's or childless women's with the same level of education,¹³³ the mothers in the office are not recruited as vulnerable labor, and the implementation of care leave policies is different to the maternalist work regime. This supports my argument that white-collar mothers are assumed to be and through the different practices are constructed primarily as workers – as implicitly masculine working subjects.

The work-family practices – both the company-level ones and the way the state policies are implemented – are in contrast to the strong maternalist rhetoric at KFT. This contradiction contributes to white-collar mothers' ambivalent commitment to KFT, as it is clear from Alma's story, which I quote at length, because it illustrates very well the process of work-family decision making and competing priorities. Alma left because she felt that she worked too much and earned too little, and generally was not happy with the way things developed at the workplace. She talks about her expectations of a good job:

I was looking for a job for half a year, and I didn't find anything that interested me. [...] I didn't want anything else but a normal, relaxed workplace where I

¹³³ Alma and Juli, who were recruited as blue-collar workers in the 1990s had such experiences: they were both recruited by KFT after a spell of unemployment.

could work between 8 am and 4 pm, and I would have enough time to take my kids to the nursery school. But seriously, I have never had a job like that in my life. I would just work away happily, not too far from home, you know. But it just did not happen.

Tired of irregular and long work hours at KFT, Alma wanted a truly family-friendly work position – very similar to that of blue-collar working mothers at KFT. But she could not find one:

There was a job I really liked, but the boss told me he didn't want me to bury myself alive there. [...] There was another one, where [the boss] told me I can spend the whole day in the office, and on top of that, this company was in M [20 kilometers away from Alma's home]. We thought about it carefully, and decided that it wasn't worth it. So when the CEO contacted me, [...] I was calmer, and told her that I'm happy to come back.

So although Alma wants an easy, 'relaxed' job with family-friendly hours, both quotes contain a comment about the *quality* of the job: she implies that work should be interesting, as opposed to 'bury[ing] herself alive' at work, and that work at KFT was still her best option. Sara also talks about how she likes her job and says "my work is my hobby, this is what I want to be successful at."

Their claims support the argument of Crompton and Lyonette (2010) that professional and managerial women are more likely than manual workers to talk about paid work as important for them as individuals. What is exactly meant by an interesting or good job? I quote Alma again:

[Other companies] could not offer me a job with the complexity that I have in my job here. [Here] I can take part in everything, starting from giving a quote to even going out to the factory to have a look at how it is going. Because classic logistics is only ordering the materials. [...] But here [...] I have a say. [...] I have sort of grown up with the company professionally. I know all its parts, and I have ideas, I can add something to the whole, and it's good. [...] There are good little challenges, even today.

That is, the variety and complexity, which at times make her job tiring and stressful, also has a positive side to it. In addition, Alma views the company as something she has helped to build, her ideas and her previous work have become parts of it. For Sara the good relationship

with the CEO is a crucial factor: "The most important motivation is that the CEO trusts me, and appreciates my work. Sometimes a few words can be very important."

In summary, when explaining why they work at KFT, white-collar mothers emphasize the quality of the job and the flexibility of work hours, whereas blue-collar women emphasize that work hours are compatible with their care responsibilities, and that the job itself not too demanding physically. Most women in either group do not even mention their pay, financial considerations come up most often when they explain when and why they returned to KFT from the parental leave. This leads me to discuss the final aspects of the institutional and interactional context around the paid work of white-collar workers: the use of day care arrangements, the gender division of labor in their households and finally, their and their partners' gender ideologies.

8.7 Care work arrangements in the households of white-collar mothers

The organization of care work in the households of white-collar women is remarkably similar to that of blue-collar women's: children attend public day care, and mothers share care work with their partners and their family, rather than relying on paid help. Sara was the only one who did not take her son to a public crèche when she went back to work but informally paid a retired kindergarten teacher to look after the boy. Still, Sara used private day care instead of the public service, and did not combine the two, the amount of time spent in this private day care that was similar to the 'standard' hours.

Warren (2003) has found that in the UK 13% of women in dual-earner working-class families used non-family based childcare, while in the middle-class families it was over a third. In Hungary the provision of public day care has a strong effect— it minimizes the class difference in child care arrangements. Although the hours are short and inflexible, public day care is also cheap and easy to access for the white-collar women who have stable jobs in the

city where KFT is located. Although white-collar mothers earn higher salaries, they would still find the cost of private day care services too high. The fact that both groups of mothers prefer family-based child care, rather than baby sitters when public day care is not available, such as when children are ill, or in the evenings, supports arguments about the general mistrust towards non-family-based childcare that has been highlighted about Hungary in the literature (Blasko 2011; Fodor and Kispeter 2012).

