

Overlap and Separation: Rethinking Faith-Work Boundaries in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

How do corporate professionals negotiate boundaries between work and religion in the workplace? While there has been considerable scholarship on the relationship between work-nonwork boundaries in the workplace and on religion and spirituality in the workplace, these two domains of inquiry remain largely disconnected. This paper attempts to bridge these conversations by developing new theory on the boundaries between religion and work in the workplace. It supports this framework by drawing on empirical data from 12 months of participant observation and 122 interviews in two nonwestern cities, Bangalore and Dubai. In the paper, I theorize three modes of overlap (fusion, instrumental overlap, and invasive overlap) and two modes of separation (implicit segmentation and explicit segmentation) of the experiential realms of religion and work in global corporate workplaces, and discuss the conditions that precipitate these configurations.

Keywords: Religion; Faith and work; Boundaries; India; Middle East; Christianity

How do corporate professionals negotiate boundaries between work and religion in the workplace? Recent decades have seen a burgeoning scholarly interest in the role of religion and spirituality in the workplace (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2009; Miller, 2007; Neal, 2013; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). This literature, however, remains mostly disconnected from the vast scholarship on the relationship between work and non-work identities, which has also grown considerably in recent years (Ashforth et al., 2000; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Blair-Loy, 2003; Kreiner et al., 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Rothbard et al., 2005; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013; Trefalt, 2013). In addition to their being disconnected from each other, the empirical bases for both these bodies of literature, as well as the implications they offer, are largely focused on the west. This paper aims to make two contributions to these areas of inquiry. First, it develops new theory on the overlap and separation of work and religion in the workplace, thus bridging the gap between literatures on boundary-work and religion/spirituality in the workplace. Second, it makes an empirical contribution from two nonwestern contexts by drawing on data from 12 months of participant observation and 122 interviews with corporate professionals in India and the Arabian Gulf.

In what follows, I first outline the motivations for the study of religion in the workplace that have been articulated in most of the literature on the topic. Subsequently, I examine the literature on the boundary-work between work and nonwork identities in the workplace. Upon identifying shortcomings of extant work, I propose a new theoretical approach to studying their relationship based on the overlap and separation of the experiential realms of work and religion. I provide support for this framework by drawing on empirical data, and conclude with a discussion on the implications of this approach for the study of work and religion, and identity boundaries more broadly.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Religion and Spirituality in the Workplace

The past few decades have given rise to an immense amount of literature on religion and spirituality in the workplace (e.g., Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2010; Neal, 2013). Numerous organizations and associations have also emerged around the interest of integrating “faith and work,” and as David Miller (2007) argues, they constitute a significant and growing social movement. Much of this research on spirituality in the workplace has emerged from the United States, and is driven by several contributing factors, including a new interest in ethics and “values” in the wake of corporate scandals (Fombrun & Foss, 2004); the need to accommodate increasing diversity of ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds of employees (Konrad et al., 2006); increased cultural interest in eastern philosophies, religions, and spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation (Brown & Leledaki, 2010; Goldberg, 2010); increased anxieties, uncertainties, and demoralization among employees produced by trends such as re-engineering (Leigh, 1997); and the rendering of the workplace as one’s “primary community” simply due to new time demands (Conger, 1994:13; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Much of the discussion in scholarly literature is on defining and measuring workplace spirituality, as well as concerns of practical utility and ethical and legal implications (see Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003: 6-12 for a review). Some have come to hail (but not “religion”) the “ultimate competitive advantage” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999:xvii), while many identify problems with the commodification and manipulative potential of spirituality in the workplace (e.g., Case & Gosling, 2010; Fenwick & Lange 1998; Gotsis & Kortesi, 2008).

Outside the west, however, there seems to be no comparable level of public concern in the topic of religion and spirituality in the workplace. I would argue this is due to three main

reasons. First is the relative absence of concern about church-state separation that underlies the discussion in the west (e.g., Gregory, 1989). The centrality of this concept of church-state separation is taken for granted in western thought but rather alien to contexts in which there is either no historical drama about the need for such separation, or no centralized “church”-like entity that could be separated from the state (Casanova, 2008). In the empirical contexts examined in this paper—India and the Arabian Gulf—various forms of religious expression are widely prevalent and taken for granted, both in public spaces in society as well as in workplaces.

Second, workplaces here are pluralistic spaces, with members exhibiting a diversity of ethnicities and religious traditions. The nature of secularity here is not the French *laïcité*, with the expectation that religion be excluded from this space altogether, but tolerance for a certain level of expression, taking into account the diversity of religious traditions represented by employees and the surrounding socio-political context. Thus there are limits to which exclusion of religion can be enforced in a top-down manner. For instance, as the UAE is officially an Islamic country, it would be unthinkable for a Dubai office of an MNC to prevent Muslim employees from fulfilling their prayer obligations during the day. Even in secular India, a move of this sort would generate social backlash, if not legal action, at least in major metropolitan centers. The tendency in corporate offices in these contexts is therefore to attempt to show a good degree of tolerance and impartiality to religion, primarily by allowing employees some freedom of expression in their work spaces (e.g., putting up religious images on their desk or cubicle walls) and holding workplace celebrations of festivals of different religions, such as Diwali, Eid, and Christmas. In these social contexts, such practices cannot be done away with even if they do not contribute to productivity.

Despite these factors, corporate workplaces in these contexts also reflect “secularizing” tendencies, with normative pressures to separate “work” from “home,” “family,” and “faith,” and to privatize anything “personal” that does not fit within the norms and support the ends of these public spaces. In the western literature, a common assumption seems to be that such pressures emanate from the intentions of organizational leaders, and some of the literature seems aimed at making leaders more hospitable to employee expressions of spirituality (e.g., Mitroff & Denton, 1999). But such segmentation is not simply a function of organizational policy. It is largely driven by implicit norms, such as those espoused in the global discourse of “professionalism,” and expectations that work be treated as a separate realm untainted by “personal” activities and concerns (Vaidyanathan, 2012). As Jackall argues, the normative expectations of the workplace “caus[e] people to bracket, while at work, the moralities that they might hold outside the workplace or that they might adhere to privately and to follow instead the prevailing morality of the particular organizational situation” (1988:6). The widely felt pressure towards privatization suggests a conflict between competing “institutional logics” or “orders of worth”—market logics (driven by the principle of competitiveness) and industrial logics (driven by the principle of efficiency) are dominant criteria of worth deemed appropriate in these spaces, rather than, say, logics of civic representation or domesticity or creative inspiration (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Thornton et al., 2012). Corporate workplaces in these contexts, thus, are secular spaces, even if they are not inherently “secularist” and do not in principle exclude expressions of religion. As I will show later in this paper, many employees experience pressures to exclude religion and spirituality from the workplace, and even those who desire and attempt to integrate it struggle in many ways.

Boundary work: Integrating and segmenting religion and work

Research examining how people negotiate boundaries between work and non-work identities in the workplaces can be categorized into two main approaches. The first involves typologies of persons, and the second involves typologies of strategies.

Studies on faith-work boundaries in the workplace tend to rely on person-types. For instance, Lindsay and Smith (2010), based on a national study of evangelicals, propose a fourfold typology depending on whether the workplace was hostile or receptive to religion, and whether the individual's expression is more overt or subdued: (1) the "pragmatic" type who attempts to witness to their faith in incremental ways; (2) the "circumspect" type focusing on "values" or inconspicuous practices such as silent prayer; (3) the "heroic" type, compelled by convictions to express their faith in unreceptive environments, and (4) the "brazen" type that is more in-your-face and triumphalist. Miller (2007) suggests another typology that is not restricted to evangelicals or Christians: (1) The "ethics"-focused type, concerned with matters of personal virtue, business ethics, and social and economic justice; (2) The "evangelism" type, focused on overtly expressing faith in the workplace; (3) The "experience"-focused type, who adopts a more theological understanding of work, such as vocation or search for meaning; (4) The "enrichment" type, keen on practices such as prayer, meditation, and self-transformation, without subscribing to any particular religion.