The husbands of white-collar women also act in a similar way to their blue-collar counterparts and tend to share childcare but not much housework: Anita's husband takes the children to day care every morning, but he only helps with household tasks, as Anita puts it "when I ask him." Sara's husband also shares childcare: he picks up the children in the afternoon and looks after them until Sara gets home from work, and he sometimes also takes time off work when the children are ill, that is, he shares the short care leaves with Sara.

There are two special child care-related cases in this small group, which suggests that there is more variety in care work arrangements in white-collar households. When Anita came back from the parental leave – she was at home for four years with two children – she said they agreed on the timing with her husband and emphasized the financial considerations: "This is how we planned it. When we bought the car we already counted on my full salary." Later she referred to this decision as her husband's idea: "My husband takes the kids to day care in the morning. He doesn't complain, he wanted me to come back to work." That is, Anita's husband encouraged Anita to work for pay again and contribute more to the family budget, rather than insisting on his main provider status.

The other unusual case is that of Alma and her husband, Leo, a blue-collar worker, who also works at KFT. As Alma is the logistics manager, and Leo is a machine operator, her salary is higher than Leo's pay.¹³⁴ They have three children, and their division of care work is

¹³⁴ Alma was a logistics officer for a long time and she was promoted to be the manager only recently, but even the basic white-collar salary is higher than Leo's.

by far the most egalitarian among the households I have information about. According to Alma this can all be explained by her higher salary:

[With our first child] it was completely natural, we didn't even think about it, I stayed at home. I also earned less than Leo then. With [our second child] we shared the leave and he stayed at home for a year, because by that time I earned more. It was simply because of financial reasons. I don't know how it is in other families, but I think it is very important.

Indeed, it is very important, though only one blue-collar woman referred to the importance of financial reasons when deciding which parent went on parental leave. More of them mentioned the pay difference when they explained why they took short care leaves and not their husbands.

Research suggests that men in these 'counter normative' situations may compensate for earning less by distancing themselves from any work that can be interpreted as feminine, such as housework (Brines 1994; Ferree 1990, Greenstein 2000), and at the same time the wives also try to protect the masculinity of their husbands by doing all care work alone (Hochschild 1989, Gerson 1993). It has also been argued that men tend to insist on being perceived as the main providers in these situations (Tichenor 2005 cited in Cha and Thebaud 2009). This is clearly not the case with Leo and Alma, but the arguments about non-main provider men avoiding housework are certainly relevant to the other white-collar households where women are co- or main providers, as it is be clear from the following examples.

Bela, the technical manager, who is married to Maria, the CEO,¹³⁵ used to share childcare when their children were younger, but the division of housework has always been exactly the same as in most blue-collar families, and as in the 'upstairs-downstairs' arrangement described by Hochschild (1989): "Bela does not cook, doesn't do the dishes or the laundry, and he hates even the sound of the vaccuum cleaner, so he makes sure he is not at home when I vacuum" says Maria. [...] But the boys [Bela and their two sons] do everything

¹³⁵ In this section where I discuss the gender division of labor and the motherhood ideologies and practices of white-collar mothers, I will refer to the CEO using her name: Maria. It may cause some confusion, but in the situations discussed here, she is one of the white-collar mothers.

in the garden and they help me with the monthly shopping, with the heavy things.” She is aware of the disadvantages that she faces because of her double burden and talks about them, but she does not mention that she is trying to or ever has tried to change the situation.

The partners of white-collar women were more diplomatic in refusing ‘feminine’ housework than the blue-collar men quoted in the previous chapter: they tried to help, but were so inefficient, that the women decided it was easier to do these tasks themselves, or entered into never ending fights over how to the tasks properly. Bela volunteered to take over the responsibilities with paying bills and keeping track of official papers, to help the clearly overworked Maria. The experiment was a complete failure: when the electricity company threatened to disconnect them, Maria took things into her own hands again, claiming that she did not need another source of tension in her life: “I told him that I don’t count on his help with this any more, I’d rather spend an hour doing it every month than spending five hours as I did now, when I put everything in order.”

Tibi, Sara’s husband regularly called her in the afternoon and asked questions about which soap to put in the washing machine, or how to collect homework from the class teacher in the school building, or what food to give to the children from the packed fridge.¹³⁶ When Sara went abroad, only for a few days, Sara’s father helped him with the cooking, because he was not confident enough in the kitchen – although it is likely that the grandfather also wanted to express his love to the kids by feeding them and everything would have been OK without his help. While I do not believe that Bela and Tibi acted consciously to shed their household responsibilities, they seemed content with the unequal share.