There are two prevailing assumptions in the above approach that I call into question. First is the assumption of tight coupling between expression and preference: these typologies do not help us understand why a person's preferences for integration or segmentation might vary from their enacted practices. The second assumption is one of consistency—that people can be sorted into "types" of persons who consistently behave across workplace contexts and situations. This

approach makes it difficult to study the differential effects of contexts. People I encountered in my research were “pragmatic” in some contexts but “heroic” in others, or focused equally on “ethics” and “evangelism” for the above categorizations to be helpful.

Some of these deficiencies are overcome in a second approach that is used in studies of work-nonwork boundaries more broadly, which relies on typologies of strategies rather than of persons. Nippert-Eng’s analysis of people’s practices of boundary-making between “home” and “work,” for instance, adopts a typology of “integration” and “segmentation,” as two end-points of a continuum representing how people “classify and juxtapose items, acts, thoughts, and aspects of self to accommodate social and personal expectations” (Nippert-Eng, 1996:17). Integration reflects the tendency to obliterate distinctions between the two categorical realms and to use the same logics, mental frameworks, emotional approaches, motivations, and even objects in both realms, with “a single, all-purpose mentality, one way of being, one amorphous self,” regardless of context or role (Nippert-Eng 1996:5). Segmentation is reflected in attempts to treat the two categories as distinct and non-overlapping, with distinct logics, frameworks, and modes of selfhood. While nobody is a perfect “integrator” or “segmenter,” people “sculpt” boundaries between work and nonwork realms in ways that reflect a strategy of integration or segmentation.

A more recent attempt to provide a comprehensive synthesis of scholarship on work-nonwork boundaries in the workplace is that of Ramarajan and Reid (2013). They organize the negotiation of nonwork identities in the workplace along a number of strategies—assent, compliance, resistance, and inversion—which derive from the alignment or misalignment of people’s *preferences* to include or exclude those identities and the *pressures* they experience in the workplace for such inclusion or exclusion. The resultant strategies generate five possible

“identity states”—encompassed, integrated, revealed, compartmentalized, and concealed—and the model allows for the same identity state to result from a variety of strategies.

These attempts are considerably more adequate to the task than typologizing persons, and my own approach will build considerably on these models. Yet they also suffer from some shortcomings. First, the use of metaphors such as “sculpting” and “strategies” suggest an overly deliberative cognitive account of how boundary work happens. Recent research on culture and cognition (DiMaggio, 1997; Cerulo, 2010; Lizardo & Strand, 2010; Vaisey, 2009) suggests that people’s identity management may be less “strategic” than suggested and more tacit and inadvertent, triggered by factors independent even of people’s “preferences.”

Second, I am unpersuaded by Ramarajan and Reid’s claim that the various “identity states” reflecting integration or segmentation can be satisfactorily reduced to a function of “pressures” and “preferences.” Their approach assumes about pressures that these are always identifiable, and that they emanate solely from the work identity. I contend that people may not be able to clearly recognize workplace pressures, and that the pressures that drive some of people’s actions may emanate from the *nonwork* identity—for instance, when people feel compelled not by workplace norms but by their *religious beliefs* to act in certain ways in the workplace, even though they would ordinarily not *prefer* to do so,¹ as I will illustrate later in this paper. This model recognizes that people follow workplace norms and expectations even though

¹ What counts as a preference? Economists like Rothbard (1977) argue that preferences are simply “demonstrated” in action, regardless of what people *claim* to prefer. But this conception does not allow us to distinguish between actions performed that one considers desirable versus undesirable, which what we ordinarily mean by a preference. But it is not enough to identify preferences with desires. As philosophers like Charles Taylor (1985: 15-44) argue, we need to distinguish between first- and second-order desires (i.e., desires about desires). Reducing both categories (e.g., a choice of one among many pastries versus a qualitative distinction of worth between which of two actions is more noble/vile) to a single concept of “preferences” is misleading and unhelpful. In examining the ways in which religion (or moral commitments more broadly) can shape action, it is important to recognize that adherence to these can chafe against people’s first-order preferences (e.g., when people say “I’d rather not do this but I really ought to”). This point is relevant to my discussion of “invasive overlap” further below.

these may not align with their personal preferences. But it fails to recognize that people similarly also follow *nonwork* norms and expectations in the workplace when even these may not align with their preferences. The fact that people at times act in ways that reflect neither their preferences nor workplace pressures poses a challenge to Ramarajan and Reid's model. Their approach is well suited for cases in which personal preferences and workplace pressures can be clearly identified, and strategic responses adopted. However, we must be additionally able to account for pressures emanating from nonwork identities, consider tacit and inadvertent aspects of identity management, and perhaps rethink the notion of "preferences" altogether, in order to better understand how people negotiate nonwork identities in the workplace.

Realm Overlap and Separation

The approach I propose here builds on Nippert-Eng's (1996) phenomenological construct of "experiential realms," which denotes domains of life that people come to experience as distinct (though not unrelated). Rather than typologizing strategies, I propose to focus on conditions of relationship between these distinct realms. In this way I echo Ramarajan and Reid's (2013) attempt to demarcate "identity-states," but instead of making assumptions of homogeneity about identity, I simply demarcate states of relationship between the two realms of work and religion (or any other nonwork realm such as family, for that matter). Thus I do not identify ideal types² but empirical types, which are not purely theoretical or ideal constructs, but the result of inductive analysis of actual conditions (Turner & Factor, 1994:181n3).

² According to Max Weber, "[a]n ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a utopia" (Weber 1949:90).

I begin by identifying two broad states of relationship between two realms: realm overlap and realm separation. Realm overlap reflects a state in which elements of distinct experiential realms are “shared” between the realms. There can be overlap between people, objects, as well as modes of acting, thinking, and self-presentation in the two realms (Nippert-Eng 1996:8). Realm overlap can occur in three distinct modes: *fusion* (when the realms are experienced as indistinguishable), *instrumental overlap* (when elements of an external realm support those of the host realm), and *invasive overlap* (when elements of an external realm thrive in the host realm, but either do not benefit it or take priority over it). In response to perceived realm overlap, people could also attempt to separate the realms, depending on various personal and situational factors, including one’s expectations and beliefs about the relationship between the realms, the norms and expectations in one’s context, and the availability of resources to adjust.

Realm separation, by contrast, refers to either of the following conditions: *implicit segmentation*, in which people are unable to see any relationship between the realms, or *explicit segmentation*, which entails deliberately drawing boundaries in order to exclude religion from the workplace because overlap is undesirable. In response to perceived realm separation, people may attempt to integrate realms either through implicit or explicit means—for instance, if one feels that, as a committed religious believer, they should take efforts to make faith more relevant to their work. I will describe these different categories with illustrations from my data.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data on which this paper is based derive from a larger sociological study on religion and capitalism in rapidly globalizing cities in India and the Arabian Gulf. This paper relies on data from 12 months of participant observation and 122 interviews conducted between 2010-2012 in

Bangalore and Dubai. Participants were predominantly mid-level professionals in Fortune 500 companies or affiliates, with at least three years of work experience, and ranged in age from 25 to 50. As the broader project was aimed at comparing Roman Catholicism in two cities, most participants (103) were Catholic, and the remainder of Hindu, Muslim, or Protestant backgrounds. The sample was designed to capture variation along a set of criteria: ethnicity, occupation, religious involvement, gender, and length of residence in city. Participants were recruited through various church groups (e.g., prayer groups, parish councils, religious education, and volunteer groups) as well as through snowball sampling starting from prior contacts in corporations. Potential respondents were invited to participate in a study about lifestyles of professionals in rapidly developing cities, and semi-structured interview questions examined the relationships between work, lifestyle, and religion.