These findings support the arguments that working- and middle-class men use different techniques for shedding domestic responsibilities (Gerson 1985, 1993; Hochschild 1989; Pyke 1996), however, the – admittedly few - white-collar men in my study did not refer

¹³⁶ I only heard half of these conversations, sitting near Sara in the office.

to the demands of their own careers in avoiding care work, which is unusual in the light of the existing literature. Leo is the only exception again: he doesn't mind cooking for the children, he likes going shopping and even dusts and vacuums, although it is Alma's responsibility to co-ordinate the housework.

Weiner (2007) has found that Czech women managers tend to rely on paid domestic workers, but among the white-collar women at KFT only Maria uses the services of a cleaner, who was first hired when Maria was ill and physically unable to take care of the more demanding tasks. While she pays a cleaner and saves some time and effort, she makes her own jams and preserves, because "[the kids] really like them." All other white-collar women do their own housework – and they agree that these are the tasks they drop most easily, as Alma said it with a smile: "I would like everything to be sparkling clean, too, but it isn't."

There is one important difference in how care work is organized and shared in blue- and white-collar families: the husbands of white-collar women do not take on extra work, certainly not to the same extent as their blue-collar counterparts. It was only Leo, the blue-collar worker with vocational education who sometimes took on small paid jobs and disappeared into his workshop, but as he put it, "If I have time, I'd rather work in the garden. If Alma says we need more money, I ask around for work." As these men do not work very long hours, some of them finds time to study or engage in a hobby – two activities that were hardly ever mentioned in blue-collar families.¹³⁷

In the first years after they got married, both Bela and Maria studied toward a college degree, but once they graduated and moved into their new house, Bela started to build model cars: "This is my only hobby, I don't drink or gamble. If I'm tired and I need to take my mind of something, like [a difficult project at work], I go and work on a car. It's not even expensive." Although Bela sounds a bit defensive about his hobby when talking to me, he

¹³⁷ Blue-collar men also played an occasional football match or went fishing at the weekend, but not regularly.

also brought me some English language manuals for translation – his hobby was a very important thing for him. Tibi has been playing basketball two evenings a week, only for fun, but recently he has been asked to help the coach of the junior team, which takes up two of his afternoons – on these afternoons Sara tries to work from home while supervising the children, or one of the grandparents look after the children.

Thus, unlike in the blue-collar families where both partners work long hours on their own, gender specialized tasks, in white-collar families a gendered leisure gap has emerged: the higher incomes enable some of the husbands, but not the women themselves to have free time. Alma would like to return to her sewing machine, but she does not have the time, while Maria claims that cooking, baking, and entertaining friends is the best form of relaxation.¹³⁸

How do the women feel about the leisure gap? Sara feels angry and hurt – not because Tibi does not share more of the care work but because he resents her commitment to work. She is oblivious to her own self-exploitation when she says: “Tibi has basketball. I have my job, he’s got basketball. I don’t know why he can’t understand it.” I suggested that perhaps her husband expected her to be a more traditional wife and mother, and she replied: “But I cook, and I do all the housework. He’s just jealous of my work.” Although Sara maintains that her job and her husband’s hobby are really the same things, she gets incredibly angry and when her husband goes to a summer camp with the basketball team, and he’s packing his best clothes into the suitcase, looking forward to a week’s free time and evenings out, while she is looking forward to a week of work and childcare. After twenty-one years of marriage, Maria sounds resigned to the unequal division of labor in her relationship with Bela, and gives a very clear analysis of what happens:

¹³⁸ The lack of leisure time is not necessarily linked to the presence of children: Panni lives with her boyfriend, but they are not married and they have no children, she still feels overburdened and claims she has no time to continue studying, although a degree would be useful: “I’ve got work, shopping, cooking, cleaning, and to study for years on top of this... I don’t know, I don’t have the courage to do it.” Lea, who also lives with her boyfriend on the other hand is the only one among the white-collar women to have time for extra paid work – she teaches English in the evenings informally.

When he's tired, he sits down and relaxes. If I see that [our youngest son] needs this or that, then I stand up and take care of it. Bela is much more easy-going about it, and he doesn't force me to do anything either, he always tells me to sit down and relax when I'm tired.

Apart from resignation, there is also a hint of a 'free choice' argument in this passage: Maria is telling me and herself that it is her decision to stand up and look after her son, and Bela's decision not to stand up is just as valid as hers.