Respondents were of diverse ethnic backgrounds: Indians (including Anglo-Indians, Bengalis, Bombayites, Goans, Mangaloreans, Malayalees, and Tamils), Filipino, Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian, Ghanaian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Spanish, American, Italian, and French. Participants identified as middle-class professionals from a diversity of occupational functions (accounting, finance, engineering, marketing/communications, and general management). Sixty-six were male and 56 female. The majority of the Catholic respondents (74) were highly involved in church activities (i.e., participated more than once a week beyond weekly service attendance), and thus constitute an extreme case of professionals with high religious commitment. This sample is thus well suited for studying the various processes through which people negotiate religious identities in the workplace.³

³ I should note that many of these respondents belonged to groups that were either affiliated with or influenced by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, reflecting the global diffusion of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity (Robbins, 2004). Many were also avid consumers of American religious media, from American

Interviews lasted 90 minutes on average and were digitally recorded and manually transcribed. I also systematically recorded and coded fieldnotes from participant observations in religious and secular settings, including church groups and events, and regular visits to workplaces, homes, and other venues frequented by these professionals. Sustained conversations with informants and academics in these cities as well as my own previous experience of having lived and worked in these cities aided the research process immensely.

The research was carried out over multiple visits to each city over a two-year period. During this time, data were analyzed iteratively (following Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles et al., 2013), allowing emerging theoretical insights to inform data collection and vice-versa. While the broader study examines the lifestyles of corporate professionals as well as their involvement in religious institutions, the present paper is focused only on the workplace, and more specifically, the modes of overlap and separation of religion and work in the day-to-day work lives of these professionals. I began analysis at a basic level by categorizing people's experiences along the continuum of integration and segmentation proposed by Nippert-Eng (1996). Finding the typologies and categorizations in the available literature on the topic inadequate, I strove to develop a conceptual framework that more adequately captures the experience of negotiating the realms of religion and work in the workplace. I began to hone in on the distinct modes of overlap and separation of religion and work that emerge as people engage in boundary-work between these two realms in the workplace, and under what conditions these diverse modes of overlap and separation obtain. Because my data are not representative, I do not attempt here to make statistical generalizations. Rather, my goal is to shed light on the various modes of interaction

Catholic media such as EWTN to the works of popular religious figures such as Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, and Joyce Meyer, and thus reflect an "Americanized" religious sensibility that might be surprising to an outsider.

between religion and work that occur in these workplaces, regardless of their frequency, and to present a catalogue of mechanisms. By doing so, I can make analytical generalizations (Yin, 2003) about boundary-work between work and nonwork identities more generally.

Table 1 summarizes the modes of realm overlap and separation that I identify in my research, which I discuss in what follows.

[Insert Table 1 here]

REALM OVERLAP

Fusion

Fusion denotes a state in which the two realms are implicitly integrated in such a way that people do not perceive a distinction between fulfilling the requirements of one realm from that of another. For instance, people's values, criteria of worth, or self-perceptions might be identical in certain ways in both their religious and professional spheres, and are not perceived as being exclusive properties of either realm. I identify three types of fusion: fusion of mission, of ideals and values, and of dispositions.

Identity. One mode of fusion is seeing one's job as a divine calling, identical with one's vocation. This idea of work as a mission relates to the classic notion of work as a vocation or divine calling (e.g., Weber, 2011 [1920]). But this mode of fusion is something I rarely encountered among respondents. None of my respondents who were working in corporate settings at the time of the interview spoke about their jobs as such as a vocation—at best, their job was where God had “put” them for the moment. The idea of work as a meaningful vocation emerged only among three professionals I talked to who had started their own business. These

entrepreneurs saw their business ventures as responses to divine promptings. One of them, Floyd⁴, an Indian entrepreneur in Dubai who volunteers at the church several days a week, narrated how he left a well-paying corporate job to start his own business in a completely different industry, primarily because he felt God was calling him to use his talent and creativity to make a difference in the world.

Now if money was the motivating factor, I would have continued in employment, right? Employment-wise, I had a situation that I couldn't have asked for any better. I was the number-two man in an organization in Dubai. An American company where I had an American secretary. Now how many Indians can boast of that position in Dubai, right? I had check-signing authority... Virtually I was running the whole company... And then I found this talent—this unique talent that God had given me—and I felt that I must use it, for bettering myself and for making the world a better place. Today as I look back on that, I feel that I have achieved that, and I can let it grow even more and make the world a better place by ensuring that my products...will help me make the world a better place.

Floyd was very explicit in attributing both his motivation for his decision to leave a secure career in finance and venture out into an entirely new industry as well the success he has experienced, to his religious beliefs. Unlike Floyd, most of my respondents working in transnational corporations were not entrepreneurs, and expressed a different sense of “mission” that was distinct from any understanding of work as a vocation. Rather, they saw their mission or purpose in the corporate environment as being “a witness.” For such respondents, the corporate realm was not experienced as fused together with the religious realm, as it was in the case of Floyd above. Instead, they saw these realms as distinct, and the work realm was an arena in which they could extend in explicit and implicit ways the commitments cultivated in the religious realm. I will return to this theme of witness further below.

⁴ All names used are pseudonyms.

Ideals. Many people I talked to claimed that the values espoused by their companies reflected and supported their “personal” and “moral” values. For instance, Jackie, a Filipina who was senior HR director of the Dubai office of a major global soft drink company, claimed that her company espoused principles that were consonant with “not just [her] religious beliefs,” but “also [her] values.” For instance, in dealing with external vendors, her company prohibited them from accepting gifts from suppliers. “We’re not allowed to do that,” she said, because “it’s an American company.” She also personally saw such practices as instances of corruption, and thus wholeheartedly supported them. Like Jackie, many believed that “good business” reflected moral values that people everywhere would espouse. Others similarly expressed the idea that values espoused at work were no different from one’s personal values. “You should be fair overall, whether in [church] or in business,” insisted Terence, a Filipino manager in Dubai, and leader of a Filipino church group. “You should do good things, because good things happen to good people. That’s the other way of Karma, no? Because Karma is: doing bad things, bad things you will get.” Terence thus sees the role of faith in his workplace as a sort of a positive version of what he understands as Karma.

Other values similarly espoused by people included discipline, hard work, and honesty. When I asked my respondents about whether any of their experiences in Catholic institutions (whether families or schools or church groups) influenced their work, the notion of discipline would often arise first. Many of them credited strict Catholic families and attending Catholic schools for having cultivated in them a value for discipline and order. They claimed that the resultant beliefs—that they should be disciplined, as well as their self-conception as a disciplined person—served them well in their work-life, especially when having to endure long hours doing tasks that they didn’t want to.

Cherian, a prayer group leader in his church and a senior management executive in Dubai, claimed that “values like patience [and] humility” were central to his day-to-day life in the workplace, and were enshrined in the strategic plan he had unveiled recently. He was not trying to integrate religion into a secular realm; rather, he articulated the internal values of the realm of work as being identical to those he would articulate in a religious setting. Another example of realm-fusion comes from Vinay, an engineer at an American firm in Bangalore whose employee performance evaluations entailed grading people on twelve behaviors on a 5x12 matrix, including components such as “leadership quality, the way you be with your team members, your learning capability..., how much of change you get in your team, how much of progress you show, how well is your result,” and so on. “Based on these qualities, they rank you. So that way it is very professional.” However, he said that the comments he most often received on his performance appraisals were: “your patience is very low; you should be more patient with people,” “you need to improve in your leadership qualities.” Vinay claimed to be struck by the fact that in following his company’s criteria, “Christian discipleship also falls into place, [because] they actually grade your patience, leadership qualities, and all those things. In that way, it is actually linked, but they don’t quote it scripturally, they do it professionally.” For Vinay, corporate and religious criteria thus fuse together.

Dispositions. Religion can affect work in ways that are mediated by the kinds of dispositions one cultivates in religious settings. For instance, David Menezes, the national HR director in India for one of the largest US-based IT corporations claimed that his faith was a crucial part of his daily life: “I don’t step out or don’t sleep before saying prayers.” He talked about prayer as a regular practice that shaped him as a person. I asked him how exactly his faith made a difference in this regard.

Faith has brought you up in a particular way and shaped you in a particular way. So it has [shaped] your personality. Now personality is defined by what? Upbringing, which is decided by church, family, and how you've been brought up. So to say faith, it doesn't come up in your mind to say, "I am a Christian, I need to do this." It shapes your personality and your personality decides what to do. So if you look at my record here: I can sack so many people but I don't do that. I tell my people, 'Don't sack people, give them a chance.'... You give them a chance so that they succeed in life. By sacking them etc. you have spoilt their career and things like that.

Menezes' example suggests that such realm fusion may contribute to a consistent identity in the work and nonwork realms, but need not be perfectly compatible with corporate goals. It may be in the company's best interests to fire underperformers. Yet managers like Menezes claim that it is important to be merciful, and to allow people who fail to get another chance. Menezes claims that such dispositions in his own life cultivated through prayer. Certainly such orientations need not be motivated exclusively by religion, but we see here that at least for some people, religion seems to make such a difference.

Instrumental overlap

The elements of an external realm are integrated as supports of the host realm. Considering the case of religion in the workplace, religion can serve as a "resource" that supports corporate ends—for instance, when skills, practices, or dispositions cultivated in religious settings are used to one's advantage in the workplace. I came across three main forms of instrumental overlap.

Resilience. Many talked about religion as a coping mechanism in the face of difficult and stressful situations in the workplace. Among such examples were Maryann and Carol, two Philippine professionals in Dubai who belong to the same Catholic Charismatic movement.

“I have to be honest, Maryann told me, “there are times I cry myself to sleep because of the stress and these kinds of intrigues and stuff [in the workplace]....In my field, which is sales, it can be so stressful at times. You just wanna give up and go home and you’re like “what am I doing here?” One fine day you wake up and realize that “why the heck am I doing this job?” But she says it is primarily because of her prayer group that she is able to persevere. “It’s our source of strength. Every Friday you look forward to it.” Carol similarly described her anticipation of the event. “You’re excited to come....When you have one week full of stress or issues or whatever, at the back of your mind you know that Friday is there. You will be having the [prayer group meeting], you will be meeting your friends, you will be listening to the word of God, to [founder’s] talk”. Then it rejuvenates you for the week ahead that you will be facing.”

One of their “sisters”—the group, like most charismatic groups, calls its male members “brothers” and females “sisters”—regularly sends out Bible verses and reflections every day. Before she starts her day, Maryann prays with these, and “it makes you energized for the day.” It has helped her “become more patient in dealing with my customers.”

Many respondents articulated how faith enabled their persistence in commitment to their work, providing a source of strength and even positivity in the face of challenges. A Spanish consultant, Juan, for instance, spoke of how one morning a particularly difficult client treated him harshly and disrespectfully in front of others in the office. A colleague later came to him to commiserate: “Bad day, huh?” He responded, “No, not really. There is more to my day than this.” His faith, he said, helped him to maintain perspective on what’s really important, particularly his family and spiritual commitments; to be able to acknowledge the many positives and blessings of each day; and not to be deterred by difficult circumstances. If not for this, he

said, he would have quit long ago. Dianne, a PR manager and an active member of a charismatic prayer group in Bangalore, talked about using prayer to deal with stress at work:

I always know that whenever I get anxious or stressed out, I realize at that point of time I'm not really surrendered to God. I'm taking the whole load on my shoulder and doing things my way. It helps at that point to just stop and say in my heart, "Lord you're here with me, you are my strength. I give this to you." I literally, like see this big bag, I take it and say, "It's yours—you tell me what to do!" And then, you know, because of faith or because of grace, you immediately feel much lighter. You feel the stress go off. And you're not really bothered. Because you know at the end of the day nobody can really fire you unless it's God's will for you to leave. And nobody can really retain you unless it's God's will for you to stay back, you know? So it works both ways. It's a practice of daily renewing your commitment to making him the Lord of your work-life.

We see that it is not only that faith helps her manage stress, but also that the workplace provides her a context outside typical religious settings in which she can regularly cultivate practices and habits—for instance, infusing religious logics that sacralize work, and using particular spiritual techniques of imagination and attending to emotions—that reaffirm her religious commitments. Similarly, members of the Hindu 'Art of Living' community I spoke to described about meditation practices and breathing techniques they use during work to maintain their focus, let go of stress, and become more productive—echoing themes found in the literature in the west on spirituality in the workplace (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012).

Transferable capacities. Religion can provide people with beliefs, skills, and capacities that are transferable to the workplace context. People talked about ways in which skills and capacities cultivated in religious settings were even sources of competitive advantage over others at work. Vinay in Bangalore, for instance, talked about how his religious background gave him a practical edge over others, allowing him to integrate his faith in the workplace without explicitly

“evangelizing.” Religion works here not simply by shaping “personality” or attitudes, but also by equipping people with concrete skills transferable to the workplace context.

The qualities I have learned, like submission and leadership qualities, they actually [give me an] edge. That is what I have observed... My manager did come and tell me that you are one person who never gives up; you take the challenge and you do the challenge and you are there for the challenge. All this I got because of the way I was trained spiritually. I have 12 years of history being in the youth group. We have gone into different trainings of financial management, managing your work, managing your studies. So it really helped me to prioritize my work. That’s really important in the work schedule, to prioritize the work. How to handle situations, actually, and how to escalate issues....These are things that I have learned through my spiritual training. That is what I implement.

Vinay also mentioned attending leadership retreats through his church groups that taught him very practical basics that were transferable to the workplace. He said he learned, for instance, to use a to-do list every day, for which he uses Windows 7 Post-its, “and I ensure I don’t forget to do even a small job.” The retreat taught him “to list down what you have to do and how to prioritize your work... Now I can spend time in prayer, spend quality time at work. I finish 8 hours of work in four hours.”

In Dubai, members of a young adult group of Arab Catholics explicitly focus on cultivating professional skills. Rima, an active member of this group, credits the presentation skills she learned from her Arabic prayer group with landing her a job at one of the top hotel chains in Dubai. At her job interview, before the actual interview she asked if she could give them a short Power Point presentation that she had prepared about herself and why she believed herself to be the right candidate for her job. Her sales pitch, she believed, worked, because it allowed her to highlight her initiative and her positive qualities in ways that she would not have been able to do in a conventional interview.

Problem-solving. Another mode of instrumental overlap is when people see their faith as a supernatural problem-solving mechanism, where divine intervention enables their survival or success. Some talked about getting a job itself as a miracle. This “miraculous” nature of getting a job was much more prominent among respondents in Dubai than in Bangalore. The initial expense of the visa, the limited time available to people while on their visas to find work, the expensive cost of living in the interim, the difficulties of having to get a visa and returning to Dubai to search for work again—all contributed to generating a tense situation the resolution of which was perceived as a miracle—a sign that God wanted them to stay on, and was rewarding their persistence. In such cases when the job itself was seen to constitute a miracle, there is a tendency for these employees to talk about their commitment to their jobs as a commitment to God.