While Bela may encourage her to sit down and relax when she is tired, I have seen many times how they have lunch at work together, and found that Bela perhaps demands, but certainly willingly accepts his wife's caring and attention in various ways: Maria warms up the food and puts it in front of his husband, answers his questions about the food he ordered for himself a few days earlier, sympathizes with him if it is not tasty enough. In short, even though the food has been bought, these shared family meals in the company diner still involve a lot of work for Maria, who takes responsibility for the food, and no work at all for Bela.¹³⁹

While Bela avoids any 'feminine' tasks around the house, and Anita's husband does them reluctantly, the only husband who openly resents the work hours of his wife is Sara's partner, in a busy period when Sara often stayed in the office late in the evening, he lost his patience with Sara's devotion to work: "my husband hasn't been talking to me for days, because I go home [from work] too late." A year later, their relationship hit a low point and he moved out of the flat, leaving Sara and the children behind. By this time, one of the children needed counseling, and he was also full of resentment toward his mother:

We went to Germany on a business trip with the CEO. I said goodbye to the kids on Monday morning and Wednesday morning it was me again, who woke them up. But my older son did not even say hello or hugged me, he just asked me: 'What took you so long?'

Sara was in tears when she recounted the morning and it was obvious, that her first reaction, to solve the issue by making muffins to the children was not working any more. Although her

¹³⁹ Maria has never lost her patience or her sense of humour: once, when Bela complained that the soup is not as nice as Maria's home made version, she said with a smile: "I'm happy to go home and make some soup for you, if you do my work this afternoon."

husband moved back a few weeks later, in another year's time Sara left KFT, and took up a stable, if somewhat boring administrative position, which she sums up in this way: "I have to drive to work, it's a bit further out of the city, but it's a good place, there is no rush." Professionally, it was a step back for her: she now works as an administrative assistant, the only specialized skill that she uses is her German knowledge, but not her hard-earned college degree.¹⁴⁰ She still works here, and feels content with her decision. The CEO on the other hand was deeply disappointed about her leave, especially because she felt it was in vain that she had tolerated Sara's weak performance during her marital crisis, and also because Sara gave the company only two weeks' notice before she left.

In summary, I have found more variety in the gender division of labor between white-collar mothers and their partners than among blue-collar working mothers. What might explain this variation? To start with the men, Shows and Gerstel (2009) drew attention to the importance of the contrasting employment conditions of blue- and white-collar fathers when they explained why white-collar men were less actively involved in caring for their children than the blue-collar men within the same workplace. My findings however point to the importance of gender ideologies: the partners of white-collar women are less strongly influenced by the gendered institutional context, such as women's low pay and their own long work hours, which makes the role of their gender ideologies more visible. My findings give partial support to the arguments of Moen and Yu (2000), who point to the 'neotraditional' division of labor in white-collar households, which leads to higher level of stress and work overload for women. However, the white-collar mothers in my study did not work fewer hours for pay than their partners and did not earn less either – supporting the explanations for the gender division of care work among partners that highlight that masculinity is constructed

¹⁴⁰ She studied for her degree while also working full time or being on parental leave with her second child.

through not doing care work (Bittman 2003; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Hochschild 1989; West and Zimmermann 1987; Yee Kan and Gershuny 2010).

After discussing the gendered context, I turn to the motherhood practices and ideologies of white-collar women themselves.

8.8 Motherhood practices and ideologies of white-collar women

All white-collar women felt the tension between the rhetoric on the one hand and the workload and the expectations on the other hand: the notion of 'reconciliation' is a rather accurate description for the daily negotiation between the children's needs and the office. Their flexible work hours make 'reconciliation' easier: for example, they can let their children sleep longer in the morning and drive them to school, because it does not matter if they arrive at work later. Because they work in the office and have more control over their time than blue-collar women, they can phone their children when they are at home sick with a grandmother, or in the afternoon after they are picked up from school. Gabi talks to her son every afternoon, even though she will be at home at by 3.30 pm: the boy tells her about his day at school, his test scores and the amount of homework he got, and she can also talk to the grandmother, making sure that everything is all right, including the final "button up your coat" comment to the kid.

Although white-collar women did not claim that mothers should actually be with their young children 24 hours a day, as some blue collar mothers do, they share the conviction that time should be organized in a way that meets the children's – perceived – needs. That is, women in the office also believe that their paid work should not be done at the expense of their children. In addition, just as Doris and Heidi from the shop floor who expressed their love for their children by cooking for them and preparing their breakfast to give their day a good start, Alma would also get up at 4.30 in the morning to make lunch for the children and

Leo on a Saturday when she had to go to a training session and could not eat or indeed be with them.