Other occasions of “miracles,” besides getting a job, included occasions in which people were “spared” from potential disasters. One church group I attended in Dubai during its weekly meetings had a section titled “Speak for Christ,” during which members could come up to the front of the room and share some incident which they saw as an instance of God’s intervention in their lives. Over a period of several months, several examples shared pertained to crises at the workplace—losing crucial documents or data, or nearly being fired for some mistake—that were averted “miraculously,” and were interpreted as attesting to God’s faithfulness.

In Bangalore as well, many respondents described what they considered “miraculous” interventions of God in their work lives. Vivek, an accountant in Bangalore who worked for one of the “big four” accounting firms for several years before starting his own practice recently, talked about how after losing a major client, they experienced a miracle that saved their business:

Our finances monthly had dropped down by 85 percent. So unless I terminated my employees there was no way I could meet my budgets. There were three staff, and we just held hands around the table and just challenged God on one aspect. It was just a one-minute thing, we said, “Lord we always believed we are your church wherever we have gone. And you’ve always shown us victory and you have never let us down. So if today, and at any point of time, we lack finances, even to pay the salaries, God, it’s not a shame for me, it’s a shame for you. I know you will not let us down.” And you will not believe it: from that very day, till today, we have been busy. So out of the blue, just clients coming in, walking in: “Hey, we have been looking for your place last few days!”

Despite the instrumental aspects of such modes of overlap—the ways in which religion becomes an asset for their survival and success in the workplace—there is a sense in these accounts in which the religious realm cannot simply be manipulated by people for their purposes. It remains somewhat elusive and catches them by surprise. The realm of work in these cases no longer remains a disenchanted sphere confined to its restrictive set of logics, but is re-enchanted, always pregnant with the possibility of divine intervention. Such religiously committed professionals live out a form of “inner-worldly mysticism” (Weber, 1958:326)—not necessarily by finding joy or meaning in the workplace (Lambert, 2009:172), but as “porous selves” (Taylor, 2007) disposed to the “invasion” of the workplace by the religious sphere.

Invasive overlap

Elements of the external realm (here religion) may “invade” the host realm (here work) and become a priority, thus reordering if not compromising its internal commitments (cf. Pleck 1977). More commonly, modes of invasion are commensal, i.e., neither benefit nor harm the work setting. But in some cases, people’s work commitments and priorities may be jeopardized for the sake of adhering to religious commitments or their entailments. I came across the following modes of invasive overlap in my research.

Influencing. Participants in my study engaged in modes of witnessing that were either more overt and explicit or, more commonly, discreet and implicit. In either case, the logic they shared was that voiced by Mona, an Indian administrator in Dubai: “Work is where God has placed me and I have to be a testimony of God’s presence there.”

For some respondents, it meant overt proselytism, similar to what previous research has found among some evangelical employees in the US (Miller, 2007; Lindsay & Smith, 2010). This included inviting colleagues to church groups, or talking explicitly about one’s faith. For instance, Julie, an active leader in the Charismatic young adult group in her parish, worked as a training manager in a call center in Bangalore for a few years, and claimed that her job was an opportunity to evangelize—not simply colleagues, but also customers. She proudly narrated an incident in which she shattered an American customer’s stereotype of Indians and was able to share her faith with him. The man called about his mortgage, figured he was speaking to someone from India, and started to pick on her name: “How do you like your name? I mean, don’t you feel bad about your fake name?” When she replied that Julie was her real name, and that she was a Catholic, the customer was incredulous, and started to interrogate her Christian beliefs. She elaborated:

And I told him, “Listen, I know Jesus personally!” And he was very, very surprised. ‘cause their concept of India is cows, buffalos, snakes, terrorists, everything not-nice. And I told him how much of Jesus I know. And he was very, very zapped [...] And he’s like, “What?” [laughs] I said, “Yeah, I have a prayer group that meets here every Saturday!” And he was very, very zapped! And especially just the privilege I got to introduce Jesus to someone in America who thinks that an Indian has no clue what Jesus is all about!

Such overt proselytism was uncommon among my respondents. Among some, explicit witness would be restricted to the bounds of corporate prayer groups, such as ecumenical Bible-study or faith-sharing groups that exist in several offices of multi-national firms in both Dubai and Bangalore. A further means of participating in religious practices in the workplace is through informal groups that share religious messages, emails, or pictures either via email or by passing them around the office to people whom they know would appreciate them. Another means of explicitly communicating religious goods is when people bring back and distribute mementos from pilgrimages, such as Muslims bringing back pieces of the Kisbah (drape of the Kaaba) after the Hajj, or Catholics distributing prayer cards or holy water, or Hindus distributing *prasad* (i.e., food blessed by deities). Some Charismatic Catholics I talked to expressed that it was a source of some anxiety for them to discern whether or not they should accept mementos from people of other religions; for instance, they saw Hindu *prasad* as objects sacrificed to deities they did not believe in and that their scriptures forbade them from accepting, but at the same time they did not want to offend their colleagues by refusing. For some, however, refusing these objects was seen as a way to affirm their commitment to their God, and also to signal such commitment publicly, even if it meant being ostracized by colleagues. In doing so, they would put themselves into a “heroic” narrative in which they stood up for God in the face of temptation.

More common were implicit modes of witnessing, which would harness religion’s capacities to shape one’s dispositions and attitudes, not in order to serve workplace goals (as in the case of instrumental overlap above), but to simply extend the influence of religion through one’s presence in the workplace. Robert Rajan, a senior HR manager in a global manufacturing firm, explained that as he understood it, “the Catholic Church does tell its members to go and

spread the good news, but not in the way that Protestant churches would do it, where they would try and make every opportunity count to talk about the Gospel.” He continued:

For me personally it’s not been that way, you know, where I go and have a bible next to me and everyone who comes next to me try and give them a sign that this is the way. That’s not been my way. My way is just to be a person that people would like to look up to, people would like to have around. People would like to, you know, would love to learn something from, would love to come and share with you in case they have a problem. And I’ve found in the worst of situations I have found people coming to me, approaching me in the workplace, just because I was different. Very different in fact.

I asked him how he would make this difference known. “No, it’s just your way of life,” he replied. “You tend to be different, and it’s happened over years. Years of trying to be different. It’s like, you know, it’s a practice. Like certain things become habits? Like that. There’s certain choices you’ve made. And you know these are good choices, so you keep making those type of choices, and that becomes a way of life.” Robert noted that his early years of work were in a sales environment. “It was real all-out cut-throat, dog-eat-dog environment, because everyone’s running for targets, everyone’s competing.” At times he would be competing on even ground, but at other times, “you would find people going out of their way to undo you in something,” or trying to get the better of you in front of the boss. He described these environments of low informal trust as continually providing “situations that test your faith, test your way of life, test your choices:… Do you try to be someone’s favorite? Do you try to take undue advantage of a situation? Do you try to corner a deal which is not yours? Do you try and get a deal which is not right, just to stay ahead of the curve?” Robert claimed that his experience in the corporate workplace provided occasions in which his faith could be tested and strengthened, “like a muscle,” and by being a “different” sort of “presence” in the workplace.

Signaling. In addition to modes of witnessing, people would signal their religious commitments in numerous ways. In many workplaces in these cities, it is common to display religious objects such as religious posters, paintings, statues, or symbols. These would usually be displayed along with other “personal” symbols such as family photos, comic strips, and so on, and are ways of bridging work and faith through material objects and symbols which cross realms, occasions when the boundary between the two realms become permeable (Nippert-Eng, 1996:36-38, 280). Lijo, an Indian IT manager in Dubai, set up his desktop screensaver to display Bible verses, in order to make it known to his colleagues that his Christian faith is of importance to him, though he is uncomfortable with the idea of overt conversation about religion in the workplace.

A second mode of signaling commitment was through talk. Most of my respondents did not actively make declarations of their religious beliefs, but would only want to make it known that they were churchgoers and had commitments to church groups. Such signaling is different from what people called “witnessing” in that it is not aimed at either persuading others or disposing them well towards one’s religious beliefs; rather, its logic is one of (usually reticent) disclosure rather than proclamation. And many people I spoke to expressed that this was difficult to do. A case in point is Francesca, who works as a business development manager in the Dubai office of a major global electronics firm headquartered in Europe, where she has been working for seven years. She is also in a key international leadership role in a Filipino-origin Catholic Charismatic movement that I’ll call Christian Singles International. “In the beginning I wasn’t really comfortable telling people that I’m so active in a Christian ministry,” she admitted. She said that it took her several years “to get to the place where it didn’t matter what people think about [her].” While she felt uncomfortable with the prospect of being open with her colleagues

that she is actively involved in church, she also did not want to continue keeping it in the closet, “because this is such an important aspect of [her] life.” It was only about three years ago that she has been able to become more open with her colleagues about it, and admits that she still finds it a struggle. This challenge of having to explain one’s religious commitment—its nature and meaning and importance for the devoted believer—by translating it into secular discourse that is understandable by one’s colleagues at work serves therefore as one factor that might lead some of these people to conceal their religious involvement.⁵ An important factor that comes into play here, as scholars have pointed out (e.g., Lips-Wiersma and Miller 2002; Lindsay and Smith 2010), is the extent to which people their workplaces are “safe spaces” that are receptive rather than hostile to self-disclosure about religion.

A third mode of signaling which was especially pervasive among Charismatic respondents was abstinence from certain key activities in social settings: drinking, smoking, cursing, and gossip. For many of them, claiming that they did not drink alcohol was an important way of signaling their Christian commitment. The large majority of my participants from Catholic charismatic groups in both cities abstaining from alcohol as a key act of signaling their religious commitment to workplace colleagues. In many cases, when I asked them why they did not drink, or how exactly their faith influenced their choice to not drink, they could not give me a clear answer. Some referred to a biblical injunction to avoid drunkenness, and said that they preferred to not take a step that could potentially lead them there: “See I am not saying drinking as such is wrong. Getting drunk is. But you cannot get drunk unless you take the first drink, and I would rather not even do that.” Others similarly talked about refraining from gossip or from

⁵ On the difficulty with such “translation” of religious into secular discourse, see the debate between Charles Taylor and Jurgen Habermas in Butler et al (2011).

using foul language, even at the expense of ridicule by colleagues, as a means of signaling their religious commitment. Such practices also become a means of drawing boundaries against workplace norms that people are unwilling to subscribe to. Bridging religion and work thus seems to mean not only the permeation of boundaries by bringing in religious meanings and logics into the workplace, but also to re-draw boundaries in order to meet the demands of the religious realm. Many religiously committed respondents claimed to operate within the confines of these new boundaries and abstain from behaviors such as gossip, swearing, or drinking.

Moral conflict. Many also talked about the role of religion in the workplace in terms of how it shaped their relationships with colleagues, superiors, and subordinates. Some talked about this in ways that suggested a spillover of relational dynamics cultivated in religious settings into the workplace. These, at times, come into conflict with dominant norms of interaction at work. For instance, Ashwin in Bangalore talked about the role of faith in his workplace in this manner.

Ashwin: I try to be nice to people, though it's not always possible. But somehow that prick of conscience is always there right? Because if you're on a Sunday in a prayer meeting then for the next five days you can't behave like Satan in office right? Somewhere, not exactly like angel, but somewhere in between is possible. So faith does play an important role in my work, in dealing with people, how to deal with people.

I: Can you give me a specific example?

Ashwin: It helps me to give a benefit of doubt to other people. See, people talk behind the back of other people, right? ... So when people talk behind backs, I try to avoid that. I made a conscious decision seven, eight months back not to do that, not to talk behind the backs of the people in my team.

I: So were you doing this before?

Ashwin: I was, I was! In fact I was doing it; I was also involved with it. But every time there was a prick of conscience.... And I decided not to do it, and I decided to bring it on to everyone not to do that thing. Whenever you talk about a person, think that he is there, that's all.

I asked him what led him to eventually take the effort to change what had become a habit, and whether his religious group played any role in this process. “It was more of an inspiration,” he said. “That prick of conscience was always there since I joined the project. But I avoided taking decision.” Eventually it began chafing considerably, and he felt as though God wanted him to stop cooperating.

Religion can also “invade” the realm of work by shaping what people experience as situations of ethical conflict. Just as Ashwin earlier mentioned that his religious beliefs, sustained through regular participation in a community of practice, began to chafe against some of his relational practices in the workplace and forced him to change them, others mentioned how their religious beliefs, mediated by reflexivity—either individual or within religious communities—led them to change work-related behaviors in the workplace.

For example, Lijo from Dubai talked about how his faith affected some of his work-related tasks when the demands of work conflict with what he understands as the demands of faith. He narrated an incident from his early days in the company when his boss insisted that he and his team in the IT support center not respond to clients’ emails for at least 48 hours, in order to maintain the impression that they are busy—even if they really had nothing else to do. After complying with this for a few weeks, he said that his conscience began to trouble him; it became increasingly clear to him, he says, that “I should be faithful to God who gave me this job.” As a result, he violated his boss’ orders and began responding to emails as soon as he received them.

Others talked about how their conscience, shaped by their religious conditioning, bothered them when it came to other commonly accepted practices at work, such as overcharging the company for work-related expenses. Ronald, now a finance manager working with a UK-based firm in Bangalore, talked about how his faith led him to quit his previous job. He

worked for a leading national bank in India, where despite being hired as a finance manager, his position was mainly sales-oriented. He explains why he was forced to quit this job:

There were [a] lot of very challenging things. You had to say lies. There was something called buddying. I was a manager, and I had to buddy with another manager to meet with high-net-worth customers. So when we would meet them, I would say the truth. I would say, ‘A particular investment would not fetch more than this.’ But I was not supposed to say that. I was supposed to say that it will fetch, it’s a probability. But that probability has never been a possibility in the last 10 years at least [*laughs*]. So you were supposed to quote a probability and not a possibility. So coming from a finance background, after doing so much research, I felt what I was doing was injustice to my career, injustice to what I believed in, injustice to the creator who touched my life. So I felt I needed to quit the job. And I did it, but again I had to go through a lot of persecution at home, because my parents were expecting me to take care of the family and things like that. And this was a highly paid job. But I had to quit that, just for Jesus.