White-collar women do not rely on the notion of ‘quality time,’ a period that is focused only on the child and thus it is thought to be more meaningful than simply being together (Hays 1996: 135), instead they engage in all the tasks of ‘hands on mothering.’¹⁴¹ Thus, their practices are very similar to those of blue-collar mothers. As they reserve most of their time at home for the children, they work after the children went to bed - just as Mia from the shop floor studies at night, Sara also works on translations late in the evening: ”I worked two hours on Saturday. I worked at night, because I didn’t not want to take time away from the kids.”

Although white-collar women had more flexible but typically longer work hours, they also have to combine housework and childcare. They do this exactly like blue-collar mothers: Maria and Sara cook and help their children with their homework at the same time, just as Zoe, a blue-collar worker does, as it is clear from Maria’s description: “This is how we can be together. We have a large kitchen, I ask him to sit at the dining table, and while I stir the sauce, I help him with his maths homework.” As Sara has two young children and the housework to cope with, she promised herself at the beginning of the school year to be stricter and expect more independence from her older son, but a few weeks later she softened her stance and said: “I’m going to study with him this year, definitely... or until he needs it.”

There is one important difference: looking at the last two quotes, we see that white-collar women not only engage in intensive mothering as blue-collar women also do, but some of them also signal it to the listener, as Sara did when she explained why she worked on a translation late at night: “I didn’t not want to take time away from my kids.” In other words, although the practices are identical, some white-collar mothers emphasize the spiritual part of

¹⁴¹ Quality time is also important , but only as an addition to simply being together, not as an alternative to it: Alma goes cycling with her children, and claims that this is something that Leo is unwilling to do with them, so she has to, as children need this experience.

mothering, and even use some of the expert terminology of child psychology such as “be together,” “until he needs it.” Even Sara’s older son picked up the basics of this language, and once, when I was chatting with Sara in the kitchen during the summer holiday he stormed in, leaving the DVD and her younger brother behind and demanded time from his mother by saying “but today you haven’t paid any attention to me all morning.”

There is one important difference between the practices of blue- and white-collar mothers: the way the children’s education, in particular their schooling is organized. While blue-collar mothers emphasized the importance of early education by the mother at home, they tended to downplay the role of formal education in shaping children’s lives. White-collar women emphasized both: their own role as educators and the roles of the kindergarten and schools. Not only were their expectations towards educational institutions higher, but the higher incomes of their families and their flexible work hours allowed these women to spend more time, effort and occasionally money on their children’s education.

Whereas blue-collar women tended to choose schools based on pragmatic considerations, white –collar women emphasized their children’s needs and put a lot of energy into choosing primary schools. Gabi, the administrative director came to work late every morning, because she chose a school that was far from their flat and opened late:

When we started school, I did my research and picked the one with the best teacher. [My son] hated kindergarten, and I wanted to make sure that he likes the teacher, and this teacher is very good for him. He did not shed a tear [when he started school]. I let him sleep until the last minute then I wake him up and take him to school [by car]. My son is a small, weak kid.

Although Alma took her children to the village school, which was the most convenient, she did consider taking them to the city, and emphasized that she decided in favor of the village school based on educational considerations, such as the atmosphere and the small group sizes: “It is a friendly, small school, there are only six children in [my son’s] class. I don’t think I could find anything like this in the city.”

When Sara explained the choice of an informal child minder instead of taking her older son to the crèche, she referred to the educational merits of the arrangement: “They played with dolls, learned nursery rhymes, they played all day. It was much better than the crèche.” Sara is also involved in their children’s school life: she is on the committee of parents and has made sure that the corporate social responsibility program of KFT includes the kindergarten and the school where her children go. Although her children do not attend afternoon classes, she takes her older son to the child psychologist when she suspects that the marital crisis is affecting him and seeks advice.

Alma or Leo started to take the children to afternoon classes of swimming and ballet as soon as they started school, even though it takes a lot of organization and quite uncomfortable, because they do not have a car and Leo takes the bus with the children and their numerous bags. By the time both their younger children were in school Alma had learnt to drive and she claimed that they bought a car exactly because it is becoming increasingly uncomfortable for them to take the children to places. Although many of the blue-collar women also do these activities, they did not strategize and plan about so much, as these afternoon programs were rarely mentioned in shop floor talk or interviews. In a group of blue-collar mothers the costs of kindergarten and the costs of school books were more common topics.