REALM SEPARATION

Implicit separation

Perceptual separation. In some cases, people I interviewed seemed honestly unable to see how religion could play a role at all in the workplace. These respondents were software programmers who worked either mostly on their own or in teams in which they claimed they did not experience any conflict, tensions, or ethical dilemmas. Work for them seems to have been rendered a neutral space. Akin to Stephen Jay Gould’s (1997) notion of “nonoverlapping magisteria,” work and religion are seen as disparate realms with their own internal autonomous governing logics. But in the logic of implicit segmentation, this separation is simply taken for granted. It was not that people espousing this view claimed that they should not affect one another; rather, they could not even see how they possibly could have such an influence. When I asked people whether their religion or faith affected their life in the workplace in any way, many

would look genuinely puzzled and reply, “No, not really.” Below are additional examples of such responses from professionals in Bangalore and Dubai:

No, it doesn't affect it. Work is work and I don't see how my faith could affect anything. (Charmaine, Dubai)

I don't think my religious beliefs would change the way I work. It has nothing to do with work and, above anything else, it's more of a personal choice. It's not gonna shape the way I would work or the way I would approach work. As a person I'm not superstitious either... It doesn't matter at work. (Christopher, Bangalore)

The way I work has nothing to do with my religious beliefs. I think it has more to do with your personal beliefs, as a person. (Joanne, Bangalore)

Structural separation. In addition to the above kinds of perceptual separation, where one is unable to see how religion might even be relevant, another mode of implicit segmentation is when people see the structure of the job or the workplace as rendering integration impossible. Colin Perera, a middle manager in Bangalore, complained that the constraints of his workplace were such that he sometimes could not see any possible way to integrate faith with a job that required him to cultivate camaraderie among his team of 10 employees throughout the year, only to have to rank them on a competitive scale at the end of the year and fire the person at the bottom.

Logical separation. One might also see in some work environments a logical separation of faith and work because of perceived incompatibility (e.g., of faith being in conflict with science and scientific work). I encountered this view among some non-religious professionals.

Explicit separation

Explicit separation requires the work of drawing boundaries in order to exclude religion from the workplace. This implies a perception or anticipation of undesired overlap, which one

tries to avoid either on the basis of principled commitments, an unwillingness to pay the cost of integration, or due to failure of attempts at integration.

Principled separation. In contrast to implicit segmentation, explicit segmentation implies a recognition that the spheres of religion and work can overlap, but further, that such overlap is not a good thing and should be prevented; the spheres *should* be kept separate. Many claimed that they, in principle, kept these spheres separate, and that it was somehow not appropriate to integrate religion and work. For instance, Noel, a consultant in Dubai, declared:

I normally maintain a strict boundary between my personal life and my office life. So for example I use my office phone only for office things, nothing else. Even my faith and my Christian – not values but habits – I try to keep a distinction with it. So in the office for example, I wouldn't put a Christian screensaver on my computer, or I don't put Christian messages on my Facebook or on my Skype or Blackberry or whatever like that. So I keep that distinction. I don't know why, but somehow I think that in an office, you are there for working and you work, and once you come out of it, you can do whatever else you want.

Often such respondents did not have a clear reason or justification for why such separation was important; they similarly seemed to have been taught to think that it was “somehow” important, but could not articulate precisely why. Others such as Michelle in Bangalore, feel that the demands of the corporate world sometimes oblige you to leave your personal values at the door. For instance, in her own work at a global internet corporation, she had to write ads for pornographic websites:

We do work on porn sites.... And I mean it's against my religious views, because we don't believe that we should read this kind of thing... But that didn't stop me. In fact when I went to my interview, my supervisor said, “You might have to work on porn, would you be okay with that?” And I said, “In today's world you have to be, because every second person is working on it.” ... Like my religion, I have a strong belief, but in this kind of things... you can't be close-minded. So that definitely doesn't play a role in my professional life.

Michelle did not see pornography as a good thing, and claimed that it went against her personal beliefs about dignity. What she was able to do, however, was to reinterpret her situation such that the logics of work or business—whether for herself or the people creating or featured on those websites—were autonomous and should be separated from one’s religious or personal views. For those professionals who are more active in conservative religious groups, being embedded in such groups with strong proscriptions against things such as pornography would have made it extremely difficult for them to justify a response such as Michelle’s. In all likelihood, they would have used it as an occasion to solidify their faith by rejecting what would appear to them as a clear violation of their identity and beliefs. Sexuality for them is a clear boundary area in which a religious logic would have to trump norms of “work” or “business”; other aspects of work that receive less airtime in their religious groups—for instance, if their company has wiped out a slum as part of its construction or has a harmful impact on the environment—would likely not catch their attention.

Pragmatic separation. In addition to being a matter of principle to draw boundaries between work and religion, the low informal trust (Sennett 2006) in these workplaces also contributes to why many of the people I talked to insist on drawing a firm boundary between work and matters of faith and religion. For instance, Colin in Bangalore narrated an incident in which he had to train a colleague who joined his project team. Since he felt that if he did a good job in training this person to take over his duties, he would lose his own job, he consciously made it a point to prevent his colleague’s success. “I mean, you may be a Catholic but at the same time you cannot let everybody walk over you, right?” he asked. “I mean then you’re gone! Right? And I cannot let that happen to me!”

Colin's manager asked him to help this colleague by giving him some of the best people from his team. "Now you put yourself in my shoes, and I am telling you, 'Give me the best people which you are managing.' What will you do, right? So I said no," he recounted. He felt caught between trying to follow orders and watching his own back. He decided at the end to sabotage his colleague, and gave him his weakest team members. The colleague in turn launched a grievance with HR, and Colin was eventually reprimanded and denied a promotion. While he regrets his decision now, he felt at the time he couldn't do anything else but try and protect himself. He said that his faith was "not so strong" that he could do the right thing when it came to many situations he found himself in in the workplace, and feels forced to segment it from work for the sake of survival. But it was not because he tried to integrate it and failed; rather, he did not think it possible to even try.

Frustrated separation. In addition to segmentation as a principle and as a consequence of mistrust, some people gave examples evidencing a third basis for segmentation: a failure of attempts at integration. Mona, who worked several administrative jobs in Dubai, said that during her early years at work, she was overly brazen in her attempts to integrate her faith into her workplace, in ways that she regrets now as immature. In one of her jobs, she would sing Christian hymns or play them on her computer, which she has come to realize now, were perceived as overbearing by most of her colleagues who were not Christian, although at the time she saw it as something she needed to do in order to not compromise her identity, and saw the responses of her colleagues as "spiritual attacks." In another job, she would avoid colleagues at lunch time in order to spend time with her devotional practices and avoid "corrupting" influences instead. Now she realizes that she should have been spending time with them and trying to be a good witness instead. In hindsight, she looks back at her various attempts at failed integration as

simply reflected a lack of maturity on her part. She has opted for more implicit and subtle forms of integration, and has drawn a boundary that keeps out some of the more easily misunderstood aspects of her spiritual practice. Successful integration thus requires not only receptive conditions, but practice and skill.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Under what conditions do the above relationships of overlap and separation between realms obtain? This is not an easily answerable question, because of the nature of the boundary between experiential realms. As Nippert-Eng (1996:279) argues, “[t]here is a large range of potential overlap between culturally linked boundaries, so that the amount of shared contents may be larger or smaller at any given time.” Overlap and separation are thus always partial, and likely co-occurring. People may experience fusion with regard to certain elements of these realms—for instance, when Cherian gives a talk on humility in his workplace that he could just as easily be giving at church, or when Rajesh leads a session in church on Covey’s time-management philosophy that could be just as well given at the workplace—while simultaneously engaging in explicit segmentation, such as by filtering out any religious jargon from these talks (even in church groups, for the sake of underscoring the universality of the message).

With this caveat in place, I identify some of the conditions that generate the states of overlap and separation that I discussed above. Fusion requires the perceived similarity of ideals, practices, objects, and dispositions across realms. In the examples I gave above of managers giving motivational talks, or in the case of someone who functions as an accountant both at work and in church, it may be experientially difficult to separate the realms.

Instrumental overlap can occur when it is possible for one to enjoy the benefit of cultural capital cultivated in religious settings; the religious realm here offers a transferable skill or capacity that becomes a readily available resource in one's cultural "toolkit" (Swidler 2003) to further one's goals and strategies in the workplace. If aspects of the religious realm are readily "available" and "match" the requirements of the workplace context (e.g., one has recently organized several events in or given presentations to the church group and now has an occasion to organize a workplace event or to give a presentation), they can be easily transferred and become useful to workplace ends. Besides such skills, even dispositions and religious practices (such as patience or prayer) cultivated in religious settings can be enacted by people with the intention of improving their workplace lives (e.g., managing difficult colleagues or stress in order to be productive). Such "matching" is also made possible by the fact that people often try to select themselves into contexts in which they can deploy their existing repertoires of skills and habits (Lizardo & Strand, 2010; Swidler, 2003; Vaisey, 2009).

Occasions of "invasive" overlap are usually generated by unexpected "triggers" in the host realm which involve the perception of a conflict. This suggests a weakness of dominant concepts in the boundary-work literature such as "preferences" and "strategies," which privilege conscious, deliberative, intentional processes, whereas people's actions are often tacit or inadvertent. A significant amount of recent research in the intersection of cognitive psychology, anthropology, and sociology focuses on how situational cues can inadvertently trigger dispositions associated with dormant identities (DiMaggio, 1997; Cerulo, 2010). Realm invasion can result from a perceived "violation" in the host realm of central objects of an external realm, for instance, when people find certain practices or behaviors in the workplace as violating their religious identities. As a result, they may experience pressures from the religious realm to

discontinue the workplace routine, even though they may not prefer to. In such cases, nonwork identities may come to bear on workplaces in spite of an alignment of preferences and pressures to separate them. This is especially the case in areas of boundary overlap that come to be perceived as a violation of or threat to the nonwork identity, when respondents talked about a “pricking of conscience” that they feel under certain conditions. For them, to deliberately conceal their nonwork identity—even though they might *prefer* to do so—can become increasingly difficult to bear. For instance, Gemima, working at a British bank in Dubai, was extremely uncomfortable bringing up religion with her “hardcore atheist” colleagues, but claimed that despite her preferences to avoid conflict, she felt “compelled” not to be “ashamed” of her religious commitments, and thus endured “awkward” situations when she feels she must correct colleagues who insult her beliefs. This challenges Ramarajan and Reid’s model as it is a “revealed” identity under conditions of both preferences and (workplace) pressures to exclude, which we cannot account for unless we consider a *nonwork identity*-related pressure to include. Similarly, when people start to perceive routine workplace practices as violating key elements of their religious identity, despite their own expressed preference for separation or exclusion, they may even go so far as to quit their jobs. What is noteworthy is the process: they initially participated in the practice in question as part of workplace norms, and understood that doing so was very much “part of the game” entailed by their work role. Yet they increasingly felt unable to bear the tension because of the demands of their nonwork identity, and thus had to change their behaviors or remove themselves from these situations, at a personal cost they would have preferred not to bear.

It is important to note that what people are even able to recognize as a boundary object or area varies tremendously. People are more “attuned” to some elements of realms than others,

usually due to the prominence of these themes in criteria for worth in those realms. Further, the overlap also requires sufficient immersion in the rival realm (in order for the boundary object to be important enough to occasion concern) and usually some “collapse” or, in a more minor way, “gap” or “crack” in the script or routine they are otherwise following in the host realm (such as disillusionment with the results of certain practices).

Implicit separation treats as commonsensical the idea that the realms are separate. This is usually found among people who are not heavily immersed in the rival realm. Among those who are, the separation is maintained unproblematically because their work context does not seem to occasion any overlap (e.g., solitary programmer, no experience of workplace injustice, stable environment and situation with nothing to complain about).

Explicit separation can occur firstly when people are already conditioned to draw these boundaries. This is demonstrated by the fact that they carry expectations and discourses that they cannot elaborate on: “I’ve always kept work and faith separate; I don’t know why.” A second factor that shapes explicit segmentation is the lack of skill or practice at integration. This could be due to a perception of workplace constraints, such as the risk entailed—in the cases of people who perceive their workplaces as hostile to religion (Lips-Wiersma, 2002; Lindsay & Smith, 2010), or are afraid of anything that could potentially make them vulnerable and jeopardize their success at work—or the failure of attempts at integrating. Nippert-Eng (1996:288) notes that traversing boundaries between realms is partly a matter of skill, and requires practice that is reinforced by instances of success. Perceived incompetence at integration can therefore lead to segmentation. However, even such failure and incompetence may not lead to total segmentation, but instead encourage people to “tone down” their integration strategies and adopt more implicit approaches instead.

Because of the numerous elements of these realms that can potentially come into contact, the boundary between the realms can vary tremendously not only in its contents but also its permeability—the ease with which boundaries can be crossed. Skill at boundary-transition can render boundaries permeable at various points, and is also occasioned by the similarity of the categories between boundaries (Nippert-Eng 1996:280). Recognizing the cultural boundary work entailed by the context of differentiated realms makes an important contribution to understanding how people negotiate the relationship between the religious and the secular. As Nippert-Eng (1996:279) argues, “[i]t is this overlapping dimension of boundaries that has been sorely neglected.... If we fundamentally conceive of any two categories as oppositional, inversely defined classes of things, and especially if we further locate them in distinct times and spaces, we virtually force ourselves to ignore their overlapping potential.” This overlapping potential, which generates symbiosis as well as mutual constraint, warrants further attention in research on religion in the workplace.

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Category	Definition	Condition	Sub-Category	Example
MODES OF OVERLAP				
Fusion	Perceived similarity of (and inability to distinguish between) ends, ideals, practices, objects, and dispositions across realms	Regular and sustained situational cues allow beliefs, skills, and disposition to be triggered and activated across realms in similar ways	Identity	Seeing one's job as a divine calling, identical with one's personal vocation
			Ideals	Commitment to same core values in both realms; unable to separate "personal" from "professional" values
			Dispositions	Habitual and automatic dispositions developed in church are triggered and sustained in the workplace
Instrumental	Beliefs, skills, and habits cultivated in an external realm can be transferred to the host realm to serve its ends, thus enabling success	Aspects of the external realm are readily "available" and "match" the needs of the host context. Self-selection into host contexts in which skills cultivated in external realm can be extended.	Resilience	Religious rituals and practices provide a sense of energy, motivation, and ability to handle workplace stress
			Transferable capacities	Religious organizations provide training in skills valued in the workplace (e.g., leadership, presentation, etc.)
			Problem-solving	Resolution of workplace challenges and obstacles is attributed entirely to powers of other realm (e.g., miracles)
Invasive	Ends intrinsic to a realm are compromised when elements of the external realm "invade" and	Unexpected "triggers" in host realm which generate perception of threat and require	Influencing	Seeing one's primary role in the workplace as extending the influence of religion (e.g., by sharing one's faith with boss or colleagues)

become a priority of their own	choice between conflicting logics	Signaling	Selectively displaying aspects of one's religious identity (e.g., religious screensavers) without trying to influence others
		Moral Conflict	Allowing religious beliefs to challenge workplace norms

MODES OF SEPARATION

Implicit

Inability to perceive overlap between realms	Insufficient experiential overlap between realms; Limited experience of external realm; Perceptions of structural or logical conflict	Perceptual	No experience or perception of religion being relevant to work
		Structural	Perception that unjust work context makes it structurally impossible to integrate religious beliefs
		Logical	Perception of irreconcilable logical conflict between realms (e.g., science and religion)

Explicit

Drawing boundaries to exclude other realm as undesirable	Perceptions of conflict; Desire to preserve independence or purity of realms; Lack of skill or practice at integration	Principled	Principled commitment to keeping private life separate, not discussing faith at work.
		Pragmatic	Unwillingness to integrate aspects of religion because of perceived threat to one's survival or success in the workplace
		Frustrated	Failure of integration attempts (e.g., prohibitions by supervisors)