In summary, the mothering practices of white-collar women are very similar to those of blue-collar women, which supports the argument of Hays (1996) that women engage in these activities regardless of their socioeconomic situation. However, I argue that white-collar women rely more on a discourse of child psychology when talking about their practices. At the same time, white-collar mothers often talked about childcare as another task in their already busy days, Alma was the only one who emphasized that her kids were fun.

As for their motherhood ideologies, white-collar women are more likely than blue-collar women to talk about their feelings of guilt toward their children on account of not giving enough care and attention to their children. All white-collar women mentioned guilt about their decision not to take the full parental leave with some of their children. Sara states matter of factly in a conversation in the diner that she feels guilty about returning to work when her older son was two: this comment was not made in a relatively intimate interview situation, only as a casual comment. She adds that she did not make the same ‘mistake’ again, and with her younger son she stayed at home longer. Maria mentions her maternal guilt in a long and intensive interview and on the whole she sounds more optimistic than Sara:

I do have a bad conscience about it, whether I have given him as much as to the others. On the other hand, I involved him more in my life, and perhaps it will be an advantage for him in his life - for example, he doesn't find it derogatory to work in the kitchen, he can make better pancakes than the girls.

Alma, whose partner stayed on parental leave for a year and shares the care work with her on a daily basis, tend to be very easy going about their child care arrangements in everyday, casual exchanges. Once they told me that all of them stayed in until 8 o'clock in the evening, and when I asked them where they put the kids, thinking especially about Sara, whose partner was already unhappy about her long work hours, Alma replied nonchalantly: “We've got husbands, you know.” Still, in an interview she told me that she did not like leaving the kids with their father, and she was uneasy about sharing the parental leave with him:

I found the whole situation very irritating. These are my kids, period. (She's laughing). No, really, when they were small, I hated the whole thing, even though I knew he was very good at caring for them. [Now] it drives me mad when I can't reach him on the phone and he's at home with the kids. I really feel the urge to come home immediately, just to see what's going on with them.

Alma does not rely on the language of child psychology and children's needs, her arguments about maternal responsibility are more similar to the straightforward statements of blue-collar

mothers, however, her work responsibilities are different (I added the emphasis to the following quote):

When they are ill, and I'm not with them, I have a really bad conscience. I think it's a mother's job to look after a sick child. But I can only do it when I don't have too much work. I know I'm a stupid mother (laughing).

Although Alma can live with this tension, because she likes her job and her partner shares the care work, Sara's decision to leave KFT and save her marriage can only be understood if we take into account her gender ideology. A few months after she left, Sara explained her decision referring to the importance of the family and finally gaining her husband's respect: "I think my husband started to respect me because I had the courage to leave KFT. I think he did not believe that I would do it, but when I left, I convinced him that family comes first."

Despite their strong maternalist values, these women do not want to give up paid work and become stay-at-home mothers, as some of the women managers interviewed by Vicsek and Nagy (2006), who claimed that they only worked out of financial necessity. However, the white-collar mothers in my study are torn between their own need of meaningful work, managerial demands on their time and their husbands' and children's demands on their care work. It is worth pointing out that none of them mentioned their own needs – for more free time, for more sleep, or for more help from their partners – and thus, 'interesting' work is the only need that they have actually voiced.

8.9 Summary of arguments and theoretical contributions

In this chapter I have argued that at KFT white-collar employees work under a regime which constructs all employees in the office as implicitly masculine 'workers' through the practices of flexible but long work hours, higher pay and high managerial expectations of commitment. It is a hegemonic regime, based on informal practices, but it is not a maternalist

regime and control has more despotic elements than on the shop floor, which gives partial support to Burawoy's thesis (1985) on the shift towards hegemonic despotism in the era of globally mobile capitalism. This argument also contributes to the theory of production politics by showing how gender and workers' position in the company hierarchy come together in shaping the system of labor control.

Managerial control over white-collar workers is less successful at eliciting the commitment of white-collar mothers as there is an obvious discrepancy between the general maternalist rhetoric and the implicitly masculine practices. The managerial practices of labor control represent a shift towards including white-collar women in the company based on the principle of similarity. This argument contributes to feminist theories on gender in production.

The maternalist state policies have a less direct influence on the white-collar work regime, as mothers in the office take shorter and fewer child care leaves, which is welcome and encouraged by the management. This is another shift towards including white-collar women in the workforce based on the principle of similarity, although a much smaller shift than what has been reported by other research focusing on professional workers (Glass and Fodor 2011; Vicsek and Nagy 2006).

My findings about maternalist state policies and class show that universally available state provisions, such as paid parental leave and public day care services - have a levelling effect on the work-family strategies of blue- and white-collar mothers.' Unlike in liberal welfare states discussed in most of the scholarly literature, in Hungary better paid, higher status mothers use almost identical services and adopt very similar work-family strategies as their low-paid blue-collar counterparts. Comparing the labor market position of different socioeconomic groups of women Mandel (2009) argued that the policies exclude professional women from the best jobs in the market sector, because the policies construct these women as unreliable workers. I argue that the company-level work-family practices at KFT enable

white-collar mothers to reach high positions: employer discrimination that is pointed out by Mandel does not limit their career options, but their gender ideologies and the resistance of their partners do.¹⁴² This argument contributes to the work-family literature, and draws attention to how different ideological contexts shape the outcomes of similar state-level work-family policies.

Focusing on how the white-collar labor regime is embedded in the context of workers' households, I have found a greater variation in the gender division of labor between white-collar mothers and their partners than in the families of blue-collar mothers. White-collar couples are less strongly influenced by the gendered logic of the institutional context, such as women's low pay and men's long work hours in blue-collar families. This relative 'freedom' from institutional constraints draws attention to the gender ideologies of both men and women, and the effect on men's preferences on women's work-family decisions.

¹⁴² Although white-collar mothers at KFT do not earn as much as managers at multinational firms, they earn more than they would in feminized sectors of state employment such as education or health care. However, KFT is a small company with a flat organizational structure, so there are not very high positions.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I have examined the gendered work regimes of a Hungarian company, a local producer that is integrated into global production, in order to analyze the post-state socialist developments from a feminist and sociological, rather than a mainstream economic perspective. In this chapter I outline my arguments and their theoretical relevance in full, and make a few overarching arguments.

I started the analysis by focusing on the shop floor and argued that the management meets the contradictory demands of the skill-dependent labor process and the pressure to keep production costs low through a system of maternalist labor control. Labor control is based on recruiting women, especially mothers of young children, who are vulnerable workers on the current Hungarian labor market, for low wages. Their commitment to the company is elicited through a range of formal and informal work-family practices, and a strong managerial rhetoric of maternalism. The labor control strategy incorporates women workers' motherhood ideology, and at the same time it constitutes blue-collar women as 'working mothers,' whose identity as mothers is emphasized over their identity as workers. I have termed the work regime that emerges on the shop floor as maternalist hegemony.

As for the institutional sources of the work regime of maternalist hegemony, I argue that state-level work-family policies, which have kept their maternalist character since the 1960s, are of crucial importance. These policies influence the work regime directly and through other elements of the institutional, ideological and interactional context in a way that constrains blue-collar women's employment decisions.

I have made three arguments about the mechanisms through which the maternalist state policies influence the work regime through the context. First, I argued that the policies contribute to the vulnerable labor market position of mothers through employer

discrimination, and the management only takes advantage of this situation by hiring women workers for low wages. Second, through influencing the gender division of work in blue-collar families, maternalist policies channel couples toward the gender specialization of blue-collar men as main providers, and women as primary care givers and secondary earners. It is their caregiver and secondary earner status that steers women toward KFT, as the company's work-family practices articulate well with their caregiving responsibilities. Third, I argued that the ideology of maternalism, embedded in the state-level work-family policies, naturalizes the gender specialization between partners. While blue-collar women are satisfied with their jobs, and are committed to KFT, the company-level work-family practices reproduce their vulnerable labor market position and their economic dependence on their partners.

With these arguments the dissertation contributes to the feminist theory of production politics: I have identified the locally specific work regime of maternalist hegemony, and demonstrated how it is shaped by explicitly gendered state policies. I have also demonstrated how hegemonic control based on workers' motherhood practices and ideology can increase the productivity of production in the era of globally mobile capital, and thus, in this particular location serve as an alternative to more coercive methods predicted by Burawoy (1985).

Another special characteristic of managerial control is that several work-family practices are informal, and access to them is constructed as an exchange of favors between management and blue-collar workers. This arrangement fosters an informal and personal, but also hierarchial management-worker relationship, which is rooted in the tradition of state socialist paternalism in the workplace. Taking the various aspects of labor-management relationship at KFT into account, I argue that it can be characterised as a special, 'maternalistic' reconfiguration of state socialist paternalism – this is the second contribution my dissertation makes to the theory of production politics.

The final research question addressed how women workers' position in the company hierarchy influences managerial control. I argued that white-collar employees also work under hegemonic control, which constitutes them as implicitly masculine 'workers,' that is, occupational class and gender intersect labor control, constituting blue- and white-collar women as differently gendered subjects. This argument partially reinstates Burawoy's much criticized statement (1985) that work contexts do not depend on the individual people who labor, only on the positions they fill in the labor process.

As for the institutional context of the white-collar work regime, I argued that universally available state provisions, such as paid parental leaves and public day care services have an equalizing effect on the work-family strategies of blue- and white-collar mothers. Gender ideologies remain an important influence on women's work-family decisions: partners' resistance to women's work commitment contributes to women's self-selection into more family-friendly positions even in the lack of employer discrimination. However, while some blue-collar men directly limited the paid employment opportunities of their partners, white-collar men used less direct methods.

My study contributes to feminist theories of gender in production by arguing that two work regimes emerge in the same workplace: while blue-collar women's inclusion in the workforce is based on the principle of difference, the white-collar work regime represents a shift towards women's inclusion based on the principle of similarity.

Finally, my dissertation has addressed the work-family literature: conceptualizing company-level work-family arrangements as labor control practices, and demonstrating how managerial control is embedded in them, I aimed to politicize this field of scholarship.

How does my research contribute to our knowledge about the post-state socialist condition? The most general research question of the dissertation concerns the reorganization of work in post-state socialist Hungary: I examined the current state of this process through a

gendered lens and within a framework that includes the local-global linkages. My dissertation can be summarized as an analysis of how women's reproductive difference and the post-state socialist difference of Hungary come together and shape capitalist production locally and globally.¹⁴³ I will discuss this statement in more detail below, starting with reflections on the ways in which the state is central to my arguments.

In state socialist Hungary women's reproductive difference was tolerated and reinforced: through the implementation of maternalist state-level work-family policies mothers were included in the labor force, albeit in a segregated, marginalized way. While under state socialism the productivity of a company was considered secondary, compared to the social and political goals of full employment and women's emancipation, this is no longer the case. Productivity at Hungarian workplaces is currently primarily achieved by long work hours and demanding workers' commitment to paid work above all other commitments. In this context workers' reproductive difference is a disadvantage, or to put it differently, workers' freedom from reproductive responsibilities has become an important form of 'capital' in the world of paid work (Fodor 2003).

Yet, Hungarian policy makers have kept state socialist work-family policies nominally unchanged throughout the political, social and economic transformations, despite the fundamental reorganization of the world of paid work. The contradiction between the maternalist policies based on the principle of women's difference, understood both as biological and as socially constructed, and a labor market where women are increasingly included as similar to men is at the core of the ambiguity around mothers' employment.

In order to make sense of the state's role in creating and maintaining this ambiguity, I turn to Haney's conceptualization of the state as a layered entity. Within this framework different state apparatuses are defined as "loosely coupled subsystems" (2000: 658), and each

¹⁴³ This idea is inspired by Bair's review article (2010).

of them is characterized by different gender regimes and agendas. Haney suggests that we should view these differences as the outcome of the loose connections between the different subsystems. Thus, to return to the maternalist state policies, the welfare apparatus focuses on women as mothers, in need of special policies because of their care responsibilities, while the subsystem responsible for labor market policies relate to the same women as workers, and send them the message that they do not need special protection.

The second aspect of difference that my dissertation addresses is that of geopolitical difference. KFT is at the periphery of the European Union, and the supply of cheap labor and the physical proximity to Western European centers of production are important factors influencing its inclusion in transnational production. While most discussions on the localization of global production focus on multinational companies establishing their production facilities in peripheric countries, this dissertation has focused on an alternative strategy. In the alternative version outlined in my study, it is not global producers who seek cheap locations, but local producers try to attract global clients by offering low prices and full compliance with their expectations, making the arrangement even more ‘flexible’ and low risk for global companies.

The capital and the management of KFT are not mobile, thus their search for cheap and trained labor is limited to the local labor market. The management of KFT has singled out women with reproductive responsibilities as the source of cheap labor, and has established a regime of labor control that elicits their commitment, creating a workforce that is not only cheap but also stable and trained. This regime depends on the locally specific institutional and ideological context. Thus, I have shown that the local work regime of maternalist hegemony is shaped by the forces of transnational production and at the same time contributes to it: the decisions of blue-collar women also influence globalization.

To conclude the analysis, I highlight an important political aspect of the theoretical arguments I have outlined above. In this dissertation I have conceptualized company-level work-family arrangements as methods of labor control and demonstrated how in this particular case they contribute to women's vulnerability both in the labor market and in their households. Although there are a number of scholarly works that have warned us about the potential negative effects of work-family policies on gender equality, much of the literature remains apolitical. I would like to draw attention to the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of former state socialist countries about women's inclusion in paid work, and call for more critical scholarly engagement with work-family policies.

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